

# NATIONS APART

## CZECH NATIONALISM AND AUTHORITARIAN WELFARE UNDER NAZI RULE



**RADKA ŠUSTROVÁ**



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Czech Nationalism and Authoritarian Welfare  
under Nazi Rule

Radka Šustrová

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# Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	vi
<i>List of Tables</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	viii
<i>Notes on Text and Transliteration</i>	xi
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xiii
<i>Maps</i>	xiv
Introduction	1
1 Social Security during State-Building	17
2 The Autumn Revolution and the Reconstruction of the State and Society	43
3 Community-Building through Authoritarian Welfare	110
4 Towards Workfare Communities	162
5 Health Care in Warfare	215
6 Family Policies for Segregated Nations	266
Conclusion	313
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	322
<i>Index</i>	347

# List of Illustrations

## Maps

1	Central Europe, 1918–38	xiv
2	Czechoslovakia, 1 October 1938–14 March 1939	xv
3	Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (as established on 16 March 1939)	xvi

## Figures

2.1	Poster, ‘Welcome in Bohemia and Moravia’	58
2.2	Heydrich after his arrival in Prague on 28 September 1941	73
2.3	A portrait of Karl Hermann Frank in his office	74
2.4	National Partnership meeting	80
2.5	Emil Hácha leaves a meeting with Reinhard Heydrich on 17 December 1941	86
2.6	Poster warning against ‘whispered propaganda’	92
2.7	Poster, ‘We Believe’	97
2.8	Fritz Sauckel in a discussion with Karl Hermann Frank	100
3.1	NSV kindergarten	145
3.2	Reinhard Heydrich at a meeting with senior Nazi officials	157
4.1	Poster promoting women’s commitment to work	187
4.2	Karl Hermann Frank and Konstantin von Neurath in Brno on 6 November 1939	210
5.1	Poster promoting building playgrounds and swimming pools for Czech youth	252
6.1	Czech athletic competition in September 1943	275



# List of Tables

1.1	Average disability and old-age pensions and wages in the period 1930–7	23
3.1	Actual assessed wealth by region for the purposes of social insurance settlement in 1940	122
3.2	Indigent maintenance valid from 1 April 1940	150
4.1	Make-up of premiums in mining pension insurance in the German Reich and in the Protectorate	205
4.2	The newly determined premium split	205
5.1	Number of prescriptions issued and total expenses for medicaments in the Protectorate in 1940 and 1941	232
5.2	Medical examination of Protectorate youth 1942–4	251
6.1	Live births in Bohemia and Moravia, 1937–45	274
6.2	Czech and mixed marriages in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia (with the Sudetenland excluded), 1938–45	278
6.3	Births sorted by assistance at delivery, 1938–45 (excluding the Sudetenland)	292

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It was my family history that sparked my interest in the Second World War and Bohemia and Moravia under Nazi rule. My great-grandfather was working for the Czechoslovak Railways in Česká Třebová, Eastern Bohemia, when he was arrested in June 1941 for his cooperation with the non-military resistance organisation.<sup>1</sup> As a railway employee, he could easily and cheaply travel around the country, which allowed him, among other things, to distribute an illegal journal entitled *V boj* (In the Battle). Great-grandfather was not a key figure of the domestic resistance but an opponent of the occupation from the ranks of the ordinary Czech population. After spending two years in various prisons across Nazi-occupied Bohemia and Moravia and Germany, he was eventually executed in Dresden in the autumn of 1943. Losing a husband and father of two children had critical economic and material consequences for the family for the rest of the war. My great-grandfather's story, especially his two court trials and one appeal, revealed numerous surviving documents kept by the family. I listened to my grandmother's evocative retelling of the family's hardships in the absence of the father and breadwinner and I compared it with the correspondence, materials from the family's dealings with the authorities, and the investigation and trial files produced by the Nazi courts. All these things together quite clearly pointed me towards the study of the time period, which Czech historiography still mostly describes in black and white: the Czechs' enduring struggle against German occupation. Choosing my own research path, I started to be more interested in the workings of the bureaucratic apparatus and the lives of ordinary people. The study of domestic resistance, to which my great-grandfather's story was directly linked, was thus slowly cast aside. Although the Czech resistance and Nazi terror remain the two main lines of research pursued in the Czech Republic, I rather see the resistance as one of the many puzzle pieces of the reality under Nazi rule.

<sup>1</sup> The Petition Committee 'We Remain Faithful' (Petiční výbor 'Věrní zůstaneme' in Czech, short PVVZ) referred to the declaration of loyalty to the first Czechoslovak president Tomáš G. Masaryk and his vision of democracy. The PVVZ was mainly formed by non-communist left-wing Czechs who operated illegally between 1939 and 1942. There were not only intellectuals in its ranks. The involvement of people from different professions characterised the PVVZ.

This book is based on my dissertation, which I defended at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague in June 2018 and published in Czech in 2020.<sup>2</sup> Later, when I was appointed as a British Academy Newton International Fellow at the University of Cambridge, I returned to this text in order to translate it for an international audience. In the first place, I would like to thank the British Academy and the Faculty of Arts Charles University Prague, which enabled the publication of this book as part of the *British Academy Monographs* series. I had the opportunity to work on the final version of the manuscript during my two-year fellowship at the University of Cambridge, which gave me a chance to think about the subject in a broader context. However, the conclusions and interpretations correspond with those of my dissertation.

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<sup>2</sup> Radka Šustrová, *Zastřené počátky sociálního státu: Nacionalismus a sociální politika v Protektorátu Čechy a Morava* (Prague 2020).

Archives of the International Labour Organization in Geneva, and also the staff of the Berlin State Library, the Leipzig University Library, the National Library in Prague and the librarians of the Czech Statistical Office in Prague.

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# Notes on Text and Transliteration

## Geography

This book focuses on the part of Central Europe usually referred to as the Bohemian lands or the Crownlands of Bohemia and Moravia, as a historically formed region within the Austrian-Hungarian Empire before 1918. After the First World War, a new state was created on this territory: Czechoslovakia consisted of the Bohemian lands, Slovakia (former upper Hungary) and the Carpathian Ruthenia. When Nazi Germany occupied the country in mid-March 1939, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (essentially Bohemian lands) was declared, Slovakia became an independent republic and Hungary seized the Carpathian Ruthenia. While telling the story about the Protectorate, I deliberately avoid the term Czech lands, which in English would connote an area populated exclusively by ethnic Czechs, which happened only after the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans in 1945 and 1946. Instead, I use the term Bohemian lands, which geographically and in character most closely corresponds to the territory legally defined and officially known as the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

## Ideology

National Socialism, as a term, has a precise historical meaning in European history. In this book, however, I write about German National Socialism and Czech National Socialism as two ideologically related but different political projects in wartime. Czech National Socialism (*národní socialismus*) expresses the Czech adaptation of Nazi ideology (*nacionální socialismus*) in Bohemia and Moravia under Nazi rule. The Czech language distinguishes between the adjectives national (*národní*) and nationalistic (*nacionální*), whereby the latter term is used to describe Nazi ideology in Czech. Moreover, Czech National Socialism can easily be confused with an influential democratic political party that was a part of the Czech and Czechoslovak political system. Founded in 1897 as the National Workers Party – a nationalist reaction to the internationalism of social democracy – it was renamed, after 1918, the Czechoslovak National Socialist

Party. It was a strictly democratic party supporting the democratic republic with no links to the strengthening Nazi movement in Germany or to the radicalising *völkisch* Sudeten German movement in interwar Czechoslovakia. During the Nazi occupation, members of the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party were either in exile (such as the former president and leader of the exile resistance Edvard Beneš) or persecuted.

# Abbreviations

ABS	Security Services Archive, Prague (Archiv bezpečnostních složek)
ANM	National Museum Archives in Prague (Archiv Národního muzea)
BArch	Federal Archives Berlin (Bundesarchiv)
DAF	German Labour Front (Deutsche Arbeitsfront)
ILO	International Labour Organization
MHP	Ministry of Economy and Labour (Ministerstvo hospodářství a práce)
MSZS	Ministry of Social and Health Administration (Ministerstvo sociální a zdravotní správy)
MZA	Moravian Provincial Archive in Brno
NA	National Archives in Prague (Národní archiv)
NOÚZ	National Trade Union Headquarters of Employees (Národní odborová ústředna zaměstnanecká)
NSDAP	National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei)
NSM	German State Ministry (Německé státní ministerstvo)
NSV	National Socialist People's Welfare (Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt)
ORR	Chief Government Councillor (Oberregierungsrat)
PA AA	Political Archive of the Federal Foreign Office (Politisches Archiv des Auswärtiges Amts)
PMR	Presidency of the Council of Ministers (Předsednictvo ministerské rady)
RGBL	Reich Law Gazette ( <i>Deutsches Reichsgesetzblatt</i> )
SĽS	Slovak People's Party (Slovenská ľudová strana)
SOA	State Regional Archive (Státní oblastní archiv)
ÚŘP	Reich Protector's Office (Úřad říšského protektora)
ÚŘP-ST	Reich Protector's Office – State Secretary (Úřad říšského protektora – státní tajemník)
ÚSP	Central Social Insurance Company (Ústřední sociální pojišťovna)
ÚVP	Government President Office (Úřad vládního prezidenta)
VOA ČMKOS	All-Union Archive of the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions in Prague (Všeodborový archiv Českomoravské konfederace odborových svazů)
ZÚPM	Provincial Youth Welfare Headquarters (Zemské ústředí péče o mládež)

# Maps



**Map 1** Central Europe, 1918–38





Map 2 Czechoslovakia, 1 October 1938–14 March 1939



Map 3 Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (as established on 16 March 1939)

# Introduction

In public consciousness, the Second World War epitomises violence, power, domination and suffering. Seventeen million victims of the Holocaust and Nazi persecution recall the extraordinary circumstances in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>1</sup> The reality was even more devastating. In addition to the massive number of deaths, people suffered physically, socially and mentally. Although the images from the concentration camps taken when the liberating armies entered are as telling as possible of the horrific reality of the time, the forms and shapes of exclusion and liquidation, or quite the opposite, acceptance and celebration, were multiple.

However, the Second World War also stimulated deep reflection, the renewal of European democracies and a fundamental extension of social rights. In response to social misery during the Great Depression of the 1930s and the subsequent popularity of radical political movements, it was necessary to give people a helping hand. Was it a genuinely new procedure that brought about a more universal distribution of social protection among the population? Let us here consider the possibility that the welfare state, as a form of government that aims to ensure universal security as well as social and economic well-being of the population, was not exclusively a product of the post-war world.

How to explain the apparent contradiction between destruction and care, violent repression and the simultaneous development of the welfare state? Don't we have to reconsider the development of the welfare state in the Second World War and the Third Reich? The social foundation of National Socialism is an important subject for theorists of fascism who saw social mobilisation, focus on the working class, and an emphasis on social and political issues as essential underpinnings of the regime.<sup>2</sup> This is a fruitful lens when studying Central Europe because even

<sup>1</sup> Estimated by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/documenting-numbers-of-victims-of-the-holocaust-and-nazi-persecution> (23 January 2022).

<sup>2</sup> See Sven Reichardt, 'Neue Wege der vergleichenden Faschismusforschung', *Mittelweg* 16 (2007), No. 1, 9–25.

Nazi rule in the Bohemian lands, occupied by Germany from 1939 to 1945, was not just an exclusively hostile and repressive regime in relation to the Czech population. Historiography in practice does not reflect this striking duality. John Connelly has emphasised the *improvised* character of the Nazi occupation policy in Europe.<sup>3</sup> The progress of the war, local conditions, economic opportunities, the degree of acceptance of the new order by the local population and ultimately its 'racial potential' were decisive. This improvisation in occupation policy led to a certain unpredictability of the regime, which made it possible to modify occupation practices in spite of the Nazi ideology. What did this mean for the non-German populations in this part of Central Europe?

This book traces the roots of the welfare state in the area known as the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. On 16 March 1939, the Nazis established the Reich's dominion over the Bohemian lands in the very heart of Europe and right next to the newly reconstituted German border. In doing so, they turned Bohemia and Moravia, which make up this historic territory, into one of the longest-lasting occupied areas of Europe – one characterised by considerable economic productivity and its large skilled workforce and majority Czech non-Jewish population. There was a German minority living in Bohemia and Moravia, approximately 240,000 people (about 4 per cent of the total population). By acquiring Reich citizenship, Bohemian Germans became members of the *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community) and were therefore entitled to the same social benefits as Germans living in Germany itself. The German population living in the Protectorate was very diverse, indeed. In addition, there were Germans who came originally from the Reich and worked in the civil service and in paramilitary organisations or who were migrants, settlers or evacuees from areas threatened by aerial bombing. The number of Germans in the Protectorate varied during the occupation and was significantly influenced by developments on the war front.

In this book, I argue that the welfare state project formed a key part of the Nazi occupation strategy in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Tomasz Inglot, in his analysis of the welfare state in Central Eastern Europe, has observed that in Czechoslovakia, on the ruins of which the Nazi Protectorate was founded, a reassessment of social policy had been initiated in 1938. Describing a longer process of the 1940s transformation, Inglot focused primarily on development after the war and did not go further to explain the causes of development except for the strong continuity of the legislative norms and institutions of social insurance throughout the Nazi occupation.<sup>4</sup> This is true, but the practice was even more striking. I suggest that, on the one hand, the welfare state project in occupied Bohemian lands contributed to the social stabilisation and legitimisation of Nazi rule through a complex network of social security organised according

<sup>3</sup> John Connelly, 'Nazis and Slavs: From Racial Theory to Racist Practice', *Central European History* 32 (1999), No. 1, 1–33.

<sup>4</sup> Tomasz Inglot, *Welfare States in East Central Europe, 1919–2004* (Cambridge 2008), 70.

to people's nationality. On the other hand, it provided surprisingly broad social rights to the Czech non-Jewish and non-Roma population. One of its distinctive manifestations was strengthening Czech nationalism along the lines of a national-racial community, forcing Czechs and Germans apart.

In historical memory, Nazi social policy in the Protectorate is most strongly associated with Reinhard Heydrich, Deputy Reich Protector and Chief of the Reich Main Security Office.<sup>5</sup> Heydrich's project of recreational holidays for Czech workers and canteens set up in industrial plants during the occupation have become examples of his famous 'carrot and stick' method, whereby he promised Czechs that they would receive wages and other benefits for their labour. Heydrich's speech, delivered on 2 October 1941, outlined his programme and included the oft-quoted words that 'the Czech workers must be given enough fodder ... to enable them to do their work'.<sup>6</sup> What he meant was that the aim was to achieve peace in the factories and, ultimately, the good health of the workers, since both these things were necessary for meeting the German economic quotas. However, social policy in the Protectorate did not begin with Heydrich; it was there before him and continued after his death. The social security tools used by the short-lived authoritarian government of what is known as the Second Czecho-Slovak Republic, established after the Munich Conference held at the end of September 1938, and the Nazi Protectorate that replaced it in March 1939, built upon interwar practices – none of them represented a break in the evolution of the welfare state. What is more, the number of those insured by a public social insurance scheme increased, preventive health care and occupational safety practices improved, and together with poverty care they formed the basis of the Protectorate's population welfare scheme over the entire course of the Nazi occupation.

However, there was one major change that came with Heydrich. In contrast to the policy of his predecessor, Reich Protector Konstantin von Neurath, it did not matter what the Czechs thought so long as they did not rebel and worked peacefully and well to benefit the Nazi war industry. Economic and social policy measures, which included, among other things, improving supply and raising wages, were heavily advertised under Heydrich, and the representatives of the occupation administration began talking about them in an almost brand-new way. Heydrich was a great innovator and strategist. In the Protectorate, he surrounded himself with experts in Czech realities to understand the Czech mentality and actively attempted to use Czech national symbols for his benefit. Thus, it was no coincidence that Heydrich took over the reins on 28 September 1941, the day of the celebration of Czech statehood associated with St Wenceslas, a historical figure symbolising the recognition of German dominance over Bohemia. Czech Radio broadcast the spectacular celebrations of Heydrich's accession and conveyed a

<sup>5</sup> See Robert Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman: The Life of Heydrich* (New Haven 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Heydrich's speech available at [http://www.mzv.cz/file/198483/Microsoft\\_Word\\_\\_\\_HeydrichCesky.pdf](http://www.mzv.cz/file/198483/Microsoft_Word___HeydrichCesky.pdf) (5 January 2018).

detailed picture of this moment to every Czech household. By contrast, before Heydrich arrived in Prague, the popularisation of the Protectorate's social policy was marked by a solid Czech nation-building ethos intended to prop up a collaborationist government and support a war against Communism. Its leading proponents were representatives of the Czech government in the Protectorate and other important figures of the Czech social and cultural life. Therefore, from my research perspective, Heydrich's tenure is primarily a period of ostentatious propaganda and consistent instrumentalisation of social policy. Neither the instruments nor the principles of social policy changed fundamentally during this time.

Heydrich's reign was the bloodiest period in the history of the Protectorate. Framed by the periods of the first and second martial law, after his arrival in Prague (lasted from September 1941 to January 1942) and his assassination (May to July 1942), it resulted in hundreds of executions of 'unreliable' Czechs. Especially after Heydrich's death, the Nazis launched a huge hunt for the assassins and their helpers, who – as the Nazi security forces correctly suspected – were from the ranks of ethnic Czechs with a strong national consciousness. The intensified hunt for those with any familiarity with the assassination preparations created enormous pressure and an almost permanent threat of arrest and execution of individuals and entire families.

The novelty of Heydrich's ideology and policy, in which the Protectorate played a role, rested in his vision of a global empire. The escalating radical racism that resulted in Heydrich's fantastic Germanisation schemes and the planned extermination of all European Jews shed light on the Nazis' intentions and the means they planned to employ to subjugate much of Europe. The development of this policy – from Heydrich's meeting with Adolf Eichmann and other close associates in Prague on 10 October 1941 to the infamous Wannsee Conference held in Berlin on 20 January 1942 – marked the beginning of the critical phase in the Nazi policy of expansion and Germanisation and the murder of Europe's Jews. It involved massive land seizures and systematic deportations of the population, followed by the colonisation of the vacant territories by German settlers; in parallel, the Nazis would continue creating relatively stable living and working conditions for the gentile population.

Social welfare policy makes up merely one part of state policy. It comprises a framework or a set of social measures applied by the state to ensure that the needs of society are met. This results in operation (functioning), development (improvement) or change (transformation) of the system in order to eliminate negative social phenomena associated with problems such as illness, disability, old age or injury. The comprehensive nature of the protection and the egalitarian form of redistribution make this complex structure of diverse instruments and procedures a prerequisite for the existence of a welfare state. Social welfare policy in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia encompassed all these areas. Still, the

question this book seeks to answer is who received welfare from the state and who was entitled to it.

The definition of social policy, as understood by Nazi social theorists, and the way in which it was received in the Protectorate did not fundamentally differ from how we define it today. Nazi social policy, however, had a distinctive mental horizon manifested in the concern for the *nation* as opposed to *society*, as espoused by liberal democratic regimes. Heinrich Schulz, one of many authors of Nazi theoretical texts on social policy, characterised it in 1941 as

The totality of all measures and efforts undertaken by the state and the movement to maintain, secure and increase the life force of the nation.<sup>7</sup>

Nazi social policy is thus characterised by a reduction in the scope of social policy from its original subject, that is, society in the liberal democratic sense, to a newly defined subject: a national community construed on a racial basis – the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

The principles of the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* normatively determined the form of social order, which had unforeseen outcomes. ‘National Socialists had condemned the very idea of individual rights’, stated Samuel Moyn, but ‘the regime made shockingly impressive egalitarian strides for the *Volksgemeinschaft*’.<sup>8</sup> As numerous scholars have argued, the *Volksgemeinschaft* implied the concept and practice of the Nazi social and national condition.<sup>9</sup> It was within its framework that the new social policy, the basic principles of the distribution of social rights, and all the strategies and instruments for its enforcement in practice took shape. Social welfare became a reward for well-performed work for the national community, and it was also – to some extent – preventive in nature, as it was intended to help prevent poverty and illness, which reduced or even threatened workers’ performance. However, the Nazi authoritarian welfare order was not limited to the territory of the ‘Old German Reich’ (Altreich) and its principles extended beyond its borders.

<sup>7</sup> Heinrich Schulz, *Sozialpolitik im neuen Deutschland* (Berlin 1941), 11: ‘Unter Sozialpolitik versteht der Nationalsozialismus die Gesamtheit aller Maßnahmen und Bestrebungen, die Staat und Bewegung unternehmen, um die gesamten Lebenskräfte des Volkes zu erhalten, zu sichern und zu steigern.’

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Moyn, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World* (Cambridge, MA 2018), 37.

<sup>9</sup> Frank Bajohr and Michael Wildt (eds), *Volksgemeinschaft. Neue Forschungen zur Gesellschaft des Nationalsozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main 2009); Michael Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung: Gewalt gegen Juden in der deutschen Provinz 1919 bis 1939* (Hamburg 2007); Peter A. Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge 2008); Ian Kershaw, ‘“Volksgemeinschaft”. Potenzial und Grenzen eines neuen Forschungskonzepts’, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 59 (2011), No. 1, 1–17; Michael Wildt, ‘“Volksgemeinschaft” – Eine Antwort auf Ian Kershaw’, *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 8 (2011), 102–9; Christopher R. Browning and Lewis H. Siegelbaum, ‘Frameworks for Social Engineering: Stalinist Schema of Identification and the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft*’, in *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared*, ed. Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick (New York 2009), 231–65.

## Nazi supervision and occupied societies

The expansion of Nazi hegemony in Europe was a process of implementing the power structures, law and ideology of National Socialism. In the Protectorate, it took forms ranging from the complete control of a region through the establishment of a colonial German administration to occupation regimes effectively and efficiently using existing domestic (Czech) political forces. In addition to these external interventions by the occupying power, which scholars usually underline, Czech national political tendencies were also of considerable importance. As Chad Bryant has pointed out, both 'Czechs and Germans continued to act nationally under Nazi rule', reinventing what it meant to be 'Czech' and 'German'.<sup>10</sup> Bryant was one of the first to seriously consider national activism and its real political and social impact.<sup>11</sup>

Czechoslovakia in the late 1930s was not exceptional in its move towards national unity and the strengthening of national tradition. Certain parallels can already be found in pre-Second World War history. Despite their frequent fragmentation and political insignificance, the home-grown fascist or Nazi-sympathising movements in Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Belgium were a phenomenon that stemmed from dissatisfaction with the development and functioning of the interwar democracies and the consequences of the Great Depression. However, a few years later, they grew stronger because of the Nazi occupation, which employed them to coordinate domestic political forces collaborating with the occupying regime. Nevertheless, fascists were not the only political force that appeared on the political stage during the occupation. They were complemented by representatives of various political ideologies and movements, forming together an all-national political camp.

Developments in Bohemia and Moravia followed a similar trajectory. The historical Bohemian lands are usually seen as part of Central and Eastern Europe, but they did not really belong there in terms of the type of Nazi administration that was set up there. Like occupied countries in Western Europe, the Protectorate regime was distinguished by the significant involvement of domestic institutions in the country's administration. A parallel administrative structure was created within the Protectorate, consisting of occupation (German) and autonomous (Czech) authorities, headed by the Reich Protector and the Czech State President, respectively. The overarching authority of the Reich Protector gave him a role similar to that of the Reich Commissioner in the Netherlands and the Reich Plenipotentiary in Denmark. The occupation apparatus was extensive and grew steadily prior to

<sup>10</sup> Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge 2009), 2.

<sup>11</sup> See also Jan Tesař's work, here particularly on the first months of the Nazi Protectorate: J. Tesař, *Traktát o 'záchranně národa': texty z let 1967–1969 o začátku německé okupace* (Prague 2006).



the administrative reform in January 1942. It consisted of the Reich Protector Office and, at a lower administrative level, the Oberlandrat (German regional governor) offices, which supervised the activities of its Czech counterparts – district and municipal authorities. At the same time, the Oberlandrats served as the first-instance offices for German speakers in the Protectorate who opted for Reich citizenship. The separation of occupation and autonomous administration was not strict. As a rule, German officials assumed decision-making positions in the autonomous authorities, which enabled them to control their activities.

Many German occupation regimes introduced after 1 September 1939 in other European territories occupied or annexed by Nazi Germany, such as those in the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Denmark, mirrored an organisational pattern in the Bohemian lands under Nazi rule. National governments helped to bridge the uncertain period during the establishment of the occupation administration. Their position was strengthened by their ability to control the population without resorting to violence and to take the first step towards fulfilling the primary objective determining the form and character of the occupation regime: the maintenance of peace and work morale. In addition to economic exploitation, peace in the occupied territory was the central concern of Nazi officials throughout the war. The means of reassurance and stabilisation included not only maintaining the continuity of elements of national life, but also exercising welfare ambitions towards the local non-Jewish population.

The building of Nazi power structures under the parallel existence of a national government was a type of ‘supervisory administration’ (*Aufsichtsverwaltung*), which the Nazis mainly established in Western Europe. For Werner Best, a senior officer in the military administration in France and, from 1942, Reich Plenipotentiary in Denmark, who was systematically concerned with the forms of occupation regimes, the existence of distinct nations in Europe represented a challenge of how to properly incorporate the ‘foreign element’ into the ‘body’ of the German nation without disrupting its unity.<sup>12</sup> According to Best, the goal was to achieve a German government in the occupied territories that was small but effective ‘in the sense of the nation’ and based on civil administrations as permanent administrative forms.<sup>13</sup>

Between mid-August and the end of September 1941, Best travelled through the territories occupied by Germany. Shortly after his return to Paris, he wrote a report entitled ‘German Supervisory Administrations in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia’. On the basis of a remarkably extensive comparative study, Best criticised the regimes

<sup>12</sup> Werner Best, ‘Grundlage einer deutschen Grossraum-Verwaltung’, in *Festgabe für Heinrich Himmler* (Darmstadt 1941), 33–60.

<sup>13</sup> Ulrich Herbert, *Best. Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft 1903–1989* (Bonn 1996), 280.

in Norway, the Protectorate and the Netherlands, which he argued were expensive and tied to the massive presence of the German security apparatus and required direct intervention by the German authorities. In Denmark, Germany coordinated the administration of the state with the help of only eighty-nine civil servants, whom the local population outnumbered by 43,000 to one. The situation in other territories differed substantially: there was one German official for every 15,000 local inhabitants in occupied France; one for every 10,000 in Belgium and northern France; one for every 5,500 in the Netherlands; one for every 3,700 in Norway; and one for every 790 inhabitants in the Protectorate.<sup>14</sup> Specifically, in Bohemia and Moravia in the early autumn of 1941, the occupation administration included 9,362 German officials, of whom the Reich Protector Office employed 1,119.<sup>15</sup> Best preferred a minimalist government along the lines of Denmark, arguing for 'letting life be lived and supervise, control, and correct it from afar with increased attention'.<sup>16</sup> This was to be the main purpose of the Nazi supervisory regimes. The presence and vigilance of German overseers was to be felt almost constantly by the national administration, which was expected to work within these tightly controlled confines exclusively in the interest of Nazi Germany.

However, the formation of minimalist governments appeared unrealistic already in late 1941 and early 1942. In this period, harsh police crackdowns and collective punishments proposed by Heinrich Himmler and Reinhard Heydrich, central figures in the German police and security forces, became common. Yet wartime developments required a reduction in German personnel.<sup>17</sup> In October 1943, for example, there were eighteen labour offices in the Protectorate, employing 2,821 officials. Exactly fifty-five of them were put in office either by the General Plenipotentiary for Labour Deployment or by the Reich Ministry of Labour, while the remaining 2,766, or 98 per cent of the total, were officials of the Protectorate (Czech) administration.<sup>18</sup>

Nazi occupation was extensive, and the cooperation between the Czech government and German officials was largely voluntary. Due to that, it was impossible to neglect the social aspects of such a government. National welfare was shaped

<sup>14</sup> Herbert, *Best*, 290.

<sup>15</sup> National Archives in Prague (NA), Reich Protector's Office – State Secretary Collection (ÚŘP-ST Coll.), Sign. 109-4/1054, Carton 58: Die deutschen Aufsichtsverwaltungen in Frankreich, Belgien, den Niederlanden, Norwegen und im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, 65–6.

<sup>16</sup> NA, ÚŘP-ST Coll., Sign. 109-4/1054, Carton 58: Die deutschen Aufsichtsverwaltungen in Frankreich, Belgien, den Niederlanden, Norwegen und im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, p. 77.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Mazower, *Hitlers Imperium: Europa unter der Herrschaft des Nationalismus* (Munich 2009), 227.

<sup>18</sup> NA, Reich Protector's Office Collection (ÚŘP Coll.), Carton 977: Deutscher Staatsminister, Hauptabteilungsleiter V Herrn Oberregierungsrat Schuhmann M. d. R. (...) Generalbevollmächtigten für den Arbeitseinsatz, 23. Oktober 1943.

through the interaction of Czech and German demands and needs, and it evolved under the conditions of the Second World War towards solidarity and increased social redistribution among the various members of the national community.

## Nations and national welfare

Nazi social policy is most often studied in terms of the history of institutions or its individual branches.<sup>19</sup> This book takes a different focus. In a single study, it analyses both the power structures and the deepening intervention of the state in people's lives in the form of discipline and care, and the nation as an object to be shaped through these policies. Social policy is often one of the main components of the effort of national movements to build, consolidate and secure the nation-state. In the 1930s and 1940s, it was not a matter of building a new national movement, but rather of redefining it and starting the process of its rescue or reconsolidation. It was to be a return to traditional models and values with a rejection of 'subversive' liberalism, as critics commented on the interwar situation.

This happened against the backdrop of pessimistic demographic forecasts about the German nation, which gave rise to a focus on population in both quantitative and qualitative terms. In practice, it meant the exclusion of the Jewish population and the strengthening of the 'healthy core' of the Nazi Volksgemeinschaft. There was a Czech version of this development in the Protectorate. The idea of building a solid Czech national unity took shape amid the crisis after the Munich Conference in 1938. It was an attempt at an authentically Czech project of a national racial community, but unlike the German Volksgemeinschaft, it was not convincingly anchored in political discourse. Campaigns calling for national unity and solidarity, and collective symbols, invested them with significant mobilising and identity-forming power. Daniel Béland and André Lecours, who studied social and economic redistribution in the present multinational societies of Canada, the United Kingdom and Belgium, concluded that the national and social community, or community as conceptualised by the ruling elites, is partially identified through the mechanisms of redistribution.<sup>20</sup> The existence of different national movements within the borders of the Third Reich also allows us to differentiate between state (German) nationalism and sub-state (e.g. Czech and French) nationalisms and to trace their institutionalisation in the structures of social organisations functioning according to a national key.

<sup>19</sup> Marie Luise Recker, *Nationalsozialistische Sozialpolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Munich 1985).

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Béland and André Lecours, 'Sub-state Nationalism and the Welfare State: Québec and Canadian Federalism', *Nations and Nationalism* 12 (2006), No. 1, 77–96; Daniel Béland and André Lecours, *Nationalism and Social Policy: The Policy of Territorial Solidarity* (New York 2008); Nicola McEwen, *Nationalism and the State: Welfare and Identity in Scotland and Quebec* (Brussels 2006).

The principle of segregation of national movements was described by Tara Zahra in the context of the 'struggle for the child' taking place in the Bohemian lands at the beginning of the 20th century. Czech and German nationalists 'romanticised and demonised' the linguistic boundaries of their nations and in this spirit also built a nationally segregated welfare system. The main impetus for their work was given by a piece of legislation referred to as 'Lex Perek', which in 1905 divided school authorities at all levels (provincial, district and municipal) according to nationality. This set new conditions for the creation of individual national population cadastres and created special German and Czech social organisations to help poor families among Germans and Czechs, respectively.<sup>21</sup> For the time being, however, this only concerned the level of charitable care. Around 1938, at a time of intensified need for national identification, the segregation of national communities – German, Czech, Slovak, Polish and Jewish – deepened considerably and formed the basis for nationally conceived social welfare.

Distinguishing between different nationalisms makes it possible to observe the process of the formation of national communities. The occupation authorities took all their actions within the broader policy framework conceptualised by the Reich's Volksgemeinschaft project, which represented the policy of the nation's state. At the same time, the Protectorate's institutions cooperated in the shaping of Czech sub-state nationalism, with the knowledge and tolerance (and sometimes support) of Nazi officials. The new Czech national project, which came to be known as *národní pospolitost* (national community), was shaped in complete dependence on and subordination to the German (Reich) nation. It was official and also institutionalised. It was not an isolated reaction of this kind in Europe. *Národní pospolitost* became the expression of a Europe-wide movement towards the nationalisation of societies and an instrument for the creation of a solid and sufficiently efficient national community. Its defining feature was its racial character. In view of its socially constructed nature, I deliberately refer to this community as the 'Czech nation' in quotation marks.

Belonging to the nation defined the obligation of the state to provide corresponding rights and social benefits. The status of nations and ethnicities varied considerably in occupied Europe, yet this commitment can be understood as a highly egalitarian project. According to Samuel Moyn, this is why

the very meaning of social rights in the 1940s depended on the parallel and more powerful breakthrough of the dream of egalitarian welfare.<sup>22</sup>

For National Socialists, the Volksgemeinschaft thus meant staking out a community within which equality and sufficiency were key principles. Similar attributes

<sup>21</sup> Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca 2008), 73f.

<sup>22</sup> Moyn, *Not Enough*, 48.

were also adopted by the Czech *národní pospolitost*, which contained the commitment to create a national concept of social policy.

In this book, I argue that social policy in the Nazi Protectorate, structured according to belonging to a particular nation, had a fundamental influence on the 'Czech nation' concept and the maintenance of social stability in the occupied territory. In this relationship, the Protectorate (Czech) institutions can be understood as the implementers or administrators of social policy, the programme of which rested primarily on the shoulders of the central occupation (German) authorities.<sup>23</sup> This simplified model, where the creative and decision-making power was concentrated exclusively on the German part, while the Czech part had nothing but the mere ability to accept and apply it, was not accurate in absolute terms. The skilled bureaucratic apparatus inherited from the highly competent imperial Austrian bureaucracy and the Czech experts created a suitable background for building the occupation administration. They helped to increase the supervision of the functioning of the state and society. Social policy became an attractive field for the clash of various ideas and interests, albeit with varying degrees of ability of individual actors to successfully implement their plans.

Due to its orientation towards individual national communities, the Protectorate welfare state did not have a unified concept. In this book, I distinguish between three essential functions of social policy – the repressive, motivational and provisioning functions.

Firstly, social policy took its most radical form when it denied social support to a particular group of the population (the repressive function). The 'unsocial' or 'anti-social' policy of the state was described in the 1920s by the social-democratic economist Josef Macek, who considered it an approach of the state that 'brought more benefit to certain actors than they, as members of society, deserved to receive for their social functions.'<sup>24</sup> Under Nazism, repressive social policy existed as a form of punishment, and its definition here is therefore entirely negative. It targeted persons discriminated against on a racial basis, that is, people considered Jews, Roma and, later, people of Polish nationality.<sup>25</sup> In their case, this involved a range of different restrictions that led directly to categorical exclusion from participation in the social system.

Secondly, those who were targeted by social policy in the form of social incentives (the motivational function) were in a completely different situation. The regime took an interest in them and, therefore, they were given the opportunity to

<sup>23</sup> These were primarily the Reich Protector's Office, the State Secretary's Office, the German State Ministry, the Liaison Office of the DAF and, on the part of the Reich, for example, the Reich Ministry of Labour, the DAF, the NSDAP Party Office, among others.

<sup>24</sup> Josef Macek, *Základy sociální politiky* (Prague 1925), 22.

<sup>25</sup> In the interwar period, Poles with Czechoslovak nationality made up approximately 1 per cent of the population. Approximately 30 per cent of the population were Germans (about two-thirds of whom lived in Bohemia alone), corresponding to approximately three million Czechoslovak citizens.

participate in the building of the 'New Europe.' This group represented the largest recipient group of social policy in the Nazi Protectorate and is consequently of the greatest interest to me in this book. Through this policy, the Nazis presented an attractive offer, which we could paraphrase as 'we will give you social welfare, but you will become one of us.' It was not necessary to go as far as turning Czechs into Germans. Instead, they envisioned this within a Nazi system imagined by *Großraumwirtschaft* (a large economic area) advocates and people such as Best. This approach signalled the Nazi regime's willingness to enter into a social contract with the local non-Jewish population. It was in this respect that social policy potentially became an instrument for the Germanisation or Nazification of the Czech population of 'Aryan' origin. These benefits were associated with everyday social and political practice. For example, for workers in the metal industry, this could have involved wage advantages but also, for example, recreational holidays as a reward for increased work effort. The same purpose was served by the establishment of showers, changing rooms, toilets and canteens in industrial plants, which were intended to improve working conditions and comfort while getting the labourer to work on time.

Thirdly, not even Nazi social policy had to be guided at all times by ulterior motives. It could have served to satisfy the needs of certain groups of the population that the regime was particularly concerned about. Thus, for example, an elaborate system of medical care was set up for the Reich's German children participating in *Kinderlandverschickung* (evacuation of children to the countryside) camps, set up under the direction of the Hitler Youth by the occupation authorities fearing the spread of epidemic diseases.<sup>26</sup> The health of German children was clearly of paramount interest to the regime.

## Chapters and sources

Nazi social policy in the occupied Bohemian lands was instrumental, but at the same time it reflected Czech national interests and had real effects in terms of social welfare. It was by no means a 'social demagoguery', as is often argued in Czech historiography.<sup>27</sup> The Protectorate's situation did not even come close to the 'social

<sup>26</sup> Radka Šustrová, *Pod ochranou protektorátu: Kinderlandverschickung v Čechách a na Moravě. Politika, každodennost a paměť, 1940–1945* (Prague 2012), 169–75.

<sup>27</sup> Miroslav Kárný, 'K otázce sociální demagogie v Heydrichově protektorátní politice', *Slezský sborník* 82 (1984) No. 1, 1–22; Miroslav Kárný, Jaroslava Milotová and Margita Kárná (eds), *Protektorátní politika Reinharda Heydricha* (Prague 1991). The proponents of the highly misleading thesis of the 'genocide of the Czech nation' are close to this interpretation; see Bořivoj Čelovský, *Germanisierung und Genozid: Hitlers Endlösung der tschechischen Frage – deutsche Dokumente 1933–1945* (Brno 2005); Bořivoj Čelovský, *So oder so: řešení české otázky podle německých dokumentů 1933–1945* (Šenov u Ostravy 2002); Vojtěch Kyncl, *Bez výčitek... Genocida Čechů po atentátu na Reinharda Heydricha* (Prague 2012).

fiction', a term used by the Polish historian and literary critic Kazimierz Wyka to describe the rationing system in the General Government for the Occupied Polish Territories, which was characterised by extremely low food rations leading to starvation and extensive black market activity.<sup>28</sup> The Nazis applied a more radical policy on the territory of former Poland than the Czechs experienced on a daily basis in the Protectorate. However, the General Government also created a large social welfare institution structured according to nationality. The establishment of the Central Welfare Council (*Rada Główna Opiekuńcza*) in May 1940 was a 'compromise forced by the Germans,' as Bogdan Kroll has put it. Still, the Poles managed to achieve some of their goals without the danger of Ukrainian nationalist leaders becoming part of the Council, albeit at the cost of resigning themselves to a joint organisation for Poles and Jews. As we see, it was possible or even necessary to play the national card under much more restrictive conditions. Moreover, the environment where the care of the national community was negotiated was an attractive field in which to do so.<sup>29</sup>

In Czech writing, with rare exceptions, a one-sided narrative dominates. It emphasises the violence of the regime and the strength of Czech resistance to German domination.<sup>30</sup> The externalisation of guilt and violence practised in the Protectorate, considered exclusively *non-Czech*, is very common. At the same time, it calls into question the real impact of public welfare. On the contrary, German and English written historiography contains approximately five main approaches adopted by scholars researching Nazi social policy. Firstly, Tim Mason was probably the greatest proponent of interpreting Nazi social policy as a policy of conciliation, referring to the Nazi leadership's constant fear of a possible uprising (referred to as 'November Syndrome') and the need to find new legitimisation strategies in relation to the population. According to the second interpretation, welfare was merely a side effect of the boom in the arms industry, while the third approach sees the Nazi social reform as part of a policy of modernisation. Scholars see aspects of the modernisation of German society especially in the projects of social insurance, post-war planning and the activities of the German Labour Front (*Deutsche Arbeitsfront*, DAF), the unified German trade unions. Fourthly, social policy was the equivalent of the politics of racism, through which Nazi racial ideology and eugenics were thematised, and through which 'positive'

<sup>28</sup> The proponents of the 'genocide of the Czech nation' thesis are probably the closest to this misleading interpretation.

<sup>29</sup> Bogdan Kroll, *Rada Główna Opiekuńcza, 1939–1945* (Warsaw 1985), 64.

<sup>30</sup> These exceptions include in particular Jaromír Balcar and Jaroslav Kučera, *Von der 'Rüstammer des Reiches' zum 'Maschinenwerk' des Sozialismus. Wirtschaftslenkung in Böhmen und Mähren 1938 bis 1953* (Oldenbourg 2013); Jaromír Balcar, *Panzer für Hitler – Traktoren für Stalin. Großunternehmen in Böhmen und Mähren 1938–1950* (Munich 2014). The master narrative is based mainly on works published by the doyens of Czech research on the Nazi Protectorate, especially Miroslav Kárný, Jan Kuklík and Jan Gebhart.

selection, care and support, as well as ‘negative’ exclusion and stigmatisation, were linked. Using the fifth approach, historians look for possible evolutionary continuities and discontinuities with the post-war period.<sup>31</sup>

This book combines several of these approaches into a single analysis. It attempts to show that social policy helped to legitimise the National Socialist regime in the Protectorate, that more effective and modern methods were deliberately constructed for social safety, that it had a distinctly racial basis and, finally, that a distinct continuity ranging from the interwar period to the Protectorate and the post-war period can be identified. I base my conclusions on original research conducted in sixteen archives in the Czech Republic, Germany and Switzerland. The following text is divided into seven chapters that combine chronological and thematic divisions.

**Chapter One** focuses on the formation of social legislation and its instruments in the state-building of interwar Czechoslovakia (1918–38) and Nazi Germany (1933–8). The Protectorate was certainly not an isolated experiment conducted by the Nazi regime. In its basic features, the Protectorate’s welfare state built on and drew from the staff and expertise of the first Czechoslovak republic. At that time, Czechoslovakia was a liberal democratic regime, internationally networking with other states through its foreign policy and scientific exchange. Although it declared itself a nation-state, building its foundations on the idea of the ‘Czechoslovak nation’, it was a multinational state struggling to implement this concept of a political nation in daily practice.<sup>32</sup> The chapter concludes with the historical attempt to bring about a radical change in Czech society at the end of the existence of the interwar republic.

**Chapter Two** describes the period of the reconstruction of the state and society. Following the 1938 Munich Agreement and after the loss of the borderlands, the state ideology paradigm shifted. The driving force behind this change was the ‘Autumn Revolution’ the hallmark of which was Czechoslovakia’s retreat from international forums, the formation of an all-national political party, intellectual returns to the period of the formation of modern nations and, last but not least, the consolidation of Czech–German relations. The dominant political scheme determining values, rules and conventions moved significantly towards conservative values and integral nationalism. In this chapter, I analyse the sources of thought, the institutional embeddedness and the contradictions between escalating Czech nationalism and Germanisation policies. As in Germany, however, a similar vague correlation between the regime’s ideological goals and the pragmatic means used to achieve them can be observed, as David Schoenbaum has

<sup>31</sup> Detlev Peukert, ‘Zur Erforschung der Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich’, in *Soziale Arbeit und Faschismus*, ed. Hans-Uwe Otto, Heinz Sünker (Frankfurt am Main 1989), 36–46.

<sup>32</sup> See Adam Hudek, Michal Kopeček and Jan Mervart (eds), *Czechoslovakism* (London 2022).



pointed out.<sup>33</sup> Against the backdrop of extensive plans for the Germanisation of the Bohemian lands and population, there was a simultaneous exaltation of the 'Czech nation' and strengthening of its unity. The Czech national government in the Protectorate played a key role in this development. Czech officials holding various administrative offices and other Czech social elites also had an active role in this process. During the Second Republic period, these actors symbolised the 'revolutionary' spirit of the new order; after the establishment of the Protectorate, the occupation regime allowed them to reconfigure the concept of the 'Czech nation' and its role in the new European order.

In [Chapter Three](#), I look in detail at how the Autumn Revolution and the resulting demand for reconstruction were reflected in the distribution of social protection and social rights. The National Socialists could not build up authoritarian welfare without the institutional and bureaucratic support of local (Czech) actors who continued the work they had been doing so far. For the occupying power, this meant a purposeful use of domestic capacities; for the Czech authorities in the Protectorate, it was an opportunity to participate in the country's administration and to minimise the effects of constitutional and legal changes, and to advocate for social stabilisation. The Czechs, however, had been in a community-building mode since the Munich Agreement of September 1938, which accelerated the process of nationalisation and the closing of individual communities. Soon after the Munich Conference, the leaders of the 'Czech nation' set about 'rebuilding' (přebudování) the republic as the situation required after the loss of the Sudetenland border districts. This stage shows not only these stabilising features, but also a considerable will to concentrate energy and put it into creating a new concept of the state – the authoritarian Second Czech-Slovak Republic. The result was a process aimed at rebuilding the state and society, as actors from the ranks of the Czech political representation and intelligentsia of that time often put it.

The following chapters describe the three essential themes of Nazi social policy – labour, health and family – in terms of the rights and entitlements available only to members of the národní pospolitost and the Volksgemeinschaft. [Chapter Four](#) deals with the topic of labour, which formed the central concept of Nazi social policy. The general idea of labourers forced to work for the German Reich, which is most often associated with this topic, is too simplistic. In the National Socialist conception, labour, or labour policy directly, was often identified with social policy. In expert discourse, labour permeated all social policy spheres to rationalise human work, family and leisure activities in order to optimise work performance. Work was a phenomenon that largely determined the shape of other

<sup>33</sup> David Schoenbaum, *Die braune Revolution: Eine Sozialgeschichte des Dritten Reiches* (Berlin 1999), 22.

social policies. It was not related only to the determination of an individual's social standing, as many socio-economic measures were naturally dependent on it. However, employment and adequate performance remained an unconditional prerequisite for an employee to become a participant in the social security system.

**Chapter Five** focuses on health and the importance of prophylactic and curative health care. Health was an essential prerequisite for labourers' fitness for work and good performance, which mattered more and more as the war progressed. But welfare was not only directed at men in working-class professions; support was also provided to women in Czech and German families. The general availability of at least minimum health care undermines the established notion of the destruction of the Protectorate through a decaying system of public care. At the same time, maintaining public health was one of the priorities of occupation policy which motivated campaigns to combat infectious diseases, promote general hygiene, ensure the availability of a network of nursing and medical care in health facilities and other measures.

The central theme of **Chapter Six** is the family. Family policy is perhaps the most frequently discussed branch of social policy in scholarship concerning social welfare under National Socialism. This research studies the family as the central object of all social policy efforts, and especially as the objective of German racial and population policy. Nazi family policy was the most exclusive of all the policies mentioned, but – despite anti-Slavic Nazi policies – it also functioned in the Protectorate. Compared with the previous chapters, the family offers a clearer insight into the social practices that were differentiated among the individual national communities. The reason is simple. Germanisation policy and population policy were inextricably linked, and occupation administration officials closely monitored the population growth statistics of the individual communities, mainly German and Czech. However, the factor of a 'hopelessly mixed nation', as Chad Bryant has characterised the demographic environment of Bohemia and Moravia, did not create favourable conditions.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Bryant, *Prague in Black*.

## Social Security during State-Building

The declaration of independent Czechoslovakia on 28 October 1918 gave the Czechs, Germans, Slovaks, Carpatho-Ruthenians, Hungarians and other nationalities living in the country the opportunity to build a new state. In all respects, it was to be a modern liberal state, the opposite of the supposedly outdated and inflexible Habsburg monarchy that preceded it. It echoed the voice of the Czechoslovak propaganda because Austria, together with Germany, was one of the pioneers of compulsory workers' insurance in the 1880s. However, many people believed that Czechoslovakia represented a new and better beginning, albeit built on the foundations of the social legislation of the Habsburg monarchy. In this sense, the political elites wanted to reform the social legislation that the new state had inherited from Austria-Hungary and planned to develop and improve it further. At the time, Ferdinand Peroutka, a prominent Czech publicist and writer, wrote:

An age that forces workers to work ten or twelve hours a day, only leaving them with enough time to go home and sleep, does not deserve to be called a new age, regardless of any great political changes that have occurred.<sup>1</sup>

At the dawn of its republican era, the leaders of interwar Czechoslovakia – the so-called First Czechoslovak Republic, which consisted of the Bohemian lands, Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia – wanted it to be not only new but also progressive. They abolished noble orders and titles and quickly adopted essential social legislation. The eight-hour working day, which entailed binding regulation of overtime, night work and principles for employing minors, was for some politicians initially inconsistent with the state-building efforts of the independent republic. At the time, these measures were still not commonplace, but that made them all the more significant. The political consensus allowed the introduction of an eight-hour working day, and the left-wing parties pushed through state unemployment benefits and public social insurance for employees. Despite some difficulties that

<sup>1</sup> Ferdinand Peroutka, *Budování státu*, Volume 1: 1918–1919 (Prague 2003), 264. The original series was published between 1931 and 1936.

the negotiation process in a liberal democracy consistently presented – from partisan interests to the susceptibility of the political system to instability and obstruction by the parties involved – the First Czechoslovak Republic was among the countries with the most developed social legislation, granting social rights to Czechoslovak citizens, including women.

Compared with the period before 1914, the economy grew again after 1924, and quickly. The controversial deflationary monetary policy under radical national and democratic politician Alois Rašín eventually brought stability to the Czechoslovak crown (K) as one of the first Central European states. Czechoslovakia ranked among the economically medium-developed countries, along with Norway, Finland and Austria. However, the country's western and eastern parts had significant differences in economic levels. The integration of Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia, predominantly agricultural regions, into the Czechoslovak economy was only partially successful. Slovak leaders often felt that Czech institutions and civil servants had colonised them, and Prague faced constant criticism for its centralist policies.<sup>2</sup>

The Golden Twenties, as the period is known, were brought to a halt by the economic crisis. Social inequalities remained a visible problem, further exacerbated by the Great Depression in the late 1930s. After the industrial boom in the second half of the 19th century, which led to the rise of the working class, the social gap steadily widened. The social stratification of the First Republic reflected the problems inherent to capitalism, and modern social legislation was one way of mitigating the social conflict which flared up both at the time of the establishment of the independent republic and during the deepest economic crisis in the early 1930s. Social legislation as a response to poverty was nothing extraordinary or unusual. Prussian and later German social policy under Bismarck had already acted as an instrument to partially counterbalance social inequalities.<sup>3</sup> Revolutionary rhetoric and the radicalisation of political groups and movements in Europe after the First World War, especially in connection with the developments in Bolshevik Russia, motivated efforts to develop the new republic's social programmes.<sup>4</sup> Czechoslovak socialist parties wanted to focus primarily on social conflicts that persisted or were emerging after the establishment of the new state. The Social Democrats administered the Ministry of Social Welfare, but the Ministry of Public Health was also mainly in the hands of the socialists. The work on extending social protection and social rights culminated with the

<sup>2</sup> See Alice Teichova, Herbert Matis and Jaroslav Pátek, *Economic Change and the National Question in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge 2000); Matthias Morys (ed.), *The Economic History of Central, East and South-East Europe: 1800 to the Present* (London 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Frank Pitz, *Der Sozialstaat. Ausbau – Kontroversen – Umbau* (Bonn 2009), 27. See also Sandrine Kott, *Sozialstaat und Gesellschaft. Das deutsche Kaiserreich in Europa* (Göttingen 2014).

<sup>4</sup> A similar trend can be seen also on the right side of the political spectrum.

implementation of public social insurance for working men and women. In other areas of social policy, the government was less successful. For instance, it enacted a law on social insurance for the self-employed in 1925, only for it to never come into effect.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the interwar period, cooperation with a vast network of voluntary and charitable organisations was crucial for the Czechoslovak state to maintain a decent level of social protection.

In building the new republic, Czechoslovak leaders relied on its international ties, which included relationships among diplomats, technocrats and international organisations.<sup>6</sup> In social and health welfare, primarily the Red Cross and the International Labour Organization (ILO) forged international ties that aided efforts to improve social welfare and general health. The former gained a strong domestic presence immediately after the establishment of the republic in 1918 and made it possible to concentrate financial and material resources for distribution among those in need. Throughout the interwar period, during which the Czechoslovak Red Cross was chaired by Alice Masaryková, daughter of President Tomáš G. Masaryk and American Charlotte Garrigue, the Red Cross continued its nursing, health and popular education activities.<sup>7</sup> Although the ILO did not have direct representation in Czechoslovakia, it maintained close ties with the Social Institute of the Czechoslovak Republic and other institutions. It cooperated with several Czechoslovak experts, helping to connect national, international and global networks. On behalf of the ILO, renowned Czech expert leaders, such as the lawyers and politicians Evžen Štern and Lev Winter and the elite mathematicians Emil Schönbaum and Antonín Zelenka, assisted in spreading the concept of social security, and especially social insurance, around the world.<sup>8</sup> The importance of Czechoslovakia as a country symbolically associated with social progress was also highlighted by the organisation of the International Congress on Social Policy in Prague in October 1924. The delegates adopted three important resolutions: on the eight-hour working day, on works councils as the workers' representative bodies in the enterprises, and on combatting unemployment.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Act No. 148/1925 Coll., on insurance of self-employed persons against disability and old age. Large entrepreneurs were allegedly behind the failure: 1926–1936. *10 let čs. sociálního pojištění* (Prague 1936), 6.

<sup>6</sup> Sarah Lemmen, 'Locating the nation in a globalizing world: debates on the global position of interwar Czechoslovakia', *Bohemia* 56 (2016), No. 2, 456–43.

<sup>7</sup> For a general overview, see Otakar Dorazil, *Čs. Červený kříž* (Prague 1929).

<sup>8</sup> See Natali Stegmann, 'The ILO and East Central Europe: Insights into the Early Polish and Czechoslovak Interwar Years', *Acta Universitatis Carolinae, Studia Territorialia* 1 (2017), 11–34. Sandrine Kott, 'Towards a Social History of International Organisations: The ILO and the Internationalisation of Western Social Expertise (1919–1949)', in *Internationalism, Imperialism and the Formation of the Contemporary World*, ed. M. B. Jerónimo and J. P. Monteiro (Basingstoke 2018), 45.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Josef Skoch, *Mezinárodní organizace práce a Československo. Genese Mezinárodní organizace práce, její působení a účast Československa na jejím díle* (Prague 1928); František Polák, *Sociální politika Československa* (Prague 1927).

Czechoslovakia pursued a programme of economic development and built the foundations of the later welfare state. The principles of ‘economic democracy’ and ‘social democracy’ contributed to the stability of the interwar democratic republic and enabled the political participation of citizens. Both helped to reduce the most severe threat to democratic capitalism – social inequality. Social inequality had the potential to grow to such proportions that, as Tim B. Müller has argued, it annihilated social cohesion.<sup>10</sup> Müller was basing his conclusions on the conditions into which the Great Depression had plunged many European democratic states, especially the Weimar Republic. Political democracy could never ensure economic freedom and political equality without some degree of *social* democracy. Without it, it remained an empty slogan because it was only in social policy that political democracy found its material expression. According to Müller, it was the active economic and social policy that made democracy possible. However, despite the Great Depression, which resulted in a catastrophic crisis of capitalism, many states were unable to consistently implement both.<sup>11</sup> Socialism and socialisation ideals in liberal regimes strengthened local democracies, but in many European countries they gave way to political authoritarianism. Nevertheless, the American New Deal showed that there was a liberal democratic alternative to the solutions presented by flexible radical ideologies.<sup>12</sup>

Czechoslovakia remained democratic until the late 1930s, but internal tensions escalated. Under the pressure of emerging National Socialist regimes in Germany and Austria in 1933 and 1934, refugees began to enter Czechoslovakia, which became a kind of last democratic bastion of Central Europe. ‘Prague welcomed us as its relatives,’ German writer Heinrich Mann recalled in his memoirs.<sup>13</sup> Many privileged intellectuals, artists, social democrats and communists, including the German writer Thomas Mann and the Austrian writer and painter Oskar Kokoschka, were granted Czechoslovak citizenship. However, not everyone belonged to this favoured society and the Czechoslovak political scene was far from united on the refugee issue. Increasingly empowered right-wing parties became more and more intense in expressing anti-German nationalism and anti-Semitism. Moreover, they warned against a strengthening of the German-speaking population in Czechoslovakia.

The Bohemian Germans (or Sudeten Germans, as they called themselves) became involved in the building of Czechoslovakia only after the final verdict of the Allied Powers after the First World War that the border areas inhabited mainly by the German population would be part of Czechoslovakia. However, when Adolf

<sup>10</sup> Tim B. Müller, *Nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. Lebensversuche moderner Demokratien* (Bonn 2014), 103.

<sup>11</sup> Müller, *Nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, 111.

<sup>12</sup> See Kiran K. Patel, *The New Deal: A Global History* (Princeton, Oxford 2016).

<sup>13</sup> Kateřina Čapková and Michal Frankl, *Nejisté útočiště: Československo a uprchlíci před nacismem, 1933–1938* (Prague, Litomyšl 2008), 94.

Hitler came to power in Germany with his vision of uniting all Germans in a single state, national antagonism in Czechoslovakia began to deepen. Radical Sudeten German political movements with close ties to neighbouring Nazi Germany voiced harsh criticism of Bohemian Germans' national and social conditions. There was some truth to this. As reported by Minister of Social Welfare Alfred Meissner in 1934, of the eleven economic sectors with the highest unemployment, eight were dominated by Germans.<sup>14</sup>

By the autumn of 1938, the country still had not fully recovered from the economic slump which had plunged the social classes most affected by the Great Depression into misery. Besides many successes, the interwar state also saw structural problems that were not resolved satisfactorily (or at all).<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, it was a functioning democracy that guaranteed the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens. As Peter Bugge pointed out, Czech and Slovak political leaders remained committed to democracy until the end of 1938, whatever that meant in interwar Czechoslovakia. One of the fundamental pillars was Masaryk's thought, which stressed democracy as a specific ethos and everyday practice (instead of its formal dimensions).<sup>16</sup> When Czechoslovak democracy was threatened, for instance, by the increase in the number of refugees from Germany and Austria due to the seizure of power by National Socialist governments, the democratic rights of selected population groups were restricted. Similarly, the gradual criminalisation of the Czechoslovak Roma in the 1930s showed that the protection of democracy was seen as the primary means of preserving and securing the nation.<sup>17</sup>

This chapter is not meant to underline the contrast between interwar Czechoslovakia on the one hand and the authoritarian regimes that were in power from October 1938 onwards on the other. Instead, it shows the limits of the implementation of economic democracy in liberal democracy, the failure to complete some fundamental reforms and the growing discontent under the weight of social and political conditions in Europe. Here, I address selected issues, showing key points of the democratic debate and state-building ethos in the interwar republic. The chapter aims to define a set of issues and topics related to the distribution of social rights that were contested by interwar political representation

<sup>14</sup> Výklad ministra sociální péče A. Meissnera v sociálním politickém výboru PS dne 20. listopadu 1934 (Prague 1934), 13. Cited from J. Rákosník, *Odvračená tvář meziválečné prosperity. Nezaměstnanost v Československu v letech 1918–1938* (Prague 2008), 339.

<sup>15</sup> On social development in interwar Czechoslovakia, see Zdeněk Deyl, *Sociální vývoj Československa, 1918–1938* (Prague 1985); and Zdeněk Kárník, *České země v éře První republiky (1918–1938)*, Volume 1: *Vznik, budování a zlatá léta republiky (1918–1929)* (Prague 2000); Volume 2: *Československo a české země v krizi a v ohrožení (1930–1935)* (Prague 2002).

<sup>16</sup> Peter Bugge, 'A Nation Allied with History: Czech Ideas of Democracy, 1890–1948', in *Democracy in Modern Europe: A Conceptual History*, ed. Jussi Kurunmäki, Jeppe Nevers and Henk te Velde (New York, Oxford 2018), 208 and 219.

<sup>17</sup> See Pavel Baloun, '*Metla našeho venkova: Kriminalizace Romů od první republiky až po prvotní fázi protektorátu (1918–1941)*' (Prague 2022).

and expert circles. This chapter focuses on three parts of the Czechoslovak social question: the field of public social insurance, the link between the labour market and health care, and public hygiene. Finally, I briefly outline the milestones of social and political developments in Nazi Germany up to 1938, that is, a similar kind of state-building stage in that country's history, albeit in a very different political and ideological atmosphere.

## Public social insurance

Public social insurance in the First Czechoslovak Republic was a financial safety net administered by the government. This section zooms in on the complicated architecture of social insurance through the lens of a broad palette of social insurance branches managed by various public institutions. The system thus offered support to a large part of society, albeit with varying degrees of generosity.

If we want to name the decisive moment of development of public social insurance, then it gained a distinctive form by the Act on Insurance of Employees against Sickness, Disability and Old Age, which was adopted by the Czechoslovak government in 1924 but did not come into force until July 1926.<sup>18</sup> At the time it was known as the 'Social Insurance Act' for short. This was inaccurate, as it did not apply to the entire working population (only those in blue-collar occupations), but it was a reference to its importance in the building of the Czechoslovak welfare state.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, the Central Social Insurance Company (ÚSP), a key social security institution in interwar Czechoslovakia, became the body responsible for workers' social insurance and overseeing the activities of district sickness insurance offices across the country. In addition to stabilising the system, this change confirmed two distinctive features of social insurance in Czechoslovakia. On the one hand, there was partial organisational consolidation, as shown by the merger of the disability and old-age insurance responsibilities under the ÚSP. On the other hand, the system retained a corporate logic. Thus, social insurance for workers, miners, private civil servants and public employees existed side by side.<sup>20</sup> Their benefits varied, and there were doubts especially about the adequacy of the benefits covered by the workers' insurance scheme in which the largest number of

<sup>18</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Act No. 221/1924 Coll., on insurance of employees against sickness, disability and old age.

<sup>19</sup> Act No. 221/1924 Coll. did not apply to miners, public employees or private employees working in administrative roles. Vladislav Klumpar, *Sociální pojištění. Přehledný výklad o dosahu a významu zákona o pojištění zaměstnanců pro případ nemoci, invalidity a stáří a jeho nákladech s úplným textem zákona* (Prague 1925), 7. In parallel to this legislation, there was miners' insurance, pension insurance for private employees and accident insurance.

<sup>20</sup> For the organisational structure of social insurance, see Jaroslav Houser, *Vývoj sociální správy za předmnichovské republiky* (Prague 1968), 55f.



Year	Average old-age and disability pension [CSK/month]			Average wage [CSK/month]			Average pension as % of average wage		
	Private empl.	Miners	Workers	Private empl.	Miners	Workers	Private empl.	Miners	Workers
1930	596	226	97	1,358	930	478	43.9	23.4	20.3
1931	711	228	106	1,317	899	467	54.0	25.4	22.7
1932	768	231	109	1,283	800	443	59.9	28.9	24.6
1933	775	235	110	1,233	771	418	62.9	30.5	26.3
1934	766	234	139	1,217	796	408	62.9	29.4	34.1
1935	785	234	141	1,192	802	399	65.9	29.2	35.3
1936	787	234	141	1,183	843	405	66.5	27.8	34.8
1937	787	235	142	1,200	981	428	65.6	24.0	33.2

**Table 1.1** Average disability and old-age pensions and wages in the period 1930–7

Source: Ludmila Jeřábková and Miluše Salemanová, *Vývoj důchodového zabezpečení v ČSSR (1930–1956)* (Prague 1965), 43 [calculated in Czechoslovak crowns, hereafter CSK].

insured persons, namely two million workers, participated. By comparison, private employee pensioners were much better off, as [Table 1.1](#) demonstrates.<sup>21</sup> In particular, the third column shows the ratio of benefits in each type of old-age and disability pension scheme to average wages. Miners and workers remained far below even half of their average wage of the time.

The introduction of social security in Czechoslovakia was not without difficulties. As with economic issues, the conflicts were not primarily national but social in nature. As Christopher Boyer stressed:

In social conflicts, there was no front between nationalities. ... There were differences between various sectors rather than between the German economy on the one hand and the Czech economy on the other.<sup>22</sup>

This was true for public social insurance. There were three basic levels of controversy that often overlapped in debates about social insurance in interwar Czechoslovakia. Firstly, people needed to understand the mutual solidarity of the insured. This was a basic principle of how insurance worked, that is, one contributed to a fund from which benefits were paid to others. Secondly, experts

<sup>21</sup> Further details see Ladislav Niklíček, 'Čeští lékaři a povinné nemocenské pojištění v letech 1888–1938', *Moderní dějiny* 1 (1993), 69–97.

<sup>22</sup> Christoph Boyer, *Nationale Kontrahenten oder Partner? Studien zu den Beziehungen zwischen Tschechen und Deutschen in der Wirtschaft der ČSR (1918–1938)* (Munich 1999), 270; Václav Průcha (ed.), *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny Československa, 1918–1992*, Volume 1: *Období 1918–1945* (Brno 2004), 65.

and politicians were worried about the financial demands of the system. Thirdly, the tension came from the relationship between employees and employers, whose opinions on participation in the system and fulfilling of social insurance obligations differed. In particular, the issue of pensions paid for life after retirement was a field of conflict.

According to Emil Schönbaum, one of the most important founding fathers of the interwar welfare state and an eminent Czechoslovak mathematician and social insurance expert, pensions demonstrated the systemic shortcomings and 'immaturity' of the Czechoslovak population.<sup>23</sup> Schönbaum drew attention to the 'social and ethical ills' in society. He criticised both the practice where old-age pensions were granted to healthy state and public employees under the age of 65, and the perennial objection of the insured persons to social insurance – namely, that one only paid into the system and received nothing in return. The system seemed to be a financial burden for all parties involved: the state, employees and employers alike. Schönbaum blamed the ignorance of the basic mechanism of insured persons' solidarity on the lack of information among the population about the benefits of old-age and disability pensions. The financial system should have been based on the principle that each benefit had to be fully covered by insurance contributions. In practice, it meant an acceptable social insurance contribution rate of 4.5–5 per cent, but without the system providing, for example, unconditional widows' pensions. There was also public criticism of the retirement age, which was set at 65 years. From the point of view of a mathematician, it was adequate, but according to others, it was too high. The probability of living to that age at that time was about 50 per cent, so only one in two people could hope to enjoy retirement one day. By contrast, lowering the age limit to 55, as had been proposed by many, would have, according to Schönbaum, increased insurance companies' expenditures by a staggering quarter of a billion crowns per year.<sup>24</sup> For social insurance to be affordable for the national economy, it could not be generous. Schönbaum defended his social insurance calculation during a series of meetings held in 1927, facing criticism from experts and politicians from various interest groups and political parties. He acknowledged some of its shortcomings but considered the basic design, including the financial system, to be sound, beneficial and workable. Schönbaum's opinion carried weight. He was one of the most ardent promoters of social insurance and the principal architect of the Social Insurance Act of 1924.

While Czechoslovaks paid relatively little into the system, many, unaccustomed as they were to paying into a welfare system, were critical. The framers of

<sup>23</sup> Emil Schönbaum, 'O provádění sociálního pojištění u nás (Schůze 3. února 1927)', in *O provádění sociálního pojištění u nás. Rozhovor ve schůzích Sociálního ústavu ČSR ve dnech 3. a 24. února a 3. a 10. března 1927* (Prague 1927), 6.

<sup>24</sup> 'Schůze 3. února 1927', in *O provádění sociálního pojištění u nás*, 11.

the law adhered to the condition of an average 5 per cent limit on the amount of contributions paid by employers. In terms of the overall burden of public social insurance on the state budget, Czechoslovakia had a more balanced social insurance system than Germany or Austria. It resulted from the introduction of a more economical Ghent system – a design of unemployment benefits that transfers the obligation to pay the unemployed from the state to trade unions, which were only partly subsidised by the state – and smaller coverage in terms of the number of insured persons. However, it was difficult to break the vicious circle of criticism of the financial demands of social insurance, partly because of the higher burden on employers related to the introduction of workers' disability and old-age insurance. While workers' sickness and accident insurance was the flagship of Bismarck's social reforms and was soon introduced in the Habsburg Empire, lifetime pensions had not existed in Habsburg Austria. However, the acceptability of burdens is a very relative category and can perhaps only be concretised by means of international comparison of insurance quotas, that is, the participation rate. In this respect, the situation in Czechoslovakia was good because while the insurance quota made up 16.5 per cent of wages in Germany, 17.5 per cent in Austria and 14–15 per cent in the Polish industrial districts, it reached only 9.5–11.5 per cent of wages in Czechoslovakia.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, excessive costliness remained one of the main sticking points of social security in interwar Czechoslovakia. There were voices calling for a fundamental reduction of the cost of insurance and a strengthening of the state's influence on the investment strategy of the ÚSP. According to some participants at the 1927 conference, Czechoslovakia in the mid-1920s was not ready to build something so far-reaching as the system envisaged by the Social Insurance Act. The conflict of interests between employees and employers loomed here essentially *ex post* in terms of the adoption of the proposal. It is thus not accidental that it was formulated in 1927 by Jan Dubický, a member of the National Assembly for the Agrarian Party, whose constituency consisted primarily of farmers, in a debate about the parameters of the social insurance system.

I am aware that the workers were interested in seeing the law come into force as soon as possible. But it must be pointed out that social legislation must not be assessed merely on the basis of the one-sided perspective of class interests, but that its financial consequences must be examined if we are to avoid upheaval.<sup>26</sup>

According to Dubický, who had been the first deputy chairman of the ÚSP since 1926, the protracted post-First World War burdens and the constant effort to strengthen the national economy made conditions for the appropriate enforcement of the Social Insurance Act difficult. Although it had long been enacted and

<sup>25</sup> 'Schůze 24. února 1927', in *O provádění sociálního pojištění u nás*, 26.

<sup>26</sup> 'Schůze 24. února 1927', in *O provádění sociálního pojištění u nás*, 26.

was already coming into force at that time, its critics did not back off. They warned it would be essentially crippling for Czechoslovak industry. There were several ways to make it cheaper, from limiting the range of insured persons (specifically by excluding apprentices, wives of insured persons, etc.) to adjusting disability and old-age insurance benefits according to wages. The aim, according to the critics of the Act, was to reduce the insurance contributions paid by employers or even to abolish the companies' duty to contribute completely.

These discussions typically took place in Prague, and neither Slovaks nor Ruthenians were among the active participants. Still, the dispute over social insurance was essentially one of a social and class nature. If one compared the financial cost of workers' social insurance with the cost of administrative staff pensions, a marked difference between the two categories became apparent. In 1927, the state budget allocated over one billion crowns for pensioners' benefits, while the cost of workers' insurance had a hard ceiling of 700 million crowns.<sup>27</sup> Dubický criticised a 'one-sided perspective', but at the same time, he argued against accident insurance for workers from pretty much the same positions. Dubický thought it was uneconomical to have both accident and disability insurance simultaneously. Both compensated for injuries, but only the condition of disability, in his view, justified a claim for compensation from the insurance company.<sup>28</sup> Such arguments were unfortunate, as was the idea of altogether abolishing accident insurance, as the Assembly Member had suggested because it would only reignite disputes over compensation for workplace injuries.

Workers' accident insurance, unlike social insurance, also became a prime concern throughout the interwar period. Its reform, founded on the original draft from 1887, was a concern throughout the interwar period.<sup>29</sup> The consolidation of its administrators – the accident insurance companies in Prague, Brno and Bratislava – did not take place and accident insurance also remained separate from other branches of social insurance. First of all, it was characterised by the fact that it was insurance of enterprises, not of employees. It was limited to industrial plants and agricultural enterprises and to those working with machinery, where the insured person was protected during work and the journey directly from home to the enterprise and back.<sup>30</sup> The shortcomings of workers' accident insurance resulted mainly from its limited scope. Accident insurance was compulsory only for enterprises defined by law, and it did not cover all agricultural workers. Unfulfilled was the desire of people in the countryside to revise the list of

<sup>27</sup> 'Schůze 10. března 1927', in *O provádění sociálního pojištění u nás*, 86.

<sup>28</sup> 'Schůze 24. února 1927', in *O provádění sociálního pojištění u nás*, 38.

<sup>29</sup> Imperial Law Gazette for the Kingdoms and Lands represented in the Imperial Council, Act No. 1/1888 Coll. on insurance of workers in case of accident.

<sup>30</sup> For private versus workers' accident insurance, see Alfons Kliš, *Úrazové pojištění a jeho výhody* (Prague 1938). On the history of workers' accident insurance, see Antonín Hlavatý, *Úrazové pojištění dělnické (praktická příručka)* (Prague 1924).

industrial enterprises and traders subject to the insurance obligation and to fully extend the insurance coverage to agriculture and forestry.<sup>31</sup> Accident insurance in Czechoslovakia was not perfect with regard to its provisioning function, but its financial condition remained good even in times of economic crisis.<sup>32</sup> This was the case, among other reasons, because the number of accidents was directly proportional to the number of insured persons. The economic hardship affected accident insurance companies mainly in terms of the amount collected because employment fell during the Great Depression and with it also the number of insured persons and wages. However, accident insurance in terms of improving occupational safety as a kind of preventive protection continued to be a matter of public discussion. The reform intended to significantly reduce the number and severity of accidents, improve the medical care and aftercare system, and ensure adequate care for pensioners with a significant loss of their ability to work.<sup>33</sup>

The Great Depression hit two areas the hardest: the mining insurance and workers' sickness insurance schemes. Miners' insurance, with what was known as the 'fraternal treasury' (*bratrská pokladna*) – the oldest public insurance company – suffered from considerable instability in income and expenditure, which no interwar reform remedied.<sup>34</sup> Miners' remunerations remained disproportionately low throughout the interwar period and did not even reach average pre-First World War wages.<sup>35</sup> The trajectory of miners' insurance had already been precarious since the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918 but became disastrous at the time of the Great Depression. According to statistics of the Central Fraternal Treasury (*Ústřední bratrská pokladna*) from January 1933, there were ten pensioners for every fourteen insured miners.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the contributions paid by employers and miners were not sufficient to pay pensions, and the miners' insurance survived only thanks to repeated bailouts by the Czechoslovak state, which were not, however, undertaken by the government until 1935.

In the case of the workers' sickness insurance scheme, which was extended to more than 2.5 million persons by 1929 – as a consequence of the 1924 Act on Insurance of Employees – the situation was merely unfavourable at the time. Declining wages and rising sickness caused considerable complications during the crisis. People were fleeing unemployment by taking sick leave, and the structure

<sup>31</sup> *Stanovisko Úrazové pojišťovny dělnické pro Čechy v Praze k chystané reformě úrazového pojištění dělnického* (Prague 1926), 20–2.

<sup>32</sup> Emil Schönbaum, *Současný stav sociálního pojištění v Československu* (Prague 1934), 8.

<sup>33</sup> František Trnka, *K reformě úrazového pojištění dělnického. Námety pro novelisaci úrazového zákona, rozbor unifikace* (Prague 1932), 13.

<sup>34</sup> Miners' pensions did not increase even after the adoption of Act No. 242/1922 Coll., on insurance with miners' fraternal treasuries.

<sup>35</sup> For a detailed development, see Jaroslav Houser, *Vývoj hornického pojištění. K bojů našich horníků za kapitalismu* (Prague 1960).

<sup>36</sup> Schönbaum, *Současný stav sociálního pojištění*, 7.

of the legislation also posed a problem. While sickness benefits were around 50–60 per cent of the average wage in Germany, France, Italy and Poland, in Czechoslovakia they reached nearly 80 per cent because benefits were also paid for days off.<sup>37</sup> Vladislav Klumpar, the director of the ÚSP, explained this unfortunate situation by the low contribution rates, which had led to small and depleted reserves of the insurance company.<sup>38</sup> While these low rates were useful in austerity during the crisis, little was saved up during the economic boom of the 1920s. In the first half of the 1930s, Klumpar argued, the only way to improve the financial condition of health insurance companies was to enforce payment of contributions or raise health insurance as a less unpopular alternative to forced debt collection. In Vladislav Klumpar's opinion, the future reform was to modify the Social Insurance Act into a 'general social security measure', consciously less concerned with individual justice compared with redistribution.<sup>39</sup>

What was the social insurance reform, which failed to be implemented by the end of the First Republic, supposed to consist of? The results of a competition launched in 1931 by the National Economy and Social Affairs Department of the Masaryk Academy of Labour, a think-tank of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, provide a snapshot of the atmosphere of the time. The total burden laid on the public social insurance scheme amounted to over 3 billion Czechoslovak crowns (CSK) annually, and so the central question of the competition was formulated as: 'How to make social insurance cheaper, with special regard to workers' and accident insurance?' The title of the winning entry by Jan Janáček, auditor of the Central Union of Health Insurance Companies in Prague, was simple and to the point: 'Consolidate.'<sup>40</sup> Concentrating the various branches of social insurance and reducing the personnel and material overheads that incurred higher operating costs, thus making the whole system more economical, were ideas put forward not only by Janáček, but also by other participants in the competition. However, the debate over improving the existing branches of social insurance continued to avoid another glaring issue of the time – the danger of unemployment.

## Labour market and unemployment

If social security in Czechoslovakia had its limits, they lay in the risk of unemployment. The interwar state offered a contribution to unemployment benefits from

<sup>37</sup> Jakub Rákosník and Jiří Noha, *Kapitalismus na kolenou: Dopad hospodářské krize na evropskou společnost v letech 1929–1934* (Prague 2012), 179.

<sup>38</sup> Klumpar, *Sociální pojištění v době krise*, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Klumpar, *Sociální pojištění v době krise*, 12.

<sup>40</sup> *Jak zlevnit a zlepšit sociální pojištění se zvláštním zřetelem na pojištění dělnické a úrazové. (Soubor prací poctěných cenami v soutěži vypsané VI. odborem MAP roku 1931 na stejnojmenné téma)* (Prague 1932).

1921, but it did not really start paying into the fund until four years later.<sup>41</sup> Tenacious negotiations across political camps and interest groups made it possible to implement the Ghent system, which in Czechoslovakia was, in the words of Jakub Rákosník, 'that proverbial necessity made into a virtue'.<sup>42</sup> The state was obliged to pay unemployment benefits through trade union organisations, which it partially subsidised. Unemployment benefits could only be received by unionised workers, where union membership was conditional on an employment contract. At the same time, compulsory unemployment insurance was also being introduced by other European countries, but Czechoslovakia lacked reliable unemployment statistics and there were other arguments against the introduction of new compulsory insurance. Firstly, there was the assumption of a greater financial cost of administration, and secondly, there was resistance among employees in sectors with a lower risk of unemployment. Moreover, the general 'moral decline' of society which was widely believed to have followed the First World War was thought to have led to abuses of the system, which would have been challenging to control.<sup>43</sup>

Czechoslovakia experienced a double spike of unemployment: the first after the end of the First World War, caused by demobilisation and a change in the structure of industrial supply chains and a decline in the construction industry; and the second as a result of the Great Depression. During the first unemployment wave, the political establishment reacted by enacting state unemployment benefits, which were paid for a period of two months of unemployment, and for which only about half of the unemployed were eligible.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, they ranged between only CSK 0.60 and CSK 5 per day, which politicians justified on the grounds of limited resources and the fear of being seen as providing 'income without work'.<sup>45</sup>

The 1920s were marked by a search for a consensus on how to introduce unemployment benefits during an economic boom, but a decade later the situation changed profoundly. Unemployment became the most significant factor influencing the social situation of interwar Czechoslovakia. Although the Ghent system, heavily revised in 1930, was a relatively cheap form of providing for unemployment benefits, as welfare was covered by employees through their unions and the state only provided financial contributions, the situation was much more difficult for unionised employees.<sup>46</sup> According to Jaromír Nečas, a social democrat and the last

<sup>41</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Act No. 267/1921 Coll., on the state contribution towards unemployment benefits.

<sup>42</sup> Rákosník, *Odvracená tvář meziválečné prosperity*, 169.

<sup>43</sup> Rákosník, *Odvracená tvář meziválečné prosperity*, 169.

<sup>44</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Act No. 63/1918 Coll., on unemployment benefits.

<sup>45</sup> Průcha, *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny Československa*, 77.

<sup>46</sup> The main new feature introduced was the extension of the support period to twenty-six weeks and the adjustment of the amount of the state contribution, which was now three times the amount provided by the trade unions. Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Act No.

Minister of Social Welfare of the First Czechoslovak Republic, wage reductions due to cutbacks, malnutrition and health complications, and the resulting increased burden on the social insurance scheme, were interrelated issues. While in the case of short-term unemployment the greater burden was shifted to the health insurance companies, long-term unemployment, according to Nečas, induced the elderly population, who had fewer possibilities of ever finding a job again, to try and claim pension insurance benefits. The way out of this vicious circle, Nečas said, was a better system of registration of the unemployed.<sup>47</sup>

The problem was, however, that it was difficult to count and locate the unemployed. Czechoslovakia had public employment agencies (*zprostředkovatelny práce*), just as many other European countries did. Their development in the Bohemian lands and Slovakia began in the 1930s, while in Carpathian Ruthenia, the easternmost part of the country, the situation remained unsatisfactory until the dissolution of the First Czechoslovak Republic in 1938. The state depended on these institutions to count the unemployed. Still, their statistics did not record people who either did not apply for work at the agencies or were no longer entitled to unemployment benefits. The second means of keeping track of the unemployed was through the statistics on persons supported under the Ghent system. However, the data collected only captured roughly 70 per cent of the unemployed. Czechoslovakia was not far behind the European trend in this registration practice, but this did not lessen the impact of these gaps in records.<sup>48</sup>

The economic crisis hit different parts of the country with varying degrees of severity. The Ghent system operated with similarly varying degrees of effectiveness in the individual regions of Czechoslovakia. It worked best in industrial areas, primarily in the Bohemian lands, but became significantly less effective in Slovakia and even less so in Carpathian Ruthenia. Unemployment became one of the central issues causing disputes among the nationalities within Czechoslovakia, between Czechs and Germans and between Czechs and Slovaks, and Czechs and Ruthenians. The effects of unemployment in the Sudetenland border regions were attributed by right-wing radicals to deliberate oppression of the German minority. The critical comments made by the right-wing and left-wing populists represented by the German National Socialist Workers' Party (DNSAP) and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, respectively, sounded almost the same.<sup>49</sup> The causes of the crisis's effects lay elsewhere, in the economic and social structure of the

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74/1930 Coll., amending and supplementing some provisions of Act No. 267 (promulgated in the Collection of Laws and Regulations) of 19 July 1921, on the state contribution towards unemployment benefits. On the history of the Ghent system, see Jakub Rákosník, 'Gentský systém v období I. Československé republiky', *Časopis Národního muzea. Řada historická* 170 (2001), No. 3–4, 84–105.

<sup>47</sup> Jaromír Nečas, *O sociálním pojištění a jeho významu. Projev na sjezdu Ústředního svazu nemocných pojištěných dne 23. května 1937* (Prague 1937), 6.

<sup>48</sup> Rákosník, *Odvracená tvář meziválečné prosperity*.

<sup>49</sup> Rákosník, *Odvracená tvář meziválečné prosperity*, 338.



borderlands, in particular in the predominance of the industry most threatened by the economic downturn and in the strong representation of Germans among the working class. Nevertheless, the nationalist arguments were highly effective and provoked the creation of a German social programme based on national self-help. In November 1934, the Sudeten German Party, a successor to the DNSAP, then already co-financed by Nazi Germany, founded the Sudeten German People's Aid (*Sudetendeutsche Volkshilfe*), the equivalent of the Reich's Winter Relief of the German People (*Winterhilfswerk des Deutschen Volkes*). From December 1934 to March 1935, it raised nearly CSK 6 million in monetary donations and CSK 1.5 million in material goods, and it helped score important political points for the Sudeten German movement.<sup>50</sup>

Among unemployed persons, the most disadvantaged were 'over-aged' persons. If an individual was fired around the age of 50, it was not easy to get another job. Moreover, they lacked qualifications for work in dynamic industrial enterprises where companies preferred younger applicants. Thus, they often found themselves outside the system of state benefits. They did not meet the conditions for food aid, the strict criteria for disability pensions and the unconditional retirement age of 65 for old-age pensions, which left them in a situation of complete destitution. The issue of lowering the retirement age thus returned, but, as Minister of Social Welfare Jaromír Nečas pointed out, it would have been entirely financially unsustainable. If the age limit had been lowered to 60, Nečas estimated a 13 per cent increase in insurance contributions, and even then, he did not consider the amount of benefits sufficient to support a whole family.<sup>51</sup> The only way to help the most vulnerable people was to ensure poverty care was provided by their home municipalities. However, the municipalities were not in good shape financially either.

The economic crisis did not end efforts to improve the welfare system for those without work and resources.<sup>52</sup> On the contrary, the 1930s opened up debates on austerity and benefit cuts.<sup>53</sup> In this sense, the comprehensive defeat of the social democrats meant a reduction of welfare to one-third in some cases.<sup>54</sup> The system of state unemployment benefits was also losing its effectiveness in view of the decline in the number of people supported in proportion to the total number of unemployed reported. Other programmes and institutions of social welfare, therefore, played a decisive role. The second-largest item of expenditure in the state budget was food aid for those not covered by the Ghent system. However,

<sup>50</sup> Rákosník, *Odvracená tvář meziválečné prosperity*, 344.

<sup>51</sup> Jaromír Nečas, *Nezaměstnanost a podpůrná péče v Československu* (Prague 1938), 59.

<sup>52</sup> In aggregate to the government measures to combat the economic crisis, see Kárník, *České země v éře první republiky (1918–1938)*, Volume 2, 73f.

<sup>53</sup> Government regulation No. 161/1933 Coll., on temporary adjustment of the contribution towards unemployment benefits.

<sup>54</sup> Rákosník, *Odvracená tvář meziválečné prosperity*, 291.

resources were also secured from municipal budgets, fundraising events, lotteries and special municipal surcharges. The state relied to a large extent on the charity and self-help of the people, which made traditional charities virtually a part of the public social policy system during the interwar Czechoslovak Republic.

### **Health and public hygiene**

The area of health care was influenced not only by the modernising ethos of the Czechoslovak welfare state but later also by the unfortunate consequences of the Great Depression and high unemployment. The medical care system provided by health insurance companies under the sickness insurance scheme represented a solid platform for implementing public health care. However, in the 1930s, the health care of the unemployed and their family members proved problematic, as, over time, they were losing the opportunity to benefit from sickness insurance. Insurance companies could not perform miracles, and especially in combating social diseases such as tuberculosis, alcoholism and venereal illnesses, they could only act in a supporting role. In 1936, the daily expenditure of the sickness insurance companies, which the ÚSP supervised, amounted to more than CSK 1.5 million. Of this amount, approximately CSK 1 million was allocated to medical care, while the rest was for sickness insurance benefits.<sup>55</sup>

Public health care and its expansion were one of the central issues of the political debate. Interwar Czechoslovakia created a special government department for this purpose – the Ministry of Public Health and Physical Education. The Ministry of Health was thus freed from subordination to the Ministry of the Interior and existed in parallel with the Ministry of Social Welfare. However, there were significant differences between the two ministries. The Ministry of Social Welfare had a much larger budget, and the contrast between the cumbersome and philanthropically improvised Ministry of Public Health and the flexible and financially well-provisioned Ministry of Social Welfare was more than apparent.<sup>56</sup> Despite all this, the network of public health facilities was expanding. Whereas in 1905 there were eighty-five public and 101 private hospitals with 11,686 beds in total, by 1933 there were already 170 public hospitals with 38,859 beds, 204 private hospitals with an additional 13,720 beds, thirty tuberculosis sanatoriums, ninety infectious diseases hospitals and twenty-two mental asylums.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the sickness insurance companies had their own specialist clinics, surgeries, hospitals, sanatoriums, spas and bathhouses.

<sup>55</sup> Jaromír Nečas, *20 let sociální péče v Československé republice* (Prague 1938), 56.

<sup>56</sup> Jan K. Střítecký, *Zdravotní a populační vývoj československého obyvatelstva* (Prague 1971), 105.

<sup>57</sup> Niklíček, *Přehled dějin českého lékařství a zdravotnictví*, Volume 1, 29 and 54.

The instruments of social protection in a modern liberal state such as Czechoslovakia were thus mainly found in social insurance and in the field of curative care (healing) rather than prophylactic care (prevention). However, the shortcomings of public health care did not lie merely in this disproportion. Since the establishment of Czechoslovakia in 1918, there had been discussions about reforming the health care system or health care in general and incorporating the 'health police', an institution that had existed since the Enlightenment, and district doctors into the public health care system. Debates about the new organisation of care for children and young people, specifically the fight against infant mortality and protection against infectious diseases, especially tuberculosis, marked the need to modernise the existing system by adopting new concepts and working practices. This revised framework was to be provided by transferring the responsibilities of the health police from the municipalities to the state authorities.<sup>58</sup>

The supervision of public hygiene was to become the responsibility of a health staff consisting of a physician and other health workers at the district level. Their responsibilities included smallpox vaccination, treatment of the poor, medical supervision of workers, supervision of physical education, medical supervision of school children and health education. This practice, however, was never fully implemented because of the associated costs. It was not until a greatly reduced version was voted through the National Assembly two years later that the institution of state district doctors was established. Doctors performed their responsibilities with insufficient funding, so district doctors commonly also ran their own private surgeries.<sup>59</sup> The main consequence of this was insufficient compliance with their duties and the low effectiveness of district doctors in the area of general hygiene. It was the district and field doctors who were in contact with the population and exerted the most effective influence on the hygiene habits of the population. Social and health experts at the State Institute of Health, which was responsible for public hygiene, could hardly replace them in this role.

The overall health of the population in Czechoslovakia after the First World War was positively affected by public health care in certain regards. The number of deaths from infectious diseases was reduced, among other things due to the introduction of compulsory smallpox vaccination. At the same time, the first decade of the new republic saw an increase in vascular and heart disease.<sup>60</sup> While epidemic threats persisted in the eastern part of the country, especially in Carpathian Ruthenia, attention in the Bohemian lands was gradually shifting to social diseases.

<sup>58</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Act No. 332/1920 Coll., by which the state takes over the performance of health and police services.

<sup>59</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Act No. 236/1922 Coll., supplementing and partially implementing provisions of Act No. 332 Coll. of Laws and Reg. of 15 April 1920, by which the state assumes health policing responsibilities.

<sup>60</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Act No. 412/1919 Coll. on compulsory smallpox vaccination.

At the end of the 1920s, Hynek Pelc, a leading Czech physician and later director of the State Institute of Health, drew attention to these differences showing up on the map of Czechoslovakia.<sup>61</sup> Pelc, a professor of social medicine, a modern interdisciplinary field concerned with population health and the care for the health of society, viewed medicine in a social and economic context as a scientific system combining the knowledge of medicine and social sciences. Its scope was broad and included maternity care and a system of pregnancy clinics. Still, these were not state institutions but almost exclusively highly specialised centres and part of voluntary care. Voluntary organisations also underpinned youth care, which was structured additionally along nationality lines.

The main limitation of public health care, according to contemporary experts, was the lack of funding for social insurance. While the system was set up to provide all-around treatment, the individual items of medical care, that is, benefits in kind and services provided, including practitioners' fees, were inadequate, especially in the area of workers' insurance. 'It is a contradiction that is also unsustainable in the long term', Hynek Pelc pointed out. 'Democratic principles require that everyone is treated equally with regard to their basic human rights, which in today's view include health care.'<sup>62</sup> Egalitarianism in the sense of equal access to medical care and generous benefits was unrealistic in an era when the merit system was in force. The main reason for this was that social insurance was only just becoming a comprehensive social protection programme. The system still relied heavily on voluntary and charitable institutions operating in social health care. Only a part of the population benefitted from health and social protection through social insurance. In that situation, Eduard Břeský, associate professor of social medicine, argued in favour of insurance companies. If the public social insurance extended to all, he argued, it would become a 'national insurance' and, under these circumstances, insurance companies could be given specific responsibilities within the public health care system. Until then, there was nothing for which to criticise them.<sup>63</sup> National insurance was not within the means of the interwar state, complexly structured and coping with significant ethnic diversity.

Shortcomings were evident, for example, in the care of mothers and children. The social stratification of society and its geographical distribution caused large differences in access to this form of care. Conditions were most difficult in small towns and villages, where access to a doctor and health and sanitation conditions were often the worst and birth rates the highest. The unsatisfactory organisational state of family care had been known for a long time. It manifested in persistently high infant mortality and falling birth rates. It therefore pointed to the need to

<sup>61</sup> Pelc, *Zdravotní stav obyvatelstva Československé republiky*, 167.

<sup>62</sup> Pelc, *Zdravotní stav obyvatelstva Československé republiky*, 331.

<sup>63</sup> Břeský, *Boj proti sociálním chorobám a sociální pojištění* (Prague 1939), 9.

implement deeper systemic changes in family and childcare. In this context, the consequences of the Great Depression appeared much more complex. In addition to economic and social difficulties, research also indicated a general deterioration in the Czechoslovak population's health. The new programme proposal of the Ministry of Health published in 1937 defined both legislative and organisational tasks. Ludwig Czech, then Minister of Health and Chairman of the German Social Democratic Party in Czechoslovakia, presented its specific wording in his speech to the budget committee in November 1937. The correlation between the economic crisis and the health of the population had consequences in the long-term depopulation of the Bohemian lands and the health of children from the areas most affected by the downturn.<sup>64</sup>

Czech's programme is a remarkable milestone of political reflection on the social situation. His proposal envisaged a new legislative framework creating instruments to improve the health of the youth, conduct medical inspections in schools, and enhance social health care for mothers and children and youth in terms of social care and hygiene. One of the priorities of the new concept was rigorous prevention through counselling, intended to eliminate ignorance on the part of women and mothers and to improve antenatal and postnatal medical care. A woman would be expected to see a doctor and be examined at least three times before giving birth. Whether she did so was up to her. Ludwig Czech envisaged the reform of children's and maternity clinics, their organisational consolidation and a normative code of practice governing their activities. They had primarily been remedial up to that point, and their reach had been limited. In practice, these services varied in character (from medical surgeries to specialised centres open once a week) and visiting them was entirely voluntary.<sup>65</sup>

Czech's initiative was a response to several issues of the time. The main one was the virtually non-existent demographic policy of the Czechoslovak state, despite the endless debates about the 'nation's population decline', even though it was faced primarily by Czechs and Germans. Since the end of the 19th century, the number of births had been declining, but infant mortality had been reduced only slowly. Due to the above-average population growth in the eastern part of the country, increased health prevention was to become the solution for the undesirable demographic trend. Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia faced a much more dramatic health situation overall but at the same time significantly contributed to the national average population growth rate. The development looked ominous, which was noticed mainly by experts rather than political leaders. As František Pachner, a well-known obstetrician from Brno, Moravia, wrote in his essay *The Matter of Progeny – The Matter of National Existence*,

<sup>64</sup> Czech, *Public Health*.

<sup>65</sup> Czech, *Public Health*, 6.

published for the first time under the name of his colleague, physician Emilie Lukášová, in 1939:

On the whole, we can say that population growth will improve substantially and very quickly if we understand that our population programme needs less theory and more clear and concrete efforts : a couple of well-designed laws, a few good professional institutes, and some money. But money is not the most important factor in this struggle for the population. Even without it, thousands of the nation's children a year can be saved by immediate, programmatic legislation,

Pachner's Jewish background and pro-national rhetoric led the author to be cautious. In his treatise, he emphasised two basic methods of population policy: increasing the birth rate and reducing mortality. However, interwar Czechoslovakia was successful in neither of these areas, which has often been blamed on liberalism affecting the way of life and social norms.

In the 1930s there was no time to implement deeper strategic steps. Social insurance rarely supported prophylactic medicine, which was developing new forms of preventive social health care. Insurance did not yet cover periodic medical check-ups and insurance companies used their health resorts almost exclusively for after-treatment of illness. It was particularly the private initiative of preventive medicine advocates that contributed to efforts to care for populations at risk of communicable diseases and other social and health problems. Attempts to push through public health reform remained relevant almost exclusively in expert discussions among physicians, demographers and statisticians and in the agendas of political representatives. But so far it existed only on paper.

### **Beginnings of Nazi social policy in Germany**

The stage of consolidation of Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1938 is the only period of its existence when it is possible to trace its social programme in detail without the direct intervention of war measures. After the outbreak of the Second World War, it was already significantly influenced by its expansionist policies and war developments. Moreover, Germany's efforts to deal with the consequences of the Great Depression and the crisis of liberal democracies in the pre-1938 period may have later inspired reconstructionist visions in neighbouring conservative regimes, including Bohemian lands, frustrated by the failed reforms under the liberal democratic governments. Before turning to the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, let us briefly consider Germany and the main themes of its social policy, namely labour and employment, population growth, social insurance and social welfare, that did not go unnoticed by Czech politicians and social experts. Moreover, they may have been attractive to those whose appetite for reform was not far from authoritarian welfare.

From the Nazi seizure of power in January 1933 to the beginning of Germany's territorial expansion with the Anschluss of Austria in March 1938, the regime built its power base and tried to stabilise the internal situation in the country. As known from the historical works of Tim Mason, Detlev Peukert, Heinz Sünker and many others, social policy was intended to contribute to both these goals, particularly targeting the working class and creating a racially exclusive Volksgemeinschaft.<sup>66</sup> Germany had been the flagship of social progress since the Bismarck era, and the Weimar Republic did not abandon this social ethos either. There was much to build on. Even in terms of personal and structural changes in labour law, 1933 did not mark a sharp turn.<sup>67</sup> While the Nazis were vigorously critical of the Weimar regime, interwar Germany improved its social infrastructure; embarked on a generous housing construction programme, with the state co-financing 81 per cent of the 2.8 million new apartments built between 1919 and 1932; and expanded the number of participants in virtually all branches of social insurance.<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately, the effects of the Great Depression overshadowed these achievements. The peak of statistically recorded unemployment occurred in February 1932, when more than six million Germans were out of work. Unemployment insurance, which had only been introduced in October 1927, was unable to provide benefits to the unemployed because of deficits, and the ranks of the self-employed were dwindling.<sup>69</sup>

The consolidation of the new National Socialist regime primarily required the reduction of unemployment. Billions of Reichsmarks (RM) went into job creation, remilitarisation and employment programmes. From late 1933 to early 1934, the costs amounted to one-third of total government expenditure.<sup>70</sup> Although

<sup>66</sup> Tim Mason, *Social Policy in the Third Reich: The Working Class and the 'National Community'* (Oxford, New York 1997); Tim Mason and Jane Caplan, *Nazism, Fascism and the Working Class* (Cambridge 2011); Detlev Peukert, 'Zur Erforschung der Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich', in *Soziale Arbeit und Faschismus*, ed. Hans-Uwe Otto and Heinz Sünker (Frankfurt am Main 1989), 36–46; Heinz Sünker, 'Sozialpolitik und "Volkspflege" im Nationalsozialismus. Zur faschistischen Aufhebung von Wohlfahrtstaatlichkeit', *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte* 23 (1994), 79–92; Hans Günter Hockerts (ed.), *Drei Wege deutscher Sozialstaatlichkeit: NS-Diktatur, Bundesrepublik und DDR im Vergleich* (Munich 1998); Alexander Nützenadel (ed.), *Das Reichsarbeitsministerium im Nationalsozialismus: Verwaltung, Politik, Verbrechen* (Göttingen 2017).

<sup>67</sup> Elaborated in Rüdiger Hachtmann, 'Arbeitsverfassung', in *Drei Wege der Sozialstaatlichkeit: NS-Diktatur, Bundesrepublik und DDR im Vergleich*, ed. Hans Günter Hockerts (Munich 1998), 29.

<sup>68</sup> Between 1918 and 1929, sickness insurance covered 13 per cent more workers than at the end of the war (a total of 61 per cent by 1929), while in the same period the number of clients rose from 69 per cent to 74 per cent in the accident insurance scheme, and from 57 per cent to 69 per cent in the old-age insurance scheme. Hans Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, Volume 4: *Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten, 1914–1949* (Bonn 2009), 431–2.

<sup>69</sup> The authorities introduced compulsory old-age insurance for the self-employed in December 1938 by the German Handicraft Old-Age Insurance Act (*Gesetz über die Altersversorgung für das Deutsche Handwerk*, Reich Law Gazette (*Deutsches Reichsgesetzblatt*, RGBl.) I, 1938, p. 1900). A craftsman could be exempted from the insurance obligation only if he took out a life insurance policy.

<sup>70</sup> Mason, *Social Policy in the Third Reich*, 109.

3.5 million of the unemployed returned to work in 1934, only approximately 2.5 million of them gained permanent employment. The rest were placed as temporary agricultural labourers or sent to do hard labour in the mines.<sup>71</sup> All these successes, major and minor, were accompanied by intensive propaganda to further encourage the people's belief that the Nazi government would be successful. The Nazis' success was largely dependent on the regime's ability to get the country back on its feet after a severe economic slump and to provide people with social security by returning them to work.

One of the most widely publicised measures was the Unemployment Relief Act of June 1933.<sup>72</sup> It was particularly remarkable because it combined an employment programme with a programme to encourage marriage. Its purpose was to push women out of jobs in which they could easily be replaced by currently unemployed young men. Women were offered the alternative of staying at home as housewives and had to commit themselves to not becoming employed again. The aim of eliminating multi-income families had already been pursued by the governments of the Weimar Republic. The Nazi government, however, provided interest-free loans for newlyweds of up to RM 1,000 for setting up a household. This was not an insignificant amount as the average annual worker's wage at that time was RM 1,520.<sup>73</sup> However, only couples married after 3 June 1933 could apply for loans. Both spouses had to be ultimately 'healthy' with a 'good reputation', a holder of 'civil rights' and willing to engage politically for the Nazi 'nation-state' at all times. The ethno-racial language of the new legislation and the social practice it required was unmistakable. The considerable expenses for the newlywed loans were to be covered by what was referred to as 'marriage aid'. All unmarried persons were included in the programme, providing they received wages, salary or income from other sources. Depending on their income, they made a contribution to the Marriage Aid Fund of between 2 and 5 per cent of their pay. The only exception was individuals with a monthly income of less than RM 75.

The impact of this policy was ambiguous. Marriages increased, but at a slower rate than expected. The number of couples receiving aid rose from 33.3 per cent in 1933 to 51.4 per cent of all marriages in 1938, and as Michelle Mouton has pointed out, about half of all marriages still escaped the scrutiny of the Reich's eugenicists. Moreover, the birth rate among couples who received state aid only rose slowly, from 22.9 per cent in 1937 to 32 per cent in 1940.<sup>74</sup> The Unemployment Relief Act was the only legislation of its kind designed to address both of Germany's cardinal problems of the first half of the 1930s at once: unemployment and falling

<sup>71</sup> Mason, *Social Policy in the Third Reich*, 111.

<sup>72</sup> RGL., Part I, p. 323: Law to Reduce Unemployment of 1 June 1933.

<sup>73</sup> Michelle Mouton, *From Nurturing the Nation to Purifying the Volk: Weimar and Nazi Family Policy 1918-1945* (Cambridge 2007), 60.

<sup>74</sup> Mouton, *Nurturing the Nation*, 68.



birth rates. The programme for newlyweds continued even later during the war. Between 1937 and 1944, the total expenditure on marriage loans and child allowances was around RM 6.8 billion.<sup>75</sup>

The Ideological basis of the Unemployment Relief Act consisted of two basic arguments. Propaganda portrayed the Nazi programme as a way to secure the present and the future of the German nation and as a means to optimise the work performance of its people. The Nazis strategically placed ‘work’ (*Arbeit*) at the forefront of their efforts. In January 1934, they also gave it concrete form through one of their basic regulations, the Work Order Act (*Gesetz zur Ordnung der nationalen Arbeit*). It introduced an ‘enterprise community’ (*Betriebsgemeinschaft*) as a central legal and political term of the time and regulated relations between employers and employees and the ‘leader principle’ (*Führerprinzip*), a hierarchy of leaders prescribed at all levels of politics and society, into the organisational structure of German enterprises.<sup>76</sup>

The revalorisation of labour under the National Socialist regime had major implications. Alongside the work associated with various forms of violence, work became a goal towards which education was directed from childhood onwards and then one of the main compasses in adult life.<sup>77</sup> It also confirmed that the social programme henceforth primarily represented Nazi interests in the area of employment. Labour became the central symbol of Nazi social policy and remained so during the entire course of the Nazi hegemony in Europe. In 1934, the traditional May Day as a labour holiday transformed into ‘National Labour Day’, a German national holiday. This was a fitting commemoration of the destruction of the free German trade unions, or rather their reconsolidation along Nazi lines. The DAF, as Rüdiger Hachtmann has stressed, was both a political organisation on which the regime relied heavily and an umbrella of the entrepreneurial activities with its own business interests.<sup>78</sup> From the perspective of social policy, it was mainly an institution officially representing the interests of the working class. Not only was it concerned with the situation in the factories and the elimination of social conflicts, but it was also responsible for the equivalent of the Italian *Dopolavoro* – the German Strength Through Joy (*Kraft durch Freude*), a spectacular project through which the regime sent millions of German workers on holidays.<sup>79</sup>

The DAF, and specifically its Institute for Labour Science (*Arbeitswissenschaftliches Institut*), together with the expert circles concentrated

<sup>75</sup> Eckart Reidegeld, *Staatliche Sozialpolitik in Deutschland*, Part II: *Sozialpolitik in Demokratie und Diktatur 1919–1945* (Wiesbaden 2006), 381.

<sup>76</sup> RGBl. I, 1934, p. 45: Law on the Order of National Work of 20 January 1934.

<sup>77</sup> Elaborated in Marc Buggeln and Michal Wild (eds), *Arbeit im Nationalsozialismus* (Munich 2014).

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Rüdiger Hachtmann, *Das Wirtschaftsimperium Der Deutschen Arbeitsfront, 1933–1945* (Göttingen 2012).

<sup>79</sup> Daniela Liebscher, *Freude und Arbeit: Zur internationalen Freizeit- und Sozialpolitik des faschistischen Italien und des NS-Regimes* (Cologne 2009).

in the Reich Ministry of Labour, formed a platform for social expertise. It worked on its programme concept despite the ongoing war. Perhaps, therefore, a momentary detour from the period of consolidation is in order. When Robert Ley, the energetic leader of the DAF, presented his 'Protection of the German Nation' plan on 3 March 1939, he proposed an ambitious vision of a minimum monthly pension of RM 90, which he intended to fund with across-the-board social taxation. The estimated cost was around RM 6 billion, of which RM 5 billion was to be spent on old-age pensions alone. Ley came under heavy criticism for incorrectly calculating the revenues and costs, and his proposal was shelved.<sup>80</sup> The expert opinions of the Reich Ministry of Labour prevailed, but Ley's efforts to design post-war social reform did not stop. In the second half of the war, the four most important social policy goals of the DAF were refined. Ronald Smelser once drew attention to them and asked with justifiable interest: is it possible to attach the adjective 'modern' to these ultimately unfulfilled plans?<sup>81</sup>

The first goal of this programme sketch was full employment. It was to be achieved through 'labour mobilisation' accompanied by new organisational technologies (labour market management, vocational education, retraining on an ongoing basis, etc.). The second objective was 'fair wage', in other words implementing the principle of 'equal pay for equal work'. The third objective was the continuous improvement of the German workers' performance, which was to be supported by a range of social and health measures: from preventive medicine to the improvement of the housing situation to the organisation of workers' leisure time activities. The fourth objective was the creation of a complete social insurance system to serve all those who worked throughout their lives.<sup>82</sup> Historians usually accept both the modernist and anti-modernist foundations of National Socialism.<sup>83</sup> While social planning, especially the plans for comprehensive social insurance, is considered to represent the modernist aspects of Nazi rule, the latter was epitomised by the inherent racism of the Nazi ideology and the resulting mass murder of Jews in Europe.

Social insurance remained the main pillar of social security in Germany. Overall, there were seven branches of German social insurance: sickness and accident insurance and insurance against disability and old-age covered a large part of the working class from the late 1890s onwards.<sup>84</sup> In 1927, sickness and

<sup>80</sup> Alfred C. Mierzejewski, *A History of the German Public Pension System: Continuity amid Change* (London 2016), 113.

<sup>81</sup> Ronald Smelser, 'Die Sozialplanung der Deutschen Arbeitsfront', in *Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung*, ed. Michael Prinz and Rainer Zitelmann (Darmstadt 1991), 74.

<sup>82</sup> Smelser, 'Die Sozialplanung der Deutschen Arbeitsfront', 74.

<sup>83</sup> Detlev Peukert, the doyen of German historians studying National Socialism, described Nazism and the Holocaust as pathological forms of modernity. Detlev Peukert, *Volksgenossen und Gemeinschaftsfremde. Anpassung, Ausmerze und Aufbegehren unter dem Nationalsozialismus* (Cologne 1982).

<sup>84</sup> Specifically: sickness, disability and pension insurance, miners' insurance, accident insurance, unemployment insurance and old-age insurance for craftsmen.

disability insurance were consolidated in the miners' insurance, and at the same time, legislators passed unemployment insurance legislation. However, the latter was dramatically affected by the Great Depression. In the longer term, German social insurance has been very consistent. For instance, as Christoph Conrad has argued, National Socialists broke with individual elements of the old-age insurance, but provision and its institutional structure remained largely unaffected.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, as part of the deprivation of civil and social rights, Jews and other persecuted groups had their social security entitlements suspended. This was the most severe consequence of changes in social insurance during National Socialism in Germany and the Nazi Protectorate, as we will see in detail in [Chapter Two](#).

The National Socialists took over the administration of public social insurance at a time of high inflation when old-age, disability, widows' and orphans' pensions were in a poor state due to the loss of reserves. By contrast, accident and sickness insurance schemes were not seriously affected by the crisis. The first step taken by the Nazi government was, therefore, to bail out the pension insurance scheme and adjust its benefits.<sup>86</sup> Approximately RM 200 million per year in state funding was used. It was predicted that once full employment was achieved, some part of the unemployment insurance contribution fund would be transferred to the pension insurance scheme. The government took this step relatively early, in December 1937, under the Pension Insurance Reconstruction Act. Having claimed that unemployment had been eliminated and that the conditions had finally been achieved to permit improvement, the next stage of the reform was initiated.<sup>87</sup> Each year a quarter of the contributions were transferred from unemployment insurance to pension insurance.<sup>88</sup> In addition to providing funding for the pension insurance scheme, the authorities also increased the benefits.<sup>89</sup> With the exception of unemployment insurance, the entire Reich social insurance system was financially bolstered in 1937 and 1938.<sup>90</sup>

In parallel to these stabilisation measures, a major internal rebuilding of the Reich insurance companies took place. In July 1934, their former administrative bodies ceased to exist, and their rights and obligations were assumed by the head of the insurance company supported by his advisory board.<sup>91</sup> This introduced the 'leader principle' of organisation and the control over the decision-making

<sup>85</sup> Christoph Conrad, 'Alterssicherung', in *Drei Wege deutscher Sozialstaatlichkeit*, ed. H. G. Hockerts, 104.

<sup>86</sup> RGBl. I, 1933, p. 1039: Law on the Maintenance of the Efficiency of the Invalidity, Salaried Employees' and Miners' Insurance of 7 December 1933.

<sup>87</sup> RGBl. I, 1937, p. 1393: Law on the Expansion of Pension Insurance (Ausbaugesetz) of 21 December 1937.

<sup>88</sup> Karel Šrámek, *Sociální pojištění v Německu* (Prague 1939), 53.

<sup>89</sup> Johannes Frerich and Martin Frey, *Handbuch der Geschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland*, Volume 1: *Von der vorindustriellen Zeit bis zum Ende des Dritten Reiches* (Munich, Vienna 1996), 301.

<sup>90</sup> C. W. Guillebaud, *The Social Policy of Nazi Germany* (New York 1971), 93 (first published in 1941).

<sup>91</sup> RGBl. I, 1934, p. 577: Law on the Establishment of Social Insurance of 5 July 1934.

of the insurance companies' highest administrative bodies. The main purpose of the Social Insurance Reconstruction Act was to eliminate the fragmentation and complexity of the social insurance system and to increase the benefits paid. In the future, the Reich social insurance was to include sickness, accident, disability, workers' and miners' insurance.

A characteristic feature of Nazi social policy was the solidarity of the German people, which was most clearly represented in the system of social welfare organisation by the National Socialist People's Welfare (Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt, NSV). It was not a form of poor relief in the true sense of the word. The NSV was primarily involved in public social and health care, but it also had a strong social mobilisation potential. It expressed what the German DAF expert Richard Bargel once saw in German social policy as a whole: 'National Socialist social policy does not seek to provide a cure for those suffering from poverty, but to ensure that those who fulfil their obligations to the Volksgemeinschaft do not fall into poverty.'<sup>92</sup> The precondition for the elimination of individual poverty was admission to the national community, to which only the 'Aryan' Germans were eligible.

How did social policy in Germany evolve after the Nazi rise to power and how can these changes be characterised? According to Norbert Frei:

The social policy of the consolidated Nazi regime was not merely reactionary or rhetorical; it was more than a precisely calculated instrument of totalitarian manipulation. ... Indeed, it evolved into a substantial and partially even progressive social policy.<sup>93</sup>

It was above all a compensation for work well done and service rendered to the Nazi Volksgemeinschaft. While it declared its potentially universal applicability and its creators were eager to combat social ills and planned to improve social conditions, its basic (though not exclusive) criterion was the racial 'eligibility' of its clients participating in the redistribution of public resources. In the subsequent period, characterised by the expansion of Nazi power and the outbreak of the Second World War, attention partly shifted to the territory of former Austria and then to the Sudetenland, where the authorities sought to establish their own institutions and implement the instruments of the Reich's social policy. It never disappeared from the Nazi programme but was fundamentally affected by the ongoing war.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Richard Bargel, *Neue deutsche Sozialpolitik: Ein Bericht über Grundgedanken, Aufbau und Leistungen* (Berlin 1944), 8f.

<sup>93</sup> Norbert Frei, *Der Führerstaat: Nationalsozialistische Herrschaft 1933 bis 1945* (Munich 1987), 96.

<sup>94</sup> Ludwig Münz, 'Kriegsverpflichtete Sozialpolitik', *Monatshefte für NS-Sozialpolitik* 1940, 248–52.

## The Autumn Revolution and the Reconstruction of the State and Society

The Czech quest for a more profound social reform – in whatever form it may have taken – was not stopped by the changes on the political map of Europe in 1938 and 1939. The conclusion of the Munich Agreement between Germany, France, Great Britain and Italy on 29–30 September 1938, without the Czechoslovak foreign delegation being present, forced Czechoslovakia to cede its border territories immediately to Germany. The short life of the Second Republic, as Czechoslovakia was called between October 1938 and the beginning of the German occupation in mid-March 1939, transformed not only the relationship between Czechs and Slovaks (the federalisation of the Republic was set up for the first time in their history) but also intensified the search for a new direction. While the Slovaks declared an independent state and became a German satellite on 14 March 1939, the Czechs came under the ‘protection’ of neighbouring Nazi Germany when its army invaded the country a day later. Simultaneously, the Hungarian army incorporated Carpathian Ruthenia, after one day of its independence, into its territory. Although the war began a few months later, this was already the beginning of the struggle for the social and political future of the continent itself, as Mark Mazower has described it.<sup>1</sup>

The Germans put a lot of effort and violence into getting the Protectorate to develop in the direction they required. Shortly after the country’s occupation, arrests began according to pre-prepared lists. Social democrats, communists and public intellectuals were arrested and interrogated. However, this was only the beginning of the public and hidden violence that the Czechs faced during the following months and years. The police intervention against the demonstration on 28 October 1939 was, until then, the most visible violence against the Czech population. This official commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the

<sup>1</sup> Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century* (London 1999), ch. 5 on Hitler’s New Order, 1938–45, 141–84.

founding of the First Czechoslovak Republic turned into an anti-German demonstration, which was coordinated by the Czech resistance movement. The shooting of a Czech medical student, Jan Opletal, and his funeral in mid-November boosted the anti-German mood. In response to these events, German leaders travelled to Berlin to discuss the situation with Adolf Hitler. They decided on the 'Sonderaktion Prag 17. November 1939', which led to the arrest of 1,850 Czech university students, 1,200 of whom were sent to the Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg concentration camp, and nine of whom were executed.<sup>2</sup> From this point on, Czech universities were closed until the end of the Nazi occupation. The worst was yet to come. During the two periods of martial law – the first declared after the arrival of Reinhard Heydrich in Prague in September 1941, and the second after his assassination in May 1942 – the largest waves of terror against the Czech population took place. However, according to post-war statistics, there were 340,000 Czechoslovak victims of the Second World War, 78 per cent of whom were victims of the Shoah. Of the total, 8,500 people were executed, for which we can count mostly the victims of martial law in the Protectorate.<sup>3</sup> Here we can see that, apart from the Shoah, the National Socialists treated violence strategically. The priority was the calm area of Bohemia and Moravia, where the population would work undisturbed for the Nazi war industry. Still, the Czech population experienced more than the use of coercion to extract the highest possible work performance.

In the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, declared by Adolf Hitler on 16 March 1939 in Prague,<sup>4</sup> Czechs had some room for their own political representation as well as cultural and social self-realisation. Along with a Czech president and government, the entire state apparatus survived. Moreover, original Czech plays were performed in theatres, Czech-language daily newspapers and literature were published, and pilgrimages to the Říp Mountain, located in central Bohemia, one of the most significant symbols of Czech history, were organised. Historian Tomáš Pasák, one of the Czech promoters of the nationally oriented narrative of the Nazi Protectorate, regarded the rise of Czech nationalism during the occupation as society's defence mechanism, through which it vociferously resisted the forced Germanisation.<sup>5</sup> However, was the Nazi regime in the Protectorate really so shaky and ineffective as to allow such long-standing and open resistance?

<sup>2</sup> Jan Gebhart and Jak Kuklík, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české*, Volume 15a (Prague, Litomyšl 2007), 343.

<sup>3</sup> Specifically, there were 265,000 Shoah victims. The other 75,000 victims included 20,000 concentration camp and prison deaths, 15,000 to 19,000 deaths during and after the Slovak National Uprising, 8,500 executed, 8,000 deaths from armed clashes with the occupying forces, 6,800 fallen soldiers in the foreign army, 4,000 victims of (Allied) air raids, 3,000 dead forced labourers and 7,000 Roma. Pavel Škorpil, 'Probleme bei der Berechnung der tschechoslowakischen Todesopfer des nationalsozialistischen Deutschlands', in *Der Weg in die Katastrophe. Deutsch-tschechoslowakische Beziehungen 1938–1945*, ed. Detlef Brandes and Václav Kural (Essen 1994), 161–4.

<sup>4</sup> Officially announced in the 'Decree of the führer and Reich chancellor on the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia of 16 March 1939', published widely, for instance, in *Věstník nařízení Reichsprotektora in Böhmen und Mähren* 2 (1939), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Tomáš Pasák, *Pod ochranou říše* (Prague 1998).

This chapter will zoom in on the development of Czech nationalism, shaped in direct interaction with German and Nazi nationalism. Czechs and Germans had lived side by side in the Bohemian lands for hundreds of years, but the autumn of 1938 changed their mutual relationship. Once their paths began to diverge, it significantly affected the scope and shape of social welfare for national communities. The emerging institutions of national welfare were to serve their national communities exclusively and thus give tangible form to national and ethnic segregation in the Bohemian lands. My argument, in short, is as follows. At that time, the process of creating homogenised national communities in the Bohemian lands began, separating Czechs, Germans, Slovaks, Jews, Roma and other hitherto coexisting nationalities from each other. This not only brought about the concept of the ethno-national project in the form of the ideology of national community but also took an institutional form and fundamentally influenced the shape of social redistribution and the definition of entitlement to social provisions. The result was a transformation in understanding of the 'Czech nation' and society that later persisted into post-1945 Czechoslovakia.

This chapter focuses on the period of reconstruction of the state and society, depicted by contemporary observers as 'rebuilding' (přebudování) from an atomised society to a strong nation. It describes a shift from an interwar multinational state to the building of a national community, which was accompanied by a fundamental transformation in the understanding of the nation and its members. This process of reconstruction was started by what contemporary political leaders called the Autumn Revolution, which was considered to describe the short period from the abdication of President Edvard Beneš on 5 October 1938 to the adoption of the enabling laws by the Czechoslovak parliament in mid-December 1938.<sup>6</sup> The Autumn Revolution was not a revolution in the true sense of the word. Instead, it was a transformation, an adaptation or even construction of a politically, economically and socially disturbed state whose leaders could no longer run it. In this book, however, I understand the Autumn Revolution as a longer process because the reconstruction demonstrably continued into the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. During this time, interwar liberal democracy lost legitimacy in the eyes of the Czechoslovak public and a strong Czech anti-liberal movement sought to transform interwar Czechoslovakia's politics and society. The Autumn Revolution provided the impetus for political change and encouraged the strengthening and unification of the Czechs as an ethnic nation through a new state ideology of národní pospolitost. This term can be understood as the Czech analogue of the German Volksgemeinschaft (national community), although they were not mutually related. As the *Národní obnova* daily newspaper

<sup>6</sup> Jan Rataj, *O autoritativní stát. Ideologické proměny české politiky v druhé republice 1938–1939* (Prague 1997), 15.

wrote in December 1938: 'Only members of the nation will build the new state and work in the national field.'<sup>7</sup> The basic principle of *národní pospolitost* was the state's increased interest in the care of the 'Czech nation'.

The supporters of the Autumn Revolution promised a reliable and well-functioning state that would know how to take care of the nation. The ideology of *národní pospolitost* provided them with a tool to fulfil these promises. It was supposed to inspire a sense of national belonging and responsibility, reduce tensions within society and bring about the 'rebirth' of the 'Czech nation'. The Czechs had continuously encountered this rhetoric since the autumn of 1938. However, such appeals did not refer to the nation of 1918, when the liberal democratic conception of Czechoslovak society emerged, but rather to the nation of 1938, which had a national-ethnic and exclusionary profile. These twenty years shifted the vision of the nation significantly and set the stage for the division of society along national lines in the years to come.

The shift from society (*Gesellschaft*) to community (*Gemeinschaft*), as the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies defined the two forms of social coexistence at the end of the 19th century, is crucial here.<sup>8</sup> While society is an expression of modern capitalism, the community is a purely organic form that a human cannot create. In contrast to interwar Czechoslovakia, which was built on the pillars of liberal democracy and the cultural and political concept of Czechoslovakism, this was now a nation that construed itself in distinctly exclusivist terms through calls for national unity. The division of the Czechoslovak nation into individual national units and the abandonment of the unifying ideological framework of the interwar republic redefined the distribution of civil and social rights. This was not only a change of the system but to a large extent also a shift in the thinking of the political elites and the population. According to Michal Frankl and Miroslav Szabó, the interwar Czechoslovak political system was already 'characterised by a high level of (intra) national integration but a low level of political integration.'<sup>9</sup> It was, however, in the autumn of 1938 that significant manifestations of anti-Semitism appeared. The recognition granted to national minorities and the principle of equal rights,

<sup>7</sup> Josef Talacko, 'Jde o malou sociální revoluci', *Národní obnova* (3 December 1938), No. 48, 2.

<sup>8</sup> At the end of the 19th century, German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies defined two forms of social coexistence: *society* (*Gesellschaft*) and *community* (*Gemeinschaft*). Both forms are associated with specific property and power relations, characteristic mentalities and cultural patterns. According to Tönnies, the *community* exists in three recognisable forms: kinship, neighbourhood and friendship. The elementary unity of a community is defined by the boundaries of the space in which the community is situated. In *society* people live separately and rationally pursue their individual interests. Every society is based on a contract between its members. Its purpose is to join forces in order to achieve a common interest. The arrangement thus arises from particular distress or need. The establishment and pursuit of a common goal is the cement of society and all its social, political, economic and other connections. In this ideal, typical form, equal rights are assumed for all involved.

<sup>9</sup> Michal Frankl and Miroslav Szabó, *Budování státu bez antisemitismu? Násilí, diskurz loajality a vznik Československa* (Prague 2015), 308; Peter Bugge, 'Czech Democracy 1918–1938 – Paragon or Parody?', *Bohemia. Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der böhmischen Länder* 47 (2007), No. 1, 3–28.



as enshrined in the Czechoslovak Constitution of 1920, were disappearing and the ethnically exclusive concept of the nation was being reinforced.<sup>10</sup> The change consisted mainly in the redefinition of the nation and citizenship manifested in resolutions concerning the 'Jewish question' and the criminalisation of the Roma and Sinti. Citizens of Jewish background were thus first and foremost regarded as 'Jews', regardless of how much they identified as Czech nationals.

The basic historical concept described in this book is *národní pospolitost*. It was a contemporary term referring to the Czech community during the period of the Second Czechoslovak Republic, established after the withdrawal of the Czechoslovak borderlands under the Munich Agreement, and the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (October 1938–May 1945). In this text, I also treat it as an analytical category, helping to define the group of clients to whom the state was providing welfare. The *národní pospolitost* was a product of the reconstruction of the state and society and was related to specific thought patterns and political strategies. Archival sources show that it was highly responsive to external (foreign) and internal (ethno-national) threats to the 'Czech nation'. Czech political and social elites across the political spectrum became advocates of the Czech *národní pospolitost*, offering a sufficiently broad platform to justify the need for national unity. This is no coincidence, as Nathaniël Kunkeler has concluded in his analysis of the Dutch 'narrative of decline', towards which not only fascists but also liberal nationalists were inclined.<sup>11</sup> The Czech case points to even wider circles for whom the change of ideological order marked a turn towards reconstruction, which can be understood here as a synonym for 'rebirth', heavily researched by generic fascism scholarship.<sup>12</sup>

The appeal for national unity was one of the concomitant phenomena of the transformation of the European order, which began with the Anschluss of Austria at the latest and continued with the political changes resulting from the Munich Agreement. In the autumn of 1938, this internal process of state reconstruction could not have been instigated solely by external forces, although Czech historical memory likes to demonise the Munich Agreement of 1938 as a 'betrayal' of Czechoslovakia by its allies, especially France.<sup>13</sup> The Munich Agreement stood at the beginning of the disintegration of Czechoslovakia and became a powerful symbol of unacceptable appeasement policies towards aggressive imperialism. What followed was not 'peace for our time', as British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain confidently declared after his return from Munich, but further

<sup>10</sup> See the Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic, 29 January 1920, Title Six: Protection of national, religious and racial minorities.

<sup>11</sup> Nathaniël Kunkeler, 'Narratives of Decline in the Dutch National Socialist Movement, 1931–1945', *The Historical Journal* 61 (2018), No. 1, 225.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London 1993); Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism* (London 2007).

<sup>13</sup> A critical view is presented by Jan Tesař, *Mnichovský komplex. Jeho příčiny a důsledky* (Prague 2000).

Nazi expansion and the outbreak of the Second World War. However, there were also the efforts of domestic actors who responded to the new power balance in Europe and initiated a revision of the political system, the state ideology and the functional mechanisms within society. In their efforts, the národní pospolitost drew inspiration from other ideologies. Its closest and most accessible counterpart was German nationalism. By reducing the society of the Weimar Republic to the National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft, it formed a compelling template for a society-wide reconstruction in the context of self-preservation. Therefore, building a national-racial community was neither an exclusively Czech path nor an adopted thought platform.<sup>14</sup>

This chapter deals with the formation of the new Czech national ideology and the concept of the ‘Czech nation’ in the context of its development from the autumn of 1938 to the liberation of Bohemia and Moravia in the spring of 1945. I focus here on the sources of thought, ideological principles and the forms of their institutionalisation. The definition of the nation and national ideology was fundamentally linked to the new distribution of rights and duties of individual social and ethnic groups and gradually moved towards a visible form of authoritarian welfare. Within the authoritarian system and practices, it determined who was and was not a member of the ‘Czech nation’ and determined the extent of an individual’s participation in the social security system.

### Searching for the meaning of the ‘Revolution’

The succession of events after the Munich Agreement at the end of September 1938 was rapid. The territorial demands against Czechoslovakia raised by Poland and Hungary, affecting the districts in northern Moravia and the Czechoslovak–Hungarian borderlands, added to the overall territorial losses. The total loss of over 38 per cent of the territory and 36 per cent of the population – those living in Bohemia and Moravia – to neighbouring countries disrupted the country’s territorial integrity. Czecho-Slovakia’s economic efficiency was also lost, as 39.7 per cent of the larger industrial plants, with 42.8 per cent of all persons employed in industrial production, were located in the seized territory.<sup>15</sup>

All of that necessitated changes in the leadership of the Czechoslovak state. President Edvard Beneš, the personification of the Munich humiliation for many

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation: Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania* (Washington, Baltimore 2010); Detlef Lehnert (ed.), *Gemeinschaftsdenken in Europa. Das Gesellschaftskonzept ‘Volkshheim’ im Vergleich 1900–1938* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna, 2013); Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II* (Stanford 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Kuklík and Gebhart, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české*, Volume 15a, 18.

Czechs, abdicated his office on 5 October and emigrated to the United Kingdom, believing he was no longer welcome in his own country. Emil Hácha, president of the Supreme Administrative Court, was appointed in his place. On 1 December 1938, Rudolf Beran, leader of the Agrarian Party and a 'government of national unity' replaced general Jan Syrový with his interim government. Hence, the removal of the old political order was initiated by the Czechs themselves, before Germany began to occupy the country. A few weeks later, on 15 December 1938, the National Assembly passed the Enabling Act, which significantly strengthened the legislative powers of Beran's cabinet and of the president.<sup>16</sup> From this point onwards, the government could, subject to the president's approval, issue decrees with the force of law. The parliament did not meet again after passing this legislative act until after the end of the Second World War, on 28 October 1945.<sup>17</sup>

Although Jan Syrový did not remain at the head of the government for long, he initiated fundamental changes in the country. When Syrový presented the government's programme statement to the Czechoslovak parliament in mid-November 1938, he summarised the developments that had taken place in the autumn of 1938.

Twenty years ago, we built Czechoslovakia with the firm intention of creating a state of civil justice and cultural freedom. From the very beginning, we have endeavoured in this spirit and on the principles of complete tolerance to ensure peaceful national coexistence within our state community. However, our desire to achieve national reconciliation in this way has proved to be unworkable, since the world is now dominated by an idea of monolithic national wholes (*jednotlivé národní celky*).<sup>18</sup>

All Czech political currents, from the fascist movement to the left-wing democratic forces (except for the communists and the Zionists), agreed on the need to concentrate all forces in order to raise national self-esteem. Although the Autumn Revolution of 1938 is usually attributed to the traditionalist and integrally nationalist right, actors across the entire political spectrum found their place within it. The building of Czech 'national unity' did not begin until the appointment of the next government, which at its second meeting on 6 December 1938 discussed

<sup>16</sup> Constitutional Act No. 330/1938 Coll., on enabling changes of the constitution and constitutional laws of the Czecho-Slovak Republic and on extraordinary mandatory powers.

<sup>17</sup> Formally, President Emil Hácha dissolved both chambers of the National Assembly on the date of appointment of the National Partnership committee on 21 March 1939. After the end of the Second World War, the Czechoslovak parliament first met in the form of a unicameral Interim National Assembly. It had 300 members elected by national committees and administrative commissions at provincial meetings. For more details, see the Constitutional Decree of the President No. 47/1945 Coll., on the Interim National Assembly.

<sup>18</sup> NA, Presidency of the Council of Ministers Collection (PMR Coll.), Carton 4144, Folio 358: XIX. – 24–26 November 1938.

the drafting of regulation on the census of the Jewish population on the basis of religion.<sup>19</sup>

It was a revolution with a direction and a goal at that moment – non-violent yet clearly hostile towards certain sections of the population. The Autumn Revolution was anti-liberal in character and gradually radicalised in its form and demands. It drew its strength primarily from the prevailing mood in society. Prokop Drtina, a close collaborator of President Edvard Beneš and a personality strongly associated with the ‘old order’, described his personal experience by saying, ‘we often did not know whether people hated us or loathed us.’<sup>20</sup> Widely shared ideas about the Autumn Revolution were not filled with nostalgia for the liberal order, but with a desire for change, strength and national unity. The disillusioned people envisioned a new strong state and a leadership that would ensure the existence of a sovereign nation. From the perspective of 1938, efforts to build an interwar republic were entirely unsuccessful. The disgust and feelings of ‘national betrayal’ that Drtina described led to the destruction of interwar democracy. In practice, it manifested itself in three main demands: firstly, the revision of the First Republic’s party system by radically reducing it to just two political parties – the ruling right-wing National Unity Party and the centre-left National Labour Party forming a sort of ‘loyal opposition’; secondly, replacement of the elites who led the state, making room for a new political generation; and thirdly, the strengthening of ‘national unity’ through the control of selected social groups, especially refugees, Jews and the Roma. The process of reconstruction of state and society took place primarily in the area of state policy and national ideology, with visible effects on the social atmosphere and the everyday social interactions of the people.

Was the path that Czechoslovakia took exceptional? Certainly not. European historiography has paid considerable attention to the Vichy regime, which intended to carry out a ‘national revolution’ offering an alternative to the Third French Republic, whose seventy-year existence drew to an end in 1940. The slogan of ‘social order’ became fundamental to most ideological currents, even though the French ‘national revolution’ was rather a collection of often difficult-to-reconcile programme points. In practice, its basic pillars were integral Catholicism, Napoleonic centralism, greater concentration of capital and various forms of coercion. It cannot be overlooked that, like Pétain’s France, the post-Munich Agreement Czecho-Slovak Republic and the subsequent Nazi Protectorate of

<sup>19</sup> This was to be based mainly on the census data from 1921 and 1930. The proposal notes that for the purposes of the census of the Bohemian lands, a ‘Jew’ meant any individual who was a member of a Jewish religious society as of a certain date in the year 1918. Information was to be collected on the duration of their residence in Czechoslovakia as well as ‘sworn appraisal of the person’s property’. NA, PMR Coll., Carton 4145, Folio 93: XX. – 25–26 December 1938.

<sup>20</sup> Prokop Drtina, *Odpovědi na otázky historiků* (unpublished manuscript 1965). Cited from Václav Kural, *Místo společnosti konflikt! Češi a Němci ve Velkoněmecké říši a cesta k odsunu (1938–1945)* (Prague 1994), 26.

Bohemia and Moravia carried out in many respects a similar national programme of political and social reconstruction, as I refer to this process for the purposes of this analysis. Its distinctive features were its domestic personnel and ideological sources.

The crisis of the republic in the late 1930s had a much deeper impact than the mere reduction of the country's land area. The reconstruction quickly generated a mixture of questions and largely unresolved ideas about the ideological profile of the Second Republic, representing the new order. The various political movements did not attribute identical contents to it. However, they uniformly emphasised the need to consolidate social morale and the nation's unity after the years of perceived failed political leadership and social decline. The new order was supposed to lead the Czechs out of the internal political crisis. With some exceptions, however, there was no clear vision. A vaguely formulated consensus for change was the shared starting point for all parties involved. The conservative parties argued for Christian principles, the social democrats for rehabilitation through social justice. On what principles, then, should the new state be built?

In the autumn of 1938, the young generation associated with the former Agrarian Party published *How to Build a Second Republic*, a document representative of how the political right envisioned the new order. Among the central pillars of the programme for the reconstruction of the republic, the authors placed the národní pospolitost, social justice, corporatism and Christian morality.<sup>21</sup> Within the national-conservative political current, a youth organisation affiliated with the ruling National Unity Party made similarly radical statements. It called for public 'supervision' of immigrants of other nationalities and citizens deemed 'non-Aryan', whom the nation was to exclude from its midst, and articulated a public call for 'national purification'.<sup>22</sup>

The right-wing programme was characterised by both the principle of corporatism and an emphasis on Christianity, which contrasted with the otherwise strongly secular foundation of Czech society. In the 1930s and early 1940s, corporatism was a hotly discussed political concept, mainly in Catholic circles and among economic experts, as a socio-economic alternative to the liberal democratic model of the time. The Great Depression turned it into an alternative to the liberal and socialist political, economic and social order. The vision of a corporatist state was based on the idea that the state is an organism of which individual corporations, collective public organisations composed of persons performing the same social function, are a natural part. It aimed to decentralise the state and transfer its existing economic responsibilities to smaller units – corporations. Corporatism has remained one of the least clarified concepts in political thought

<sup>21</sup> František Kutnar, *Generace Brázdy*, ed. Josef Hanzal and Josef Tlapák (Prague 1992), 144.

<sup>22</sup> Jan Gebhart and Jak Kuklík, *Druhá republika 1938–1939. Svár demokracie a totality v politickém, společenském a kulturním životě* (Prague-Litomyšl 2004), 119.

to this day, but it nevertheless had its supporters among Czechs and Germans and constituted a remarkable attempt to find a 'Czech way' out of the crisis of state and society.<sup>23</sup> Bohumil Stašek, a Roman Catholic priest and politician, was a prominent advocate not only of corporatism but also of the re-Christianisation of the Bohemian lands at the time. For Stašek, who was prominently involved in spreading the ideas contained in the papal encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* of 1931, the situation in the autumn of 1938 was a manifestation of a moral vacuum that, in his view, required 'missionary and educational action' to be taken with respect to the 'Czech nation'.<sup>24</sup> Representatives of the Catholic Church, therefore, associated it with an attempt to carry out a re-Catholicisation of the Bohemian lands, coupled with a strengthening of Catholic circles in politics and public life. They relied primarily on corporatism and Catholic supremacy and called for a national ideology that would make it possible to exclude non-Catholics, socialists and, later, also Jews.<sup>25</sup> Czech voices called for a 'de-semitisation of the Slavs' and the rejection of Jewish and German refugees, as was the case among members of the Czechoslovak People's Party, identifying itself as a Christian Democratic Party, in the region of Slovácko in south-eastern Moravia.<sup>26</sup>

Technocrats also saw corporatism as a new and modern social template. The 'unnatural' class-based organisation of society was to be replaced by a 'natural' organisation according to corporate groups, such as agricultural, labour, military, business and scientific. Just as the family is the most natural unit of society and the state, the corporate group is the most natural unit in the field of economy, wrote Marko Weirich, an economist and sociologist close to the Catholic milieu, in 1940. For Weirich, belonging to the corporation and the family was the fundamental category of a functional state and society, which is why he devoted most of his work to them.<sup>27</sup> The new regime was to become 'the driving force for the greatest economic and cultural exertion of the Czech nation'; for him, the corporate group transcended traditional classes and their contradictions, as it brought together employees and employers. He assigned particular importance to the 'moral function of the corporations', which in his view were the bearers of corporates'

<sup>23</sup> On typologies and variants of corporatism see Rákosník and Noha, *Kapitalismus na kolenou*, 281f. On ideas of Czechoslovak corporatism in contemporary texts see Rudolf Gajda, *Stavovská demokracie: úvahy o mravní a hmotné stavbě státu: analýza zla: rozkladná sobectví: stavovský stát: usměrněná sobectví: potížení krise: praktický postup* (Prague 1933); Stanislav Berounský (ed.), *Stavovská myšlenka: I. sborník statí* (Prague 1936); Stanislav Berounský, *Střední stav v dnešní společnosti* (Prague 1940); Rudolf Malý, *Kříž nad Evropou, revoluce dvacátého století*, (Prague 1935); Bohumil Stašek, *Nový hospodářský řád křesťanský: zásady a obsah nového křesťanského hospodářského řádu* (Prague 1937); Marko Weirich, *Základy stavovství* (Prague 1940); Otakar Sulík, *Stavovské zřízení? Objasnění a kritika korporatismu* (Prague 1936).

<sup>24</sup> Jaroslav Šebek, *Za boha, národ, pořádek* (Prague 2016), 250.

<sup>25</sup> Šebek, *Za boha, národ, pořádek*, 402.

<sup>26</sup> Šebek, *Za boha, národ, pořádek*, 404.

<sup>27</sup> Marko Weirich, *Mzda a rodina. O takzvané rodinné mzdě* (Prague 1938); Marko Weirich, *O českou kolébku* (Prague 1940); Weirich, *Základy stavovství*.

honour and contributed to the strengthening of human society. Therefore, it was not enough to 'reform the regime'; it was also necessary to 'reform a human being'.<sup>28</sup>

The political left was at a crossroads in terms of its programme. The Social Democrats first sought a middle way in the form of a programme consolidation of left-wing parties and trade unions. Their potential coalition partner, the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party, a democratic political project whose roots go back to the 19th century, was diverse in terms of opinion.<sup>29</sup> It confined itself to a declaration of 'sincere, loyal and truly national work of all national forces', which was to lead 'to a new life, to national renewal'.<sup>30</sup> The only coherent vision from the political left was delivered by Josef Macek, a social democratic politician, economist and social policy theorist. Macek foresaw the profound structural changes necessitated by the moral crisis already unleashed by the 1918 revolution. However, as he repeatedly argued in the journal *Naše doba*, the dramatic events of twenty years later provided an opportunity to 'reanimate our nation again' and 'resurrect its spiritual, especially moral, strength'. When, in late 1938 and early 1939, he came to terms with the failure of the interwar republic, he blamed it on the preference for personal gain and hobbies, since 'the awareness of obligations had disappeared from people's minds'.<sup>31</sup> Macek was committed to democratic socialism, yet he did not consider work for all for adequate remuneration to be entirely removed from the ideals of the DAF's social planning, which promised full employment and adequate pay for work.<sup>32</sup> Influenced by the thoughts of Hendrik de Man, a leading socialist theoretician who became a close collaborator of the Nazis in occupied Belgium, Macek's interwar critique of Marxism and his search for a path of humanitarian socialism and just remuneration may have already seemed a path that idealistically directed him towards a belief in the Autumn Revolution in the

<sup>28</sup> Weirich, *Základy stavovství*, 60.

<sup>29</sup> The name of the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party can be misleading and easily confused with the German NSDAP. The Czechoslovak National Socialist Party started forming in the 1890s in response to the distance of Social Democrats from Czech national interests, expressed by the so-called Czech state law in the Habsburg Empire. The party combined reformist socialism with national radicalism and anti-Austrian anti-militarism, which is why it was persecuted during the First World War. After establishing Czechoslovakia in 1918, it adopted the name Czechoslovak Socialist Party, but in 1926 it adopted a new name – the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party. The National Socialists were the mainstay of the democratic republic and belonged to the so-called Castle Party, supporting President Masaryk. In 1926–35, Edvard Beneš, the second president of Czechoslovakia, acted as vice-president of the National Socialist Party. The post-Munich Second Czechoslovak Republic brought about a fundamental split in the party. Some members became involved in the National Unity Party, others in the National Labour Party.

<sup>30</sup> Jan Kuklík, *Sociální demokraté ve druhé republice* (Prague 1992), 31.

<sup>31</sup> Josef Macek, 'Budování státu a zvedání národa', *Naše doba. Revue pro věd, umění a život sociální* (December 1938), 68 and 66.

<sup>32</sup> See Ronald Smelser, 'Die Sozialplanung der Deutschen Arbeitsfront', in *Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung*, ed. Michael Prinz and Rainer Zitelmann (Darmstadt 1991), 74.

late 1930s, into which he could project his own ideas about its social character.<sup>33</sup> Likening this process to the German revolution might have sounded appealing to the democratic left. The reconstruction of the state and society in the spirit of the Autumn Revolution was to entail a transformation of not only the party and political system but above all the conception of the nation and the scope of the state's welfare services. Solidarity and self-help across the community as an inherent part of the reconstruction process was attractive after years of economic crisis and high unemployment. The social redistribution in terms of taxation, welfare benefits or other forms of assistance that Macek was primarily concerned with required a social consensus on the common wealth and the corresponding contribution by individuals to building social equality among all citizens. The publicly promised social stabilisation and improvement of social conditions lent národní pospolitost considerable social appeal and political potential.<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, the Autumn Revolution did not lead to the creation of a new democratic programme. It was rather a process of gradually establishing an authoritarian rule. A very prescient vision of it was provided by the Czech intellectual, communist journalist and later leading Nazi collaborator Emanuel Vajtauer, in his essay *What Next after Munich?* In the text, completed in December 1938, he characterised a new idea of the state based on a two-fold programme: a 'defence programme' and a 'national dynamism programme'. Vajtauer assumed that the new European order was based on the principle of 'enclosed national wholes' (*uzavřené národní celky*), which would provide room for a sufficiently defensive and creative ideology of each committed nation.<sup>35</sup> The 'Czech nation' was to work on a new national idea that would strengthen and unify society for self-preservation purposes. Vajtauer's 'enclosed national wholes' were not the fulfilment of Nazi plans for the Germanisation of the Bohemian lands, which Germany attempted to implement despite the national character of European states. The identity of nations was to be preserved, its direction and character determined by the dynamics of German nationalism.

After twenty years, we are turning into a purely national state. ... We are in a situation where ideas are dissolving like spring fog and instinct, above all the raw, unadulterated instinct of national self-preservation, is emerging in their place. The first and the ultimate law of the new Germany is the nation and its interest. Whether we want it or not, the nation and its interest will be the most sacred commandment for us in this position. All our tasks will have to be based on the sacred self-interest of the nation.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> For programme debates inside the Social Democratic Party see Martin Polášek, *Revizionisté, progresivisté a tradicionalisté. Programové debaty v československé sociální demokracii v letech 1924–1938* (Prague, Brno 2013), 138–45.

<sup>34</sup> Macek, 'Budování státu a zvedání národa', 66.

<sup>35</sup> Emanuel Vajtauer, *Jak po Mnichovu. Můžeme jít s Německem?* (Prague 1939), 22 and 88.

<sup>36</sup> Vajtauer, *Jak po Mnichovu*, 22.



With the new 'purely national state', the chapter of the interwar project of the Czechoslovak political nation finally came to an end. While the ideal of a political state-nation was never realised in the First Republic, not only Czechs and Slovaks but also members of the German, Polish, Hungarian and Jewish communities could participate in it.<sup>37</sup> With the Autumn Revolution, the new Czech national identity, mirrored in *národní pospolitost*, demonstrably lost this inclusive character altogether.

The emphasis on 'national unity' and its moral reformation, as seen in all contemporary political currents, bore the hallmarks of ethno-nationalism. This brought a new understanding of the nation and ethnic minorities. The most pronounced dividing line was drawn between the Jewish and the majority non-Jewish Czech population. In the programme statement of the Czecho-Slovak government of 13 December 1938, Prime Minister Rudolf Beran made sure to note that 'the Jewish question will be addressed', adding that the state 'will not be hostile' to Jews with 'a positive attitude towards the needs of the state'.<sup>38</sup> Observing and sensitively judging the actions of Jews contrasted markedly with other programme goals. Beran called for a 'healthy and strong people' whose demands and needs were to be met by the state 'from the perspective of Czecho-Slovak citizens'.<sup>39</sup> More detailed elaboration of the 'Jewish question', this time from a purely racial-biological perspective, was undertaken by the Commission for Racial Issues of the medical section of the National Unity Party.<sup>40</sup> From January 1939 onwards, the anti-Jewish mood was systematically reflected in various measures taken by the government and other state bodies. The Czecho-Slovak authorities proceeded towards a 'concentration of national forces' and open intolerance towards refugees, especially those with a Jewish background.<sup>41</sup> Emerging radical nationalism, as John Connelly has noted, desired the Jews' disappearance. What was new was not the discrimination that Jews faced, but the terror that accompanied it.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup> For the debate on the concept of the nation in interwar Czechoslovakia see Jaroslav Kučera, 'Politický či přirozený národ? K pojetí národa v československém právním řádu meziválečného období', *Český časopis historický* 99 (2001), No. 3, 548–68; Eva Broklová, 'Politický nebo etnický národ?', *Český časopis historický* 100 (2002), No. 2, 379–94. More comprehensively on this subject in Hudek, Kopeček and Mervart, *Czechoslovakism*.

<sup>38</sup> Government's programme statement of 13 December 1938, p. 6, available at <https://www.vlada.cz/assets/clenove-vlady/historie-minulych-vlad/prehled-vlad-cr/1938-1939-csr/rudolf-beran/ppv-1938-1939-beran.pdf> (14 March 2022).

<sup>39</sup> Government's programme statement of 13 December 1938, p. 6.

<sup>40</sup> Gebhart and Kuklík, *Druhá republika*, 216.

<sup>41</sup> These were particularly two government decrees of 27 January 1939, which supplemented the regulations on the residence of foreign emigrants and on the examination of the Czecho-Slovak citizenship of certain persons. Inspiration from Nazi Germany can also be found elsewhere. Exclusion of women from the labour force as part of measures to alleviate unemployment (adopted by the political representation of Czecho-Slovakia in the form of Government Decree No. 379/1938 Coll.).

<sup>42</sup> John Connelly, *From Peoples into Nations: A History of Eastern Europe* (Princeton, Oxford 2020), 469.

The distinct and security-sensitive military environment provides an interesting insight into the new practice of distinguishing between fellow nationals and foreigners. In the Ministry of National Defence, a debate began in the autumn of 1938 about how to deal with the requests of Czechoslovak officers and sergeants to change their 'nationality' as indicated in their personal documents. Virtually all requests the ministry recorded were for registration of individuals as Czechs. This was prompted by the Treaty between Czechoslovakia and Germany on Citizenship of 20 November 1938, which regulated the nationality of citizens living in the ceded Czechoslovak territory.<sup>43</sup> The treaty served primarily to select reliable citizens of German nationality who were to strengthen the Nazi Volksgemeinschaft. As a result, the ministry in Prague began to receive requests for the revision of old nationality records, whose origin was often dubious. Some of the petitioners may have been opportunistic; others simply inherited their nationality from their parents and had not felt the need to consider formal change until the autumn of 1938, even though they showed all the 'objective' signs of being Czech. However, the ministry was directed to take the position that registered nationality was unchangeable and was no longer guided by the 'free choice' of an individual; on the contrary, their 'outward characteristics' were to be considered. The only cases where a review was allowed concerned the need to distinguish between Czech and Slovak nationality where previously there had only been the Czechoslovak one. Various opinions emerged among the ministry's officials, ranging from those consistently in favour of the orthodox requirements inspired by the German model to benevolence or even fantastic notions of a possible future reunification of the Czech and Slovak nations into one.<sup>44</sup> This was an expected outcome of the autumn developments, reflecting the first-ever formally recognised division into Czech and Slovak parts of the country, and thus the distinction between Czechs and Slovaks. The Second Republic began to rigorously specify who belonged to the state nation and who did not, and to revise the boundaries between the different national communities. Moreover, the process of unification of the nation overlapped with the formation of an exclusivist community based on the criterion of national and racial belonging.

Despite the growing exclusivity in the concept of the nation that we would ascribe primarily to fascist circles, the Czech fascist movement never became a dominant political force and remained fragmented and marginal at best. It was mainly the old, previously democratic elites who put reconstruction of the state and society into practice. Nevertheless, the fascists came up with their own

<sup>43</sup> For more details, see Collection of laws and regulations of the Czechoslovak State, 300/1938 Coll. Agreement between the Czecho-Slovak Republic and the German Reich on State citizenship and option rights.

<sup>44</sup> Military Central Archive – Military Historical Archive (henceforth VUA-VHA), Ministry of National Defence – presidium Coll. (henceforth MNO Coll.), Folio 57 1/4, Carton 12404.

vision of a Czech národní pospolitost. They regarded the organic grouping of all members of the 'Czech nation' as the only possible entity capable of eliminating the existing internal contradictions. The shared ideology was to be Czech national socialism based on the German model.<sup>45</sup> A specific feature of this far-right notion was the concept of a 'Slavic community', supposedly a similarly integral whole as the Volksgemeinschaft of the German-speaking peoples. It was supposed to adopt from the German national community its characteristic cohesion and the racial principle in the form of 'Czech Aryanism'.<sup>46</sup> The principles of building a firm community, as envisioned by the Czech fascists, were continuously presented to the Czech audience in the form of public appeals and proclamations. The Czech community, built by derivation from the Volksgemeinschaft but integrated into the greater Slavic community, was to be free from foreign influences from the West, naturally except for Germany.<sup>47</sup>

If we take a closer look, it is difficult to consistently distinguish between members of fascist parties and non-fascist voices connected to the Autumn Revolution. Some of the actors, originally from the democratic camp, teetered on the edge of cooperation with the occupying power. However, the reconstruction of state and society was not exclusively associated with fascist ideas. It was based on a society-wide consensus for change, which was supported by the formation of two political entities that were established by reducing political partisanship and that mutually balanced each other out. It was not a nostalgia for the First Republic's value system, but a nostalgia for an independent republic free from the interference of the European powers, which aroused feelings of dissatisfaction and uncertainty about the present and the near future. This was an opinion to which actors with different political views could subscribe. The notion that society would remain committed solely to the ideals of interwar democracy and humanism even in the period of the Second Republic and during the first months of the Nazi occupation, regardless of the unfavourable power constellation in Europe, was unsustainable. Post-Munich Czecho-Slovakia implemented the concept of 'authoritarian democracy', which was demonstrably more authoritarian and racist than democratic. The inclusion of the 'Jewish question' on the government's agenda in the autumn of 1938 may have been partly lip service to German pressure, but at the same time – and more importantly – it was a response to a demand existing among the Czech public and right-wing political parties.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Význam národní pospolitosti, *Árijský boj: Ústřední list Protizidovské ligy*, 19 October 1940, 4.

<sup>46</sup> Jan Rataj, 'Návrat a nástup. Český systémový koncept krajně pravicového řádu za druhé republiky', *Politologická revue* 1 (2006), No. 1, 54.

<sup>47</sup> Rataj, *O autoritativní stát*, 96.

<sup>48</sup> During the Second Republic, anti-Jewish and anti-refugee legislative measures were prepared. Miroslav Kárný, *Konečné řešení. Genocida českých židů v německé protektorátní politice* (Prague 1991), 23.



**Figure 2.1** Poster, 'Welcome in Bohemia and Moravia.' This impressive display of national pride appeared in black and white in both German and Czech in the magazine *Pestrý svět* (Colourful world) in November 1940. With the Czech headline 'the homeland is calling ... travel home,' it anticipated the strategy of tourism policy in the Protectorate. Source: Military Central Archive – Military Historical Archive, Prague, Poster Collection 1939–45.

The departure of Jews from public institutions and Jewish emigration as a form of ‘cleansing’ of public space and society in the Bohemian lands suited the demand for their national and racial homogenisation.

### **The birth of a concept, the formation of an ideology**

The central term of the reconstruction process – *národní pospolitost* – deserves special attention. There was no significant history behind it and therefore, in principle, it remained a discursively vague concept. The only historical contextualisation can be found in the semantically synonymous *národní souručenství* (national partnership), which referred to the only Czech political entity allowed during the Protectorate period. The meaning of the concepts of *souručenství* (partnership) and *pospolitost* (community) is linked to the expression of unity on the basis of common interests and responsibility, a shared consciousness of belonging together and mutuality of opinion.<sup>49</sup> They are characterised by their dual function – emotional and material – which often overlapped in practice during the occupation. In legal terms, *pospolitost* denoted the joint use of property or the sharing of space, specifying competence on the basis of material or immaterial forms of belonging. It primarily applied to a particular space. This is also how the later reduction of the *národní pospolitost* to include only the population living in Bohemia and Moravia, where it was tied to a specific space and land, can be understood. *Souručenství*, meanwhile, was primarily an emotional bond, or ties based on a harmony of ideas, and this meaning was transferred into political practice on two levels.

The concept of *národní souručenství* first appeared during the First World War, in 1915/16, when the Bohemian lands were part of Austria-Hungary. It denoted a tentative political project consisting of the unification of Czech political parties, which was ultimately never realised. It was preceded by negotiations conducted in parallel to the emerging programme platform on the basis of national interest, which was conceived by the Czech national-liberal politician František Fiedler and the social democrat Bohumír Šmeral. Its preparation, in which other influential Czech politicians from across the political spectrum participated from the end of September 1915, related to the central category of the nation and belonging to it. The joint programme signed on 15 November 1915 affirmed a coordinated approach in defending Czech national interests and a certain ‘liberty’ as concerned matters of the estates and class. According to the historian Ivan Šedivý, this act demonstrated very well the ‘politics of “opportunistic” activism’ that was created by a circle of political representatives of a more or less

<sup>49</sup> Vocabulary of standard Czech language, <http://prirucka.ujc.cas.cz/?slovo=souru%C4%8Denstv%C3%AD> (15 March 2022). See ‘Souručenství’, in *Příruční slovník jazyka českého*, Part 5 (Prague 1948–51), 519; *pospolitost*, in *Příruční slovník jazyka českého*, Part 4/1 (Prague 1941–3), 792.

pro-Austrian inclination.<sup>50</sup> However, the next step towards the de facto unification of political parties was not so successful. The dissolution of their own party identity in a single political formation did not suit several of the parties involved, including the Social Democrats and the representatives of the Czech domestic resistance acting under the banner of Maffia (*Mafie*).<sup>51</sup> The real possibility of unification was there only as it concerned the bourgeois parties. It was encouraged by a communiqué published on 1 January 1916 calling for 'national partnership and a common expression of the national will', as the national-liberal politician Zdeněk Tobolka noted in his diary.<sup>52</sup> The attempts to concentrate political forces on the basis of the national partnership were thus clearly not taking place within the paradigmatic framework of state-building and were not an act of resistance in the sense of striving for the independence of the Bohemian lands. Rather, they were a defence against Germanisation and the assertion of a national programme within the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

In March 1939, after years of absence from the public space, Národní souručenství (National Partnership) as an institution was established for the first time in Czech history. The historiography has never described any connection with the project that was considered in the autumn of 1915, yet some inspiration can be assumed. The everyday political life of the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was probably connected with nothing more strongly than with constant reminiscences of the First World War. The memories had a negative but, from the Czech point of view, also a positive meaning: hunger was expected as during the First World War, as was the economic exhaustion of Germany as in 1918. The constant presence of such thoughts was reflected by the reports submitted by the German security services operating in the Nazi Protectorate (Sicherheitsdienst). It can also be shown from the same source that the Germans were consistently trying to avoid any comparisons with the First World War. However, even if they had been recognised in the case of National Partnership, they might not have been interpreted as negative. Fiedler's initiative in the autumn of 1915 had a national and opportunistically activist dimension.

The ideology of the národní pospolitost was in the process of being formed, or rather constructed, during the occupation as a form of sub-state nationalism loyal to the Reich.<sup>53</sup> From a broader regional context, národní pospolitost can be interpreted as an authentically Czech response to the ideology of National Socialism and the construction of social order in the form of Volksgemeinschaft, represented and promoted in Europe by Nazi Germany. In reinforcing Czech and German nationalism, the Third Reich remained the basic frame of reference,

<sup>50</sup> Ivan Šedivý, *Češi, české země a Velká válka 1914–1918* (Prague 2014), 185.

<sup>51</sup> Šedivý, *Češi, české země a Velká válka*, 187.

<sup>52</sup> Zdeněk Václav Tobolka, *Můj deník z první světové války* (Prague 2008), 145.

<sup>53</sup> The term 'Reich-Loyal Czech Nationalism' was first used by Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*, 232.

especially after the establishment of the Protectorate. There was never a mutual identification between the two communities. However, the similarity of motives, terms and accents suggests a certain consistency of thought and social practice in which both terms were used. At this point, therefore, I will first outline the historical genesis and historiographical grounding of German *Volksgemeinschaft* and then attempt to find conceptual correspondences with Czech *národní pospolitost*.

As a basic term of Nazi political theory, *Volksgemeinschaft* embodied a utopian vision of society. The term is not Nazi in origin, as Michael Wildt has pointed out, since all political parties in the Weimar Republic operated with it.<sup>54</sup> The context in which the *Volksgemeinschaft* took shape at the beginning of the 20th century was primarily provided by its criticism of modernity, specifically the dynamics of the social question and the vision that a way could be found to eliminate class conflict within industrial society. At that time, it still had strong democratic connotations. A decade later, however, things were very different. It was not an exclusively German affair, as Ulrich Herbert notes, but one can speak of a kind of virtual 'hegemony of the *Volksgemeinschaft* concept' in the 1930s.<sup>55</sup> It was found practically everywhere in Europe as a political and ideological opposition movement to the growing social class conflict precipitated by the First World War.<sup>56</sup> The extraordinary support it received in the German environment stemmed from the national and social contradictions caused by Germany's defeat in 1918. The Nazis had given *Volksgemeinschaft* a new dimension even before 1933, when they limited its previously society-wide scope. By conceiving it in restrictive terms, the Nazis emphasised the political and racial exclusivity of the community, while at the same time highlighting the equality and solidarity of those who continued to be part of it.

In terms of political language, the *Volksgemeinschaft*, according to Habbo Knoch, represented a Foucauldian *dispositif* of political and social communication.<sup>57</sup> As a set of discursive and non-discursive practices, it became a kind of identifying cypher through which members of the national community legitimised themselves. The radicalism and emotional tension that accompanied *Volksgemeinschaft* demonstrated a process of negative inclusion. Based on ethno-racial (*völkisch*) selection, it was determined exactly who was counted in the community and who was not. In the Nazi conception, the *Volksgemeinschaft* lost its

<sup>54</sup> See Michael Wildt, 'Die Ungleichheit des Volkes: "Volksgemeinschaft" in der politischen Kommunikation der Weimarer Republik', in *Volksgemeinschaft: Neue Forschungen zur Gesellschaft des Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Frank Bajohr and Michael Wildt (Frankfurt am Main 2009), 24–40.

<sup>55</sup> Ulrich Herbert, 'Echoes of the *Volksgemeinschaft*', in *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives*, ed. Martina Steber and Bernhard Gotto (Oxford, New York 2014), 61.

<sup>56</sup> See Lehnert, *Gemeinschaftsdenken in Europa*.

<sup>57</sup> Habbo Knoch, 'Gemeinschaften im Nationalsozialismus vor Ort', in '*Volksgemeinschaft*' als soziale Praxis. *Neue Forschungen zur NS-Gesellschaft vor Ort*, ed. Dietmar von Reeken and Malte Thießen (Paderborn 2013), 38.

society-wide integration potential sought by the parties of the political right, left and centre and became an expression of the new regime's exclusivity, emphasising the excluded group. The Jewish population, as the primary object of these exclusionary efforts, was placed outside social life and labelled an 'alien element'. The exclusion occurred not only on the basis of widespread anti-Semitism, embodied in the Nazi conception of the national community, but also because of the Jews' alleged political unreliability and 'inadaptability'. The integrative dimension of the project was thus proportionally reduced to the population group that was allowed to become part of the new German society. The process of social inclusion and various forms of coercion became an inherent part of the project. These took place against the backdrop of Nazi egalitarianism, manifested in the public space by charitable collections for the Winter Relief (Winterhilfswerk) or the promotion of working-class professions and large families with many children. The same function was fulfilled by various visual demonstrations of overcoming social barriers in the form of May Day parades, where workers, employees and factory management marched side by side and then celebrated together at the same table.<sup>58</sup> The Volksgemeinschaft had a positive effect in consolidating public loyalty to the Third Reich and the Nazi regime, which was shaped by symbolic acts and, in the case of German society, especially in foreign, military and economic achievements.

According to the Nazis, the new social project of Volksgemeinschaft, emphasising racial segregation and egalitarian values among members of the selected group, was to replace the existing society divided by class. The Volksgemeinschaft was used by the propaganda of the time to bring the German nation together, and it acted as an essential integrating element. Indeed, belonging to a racially defined national community provided opportunities to improve one's social status and material condition under the Nazi regime. The racially and nationally defined community not only used its mobilising appeal to attempt to integrate selected social groups but also allowed its actors to articulate a variety of needs and demands. The way in which the Volksgemeinschaft permeated the reasoning and everyday communication of the population is indicated by the unique example of its invocation and use by the German population of the town of Eisenach, located in the General Government, the German territorial unit created in a formerly Polish area, which was analysed in detail by John Connelly.<sup>59</sup> Connelly's analysis shows the critical instrumental function of the Volksgemeinschaft in German society. The population referred to it in order to further their own interests. Thus, petitioners consciously exploited the publicly stated promise made by the political authorities that the needs of the members of the national community would

<sup>58</sup> Herbert, 'Echoes of the Volksgemeinschaft', 63.

<sup>59</sup> John Connelly, 'The Uses of Volksgemeinschaft: Letters to the NSDAP Kreisleitung Eisenach, 1939–1940', *Journal of Modern History* 68 (1996), No. 4, 899–930.



be met and demanded that they make good on that promise. Arguments referring to the Volksgemeinschaft expressed a new arrangement in the socio-cultural hierarchy.

The analytical significance of the concept of Volksgemeinschaft lies not in researching its use in propaganda but in tracing the new socio-political practice that accompanied its introduction.<sup>60</sup> In Alf Lüdtke's words, these were 'forms in which people have "appropriated" – while simultaneously transforming – "their" world', by which they accept the newly defined social relations as their own and within which they learn to act, think and formulate their demands in new ways. Moreover, these newly created conditions are perceived primarily subjectively, and their 'adoption' may differ and change.<sup>61</sup> The change in social relations in Nazi Germany is then more than adequately represented by racial and political persecutions, especially the genocidal practices against the Jewish and Roma populations. Tracing the practice of power, its modes of action, its nature and its transformation, as Michael Wildt sought to do, turns our attention to society-wide processes and everyday social practice rather than to the direct exercise of power by Nazi authorities.<sup>62</sup>

Unlike Volksgemeinschaft, the Czech národní pospolitost never became a term of law or sociology, nor did it enter into people's communicative practice to such an extent.<sup>63</sup> It confined its existence almost exclusively to political and journalistic debate after the Munich Agreement and during the Protectorate period. This made it all the more difficult for Czechs to identify with the národní pospolitost, as the term had not been established in the Czech environment up to then. Its proponents had two central goals: to establish národní pospolitost as a fundamental term of Czech political language and to let the community take root to the extent that it became a pattern of behaviour and thought among the population. In contrast to the German nationalists, the Czechs faced obvious difficulties with the authenticity of their term because národní pospolitost lacked historical roots in political and broader social debate.

The lack of continuity of terms in the Czech environment motivated Czech nationalists to attempt to create an illusion of it. They harked back to the period

<sup>60</sup> Social practice has also been identified by Michael Wildt as the most promising analytical application of this concept. Wildt, "Volksgemeinschaft" – Eine Antwort auf Ian Kershaw, 106f. Most recently, see Michael Wildt, *Die Ambivalenz des Volkes. Der Nationalsozialismus als Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (Berlin 2019).

<sup>61</sup> Alf Lüdtke, 'Introduction: What Is the History of Everyday Life and Who Are Its Practitioners?', in *History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*, ed. Alf Lüdtke (Princeton 1995), 7.

<sup>62</sup> Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstmächtigung*, 13 and 21.

<sup>63</sup> On the use of the term in public communication see Connolly, 'The Uses of Volksgemeinschaft'. On the application of Volksgemeinschaft in legal terminology see Michael Stolleis, 'Gemeinschaft und Volksgemeinschaft. Zur juristischen Terminologie im Nationalsozialismus', *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 20 (1972), No. 1, 28.

preceding the formation of modern nations and recalled prominent Czech historical figures as cultural mediators between the Slavic and German traditions. They noted, for example, the contribution of the poet and writer Jan Kollár (1793–1852), who had significant ties with the University of Jena, one of the major German intellectual centres of the time, but ignored his Slovak background. The central figure of the new national narrative was St Wenceslas, who advocated peaceful relations between Bohemia and Germany.<sup>64</sup> He was an ideal candidate for the Protectorate's interpretation of the relationship between Czechs and Germans at a time when the Czech state was slipping into a subordinate position to the German empire.

Prior to the 20th century, the medieval prince Wenceslas remained for the Czechs above all a Catholic saint, symbolising since the revolutionary year of 1848 the alienation of the liberal Czech national movement from the Catholic hierarchy, the Czech historical nobility and Catholic political parties. However, even in the 19th century, there was still a difference of opinion within the Catholic Church regarding this historical figure, as he held significance for patriotic Czech priests as a protector against Germanisation. After 1918, St Wenceslas personified a counterpoint to contemporary republican political ideology as reminiscent of the monarchy, authoritarianism and the power of aristocratic Catholicism.<sup>65</sup>

Unsurprisingly, after 1918 the tradition of St Wenceslas was overshadowed by the secular holiday of 28 October, the anniversary of the founding of the first Czechoslovak Republic. In a break with the established order of interwar liberalism, St Wenceslas represented a suitable ideological dogma for the post-Munich republic and the Christianisation of the Bohemian lands. It was narratively well suited to the Second Republic propaganda disseminated by Catholic circles, the Agrarian Party, the National Democrats and Czech fascists. The tradition of St Wenceslas had already aroused great sympathy, albeit with different connotations, in Catholic and fascist circles between the wars. While the banners of St Wenceslas were commonly flown at fascist rallies in the mid-1920s, the Catholic political representation sought at the same time to merge the tradition with that of 28 October.<sup>66</sup> Developments after Munich 1938, however, channelled efforts to

<sup>64</sup> Prince Wenceslas (905–929 or 935), later proclaimed Saint Wenceslas, is one of the key cultural and historical figures of Czech national history and a symbol of Czech statehood. King Henry the Fowler, Duke of Saxony and King of the East Francia, made Wenceslas, the Prince of Bohemia, his vassal. This moment significantly influenced the future foreign policy orientation of the Czech state. Prince Wenceslas, who founded a church dedicated to St Vitus within the Prague Castle complex (later St Vitus Cathedral at Prague Castle), was later murdered by supporters of his younger brother Boleslaus, probably because of a dispute over the principality's foreign policy. However, Boleslaus himself eventually promoted Wenceslas's legacy, which allowed the establishment of the bishopric of Prague in 973.

<sup>65</sup> Jan Rataj, 'Politické proměny symboliky svatováclavské tradice a tradice 28. října v moderních československých a českých dějinách', in *Spory o dějiny. Sborník kritických textů* (Prague 1999), 85. See Cynthia Paces, *Prague Panoramas: National Memory and Sacred Space in the Twentieth Century* (Pittsburgh 2009).

<sup>66</sup> Rataj, 'Politické proměny symboliky', 87.

deliberately keep the two motifs separate and ideologically exclusive: 28 October symbolised the old order, while St Wenceslas represented a new beginning.

The resolute rejection of the Protestant tradition in the interwar period meant there was a new opportunity for the renewal of religious morality in Czech society. The pastoral letter of 11 October 1938 published by the Czech Cardinal Karel Kašpar explicitly called for such a revision.<sup>67</sup> The loss of the Sudetenland, a formal Czechoslovak borderland that contained the majority of the country's German-speaking population, constituted a new opportunity for the Catholic Church. It saw in its activities not only a sincere offer of consolation and hope for the 'Czech nation' in times of crisis but also a chance to strengthen its power and influence. The conditions for this were good. There were conservative political forces in power and many publicly denounced what they called the interwar 'religious doubt' that had led the nation into a 'disaster'. In his pastoral letter, Kašpar expressed his support for 'rebuilding the state' in order to ensure a better future for the Czechs. He added a political motif to his prayer:

We implore them [the new political elites], with all that is dear to them, with their love for their homeland and the heritage of St. Wenceslas, with their sincere efforts, which we do not doubt, to remove all those fetters with which the former laws have shackled the free development of religious power!<sup>68</sup>

The Cardinal linked the rejection of 'alien' influences, the call for the return of 'free' religious instruction in schools and the fight against divorce to the new orientation of the post-Munich state. The comparison between the fate of the 'Czech nation' and the trajectory of the Catholic Church was to lead to a common path:

What our nation is experiencing now, the Catholic Church has been experiencing for almost two thousand years. ... Let us unite with her, the great sufferer, let us fight alongside her, and just as the Church always wins in the end, we too will overcome all our troubles.<sup>69</sup>

Christianity was supposed to be the way of salvation of the 'Czech nation', but in fact it encouraged its unification and strengthened the hand of the authoritarian order. This trend had two possible objectives: on the one hand, the new regime was defining itself against the confessionally neutral interwar republic; on the other hand, by reconnecting the state with the Church, the regime had the ambition to unite the Czech people and create a functional unity of the nation that could be used to impose the contemporary political programme on the non-Jewish Czech public. This intention was evidenced by the unprecedented acts of unity between politics and religion for Czech – mainly secular – society. For instance, Beran's government opened its first meeting in December 1938 with a

<sup>67</sup> 'Pastýřský list kardinála dra Karla Kašpara', *Nedělní Lidové listy*, 16 October 1938, 1.

<sup>68</sup> 'Pastýřský list kardinála dra Karla Kašpara.'

<sup>69</sup> 'Pastýřský list kardinála dra Karla Kašpara.'

Roman Catholic mass and a joint prayer by all ministers.<sup>70</sup> Not only the conservative orientation of the members of the government but also the demonstration of a value consensus on which the effective work of stabilising the internal political situation and defining the foreign policy orientation of the state was to be based, were behind the newly privileged position of Christianity, especially the Catholic Church. It should not be disregarded, however, that the freedom given to the Catholic Church for its activities was largely defined by the occupation authorities from March 1939 onwards. In practice, this meant not only that the highest Catholic circles deferred to the Reich Protector as the new chief authority, but also that the Catholic Church itself did not escape the intervention of the Nazis, as became apparent after the death of Cardinal Karel Kašpar in April 1941, when a dispute over his successor flared up.<sup>71</sup>

The support of the Church had a critical compensatory function. In 1939 and 1940, Czechs took part in mass pilgrimages to important places connected with national history. These pilgrimages, combining Christian and national motifs, usually ended with a Catholic mass. While historiography is much more concerned with describing later interventions and persecution within the ranks of Catholic leaders, in the early months of the Nazi Protectorate, the highest Catholic dignitaries were prominent figures in inciting the cultural rebirth of the 'Czech nation' and urging cooperation with the Nazis. According to the historian Jan Tesař, during the 1939 pilgrimages, all that remained of Christianity was entirely conventional piety, morality and belief in God, serving primarily to express patriotic feelings.<sup>72</sup> The anti-Nazi beliefs often associated with the Church and its representatives were not at odds with contemporary attempts to unite the 'Czech nation'. However, the Catholic Church in Bohemia and Moravia did not have the strength and suitable conditions to secure an alliance between the Church and the state, as the clerofascist regimes in Slovakia, Austria and Croatia had managed to do.

Conservative Catholicism became part of the new official doctrine of the post-Munich Czecho-Slovakia. The 'nationalisation' and 'Nazification' of the St Wenceslas tradition was evidenced by the establishment of the highest Protectorate distinction, which was the Shield of Honour of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia with the image of the St Wenceslas Eagle, awarded to Protectorate citizens for their loyalty to the German Reich since 1944. In practice, however, the use of motifs with distinctly national connotations posed a number of pitfalls for the occupation regime. The most obvious was the opportunity to use

<sup>70</sup> Rataj, 'Politické proměny symboliky', 87.

<sup>71</sup> See the correspondence between Cardinal Karel Kašpar and Reich Protector Konstantin von Neurath on the leadership of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta in the spring of 1940. NA, Reich Protector's Office Collection (AMV 114), Folio 114-201-4: Karel Kašpar an Herrn Reichsprotektor, 6 March 1940.

<sup>72</sup> Tesař, *Mnichovský komplex*, 162. See Bohumil Stašek's sermon during the pilgrimage to St Lawrence, 13 August 1939: [http://www.tedeum.cz/2\\_2011/stasek\\_kazani\\_0211.htm](http://www.tedeum.cz/2_2011/stasek_kazani_0211.htm) (17 March 2022).

mass gatherings for an organised expression of opposition to the occupation. An intuitive understanding of the official national narrative, which relied largely on established historical and cultural motifs, was almost impossible to overwrite in an instant with a wholly reconstructed collective memory. This weakness of the Protectorate's national ideology was never resolved during the occupation. Their temporary solution was to eschew situations that could, according to the authorities, be used to demonstrate anti-German sentiments. However, as can be seen in the example of national pilgrimages, the occupation authorities only resorted to the tactic of eliminating opportunities after 17 November 1939, when they undertook a large-scale crackdown against a student procession and permanently closed all Czech universities in the Protectorate. For example, a church procession in Pilsen on St Wenceslas Day in September 1941 was cancelled by the Oberlandrat, a German regional authority, because it was concerned about its possible misuse for a 'national-religious demonstration', mainly because Czechs had recently allegedly been showing more self-confidence.<sup>73</sup>

The German occupiers defined the boundaries of the new self-determination of the 'Czech nation', but the real work of shaping a new national ideology was to be carried out by the Czech political representation. The historicisation of Czech-German relations within a broader temporal and geographical framework was the work of Czech collaborator Emanuel Vajtauer. In his most famous work, *The Czech Myth* (1943), Vajtauer debunked the 'myths of the Czech nation' based on contradictory ideas about its character and historical mission. He attempted to revise the contemporary perception of the Reich's 'protection' of the Bohemian lands, as defined by Hitler's decree establishing the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939. Vajtauer considered the incorporation of the Bohemian lands into Germany, at the time of the Holy Roman Empire as well as the Third Reich, as a move towards the formation of a European community of nations based on the peaceful adjustment of Czech-German relations. Paradoxically, integration into the community was supposed to strengthen the authenticity of national communities, in contrast to American and Soviet cosmopolitanism and internationalism.<sup>74</sup> In addition to defending the 'healthy and salvageable St Wenceslas complex', Vajtauer argued for the distinctiveness of the 'Czech nation', which would gain a cultural and economic boost in Nazi Europe instead of being 'de-nationalised'. There is no trace of the ambitious vision of the Czech fascists dreaming of a Slavic unity project modelled on the German Volksgemeinschaft:

We were Slavs a thousand years ago. In the German environment, we did not become Germans but created a new national essence. Today we are nothing but a

<sup>73</sup> NA, Reich Protector's Office-State Secretary Collection (ÚŘP-ST Coll.), Sign. 109-4/172, Carton 22: Oberlandrat Pilsen an den Herrn Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren, z. H. d. H. K. H. Frank, 24 September 1941.

<sup>74</sup> Emanuel Vajtauer, *Český mythus. Co nám lhaly dějiny* (Prague 1943), 158.

new, distinct nation whose name is Czech. We are neither Slav nor German, but Czech, rooted in Western European culture.<sup>75</sup>

Vajtauer's conviction that one could be Czech while not belonging to the family of Slavic peoples was supported by the argument that the nation was primarily a biological unit and that linguistic affiliation had lost its privileged status beginning with Charles Darwin's research. The kinship of nations within European civilisation, which Vajtauer identified with Europe under the leadership of Nazi Germany, was shaped by its 'Aryan' character.<sup>76</sup> Vajtauer considered the decades-old linguistic struggles under the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in interwar Czechoslovakia to be superficial. 'The modern biological concept of the nation sees no solution in the de-nationalisation of foreign national elements', he noted. In other words, changing the language or changing cultural patterns could not achieve the desired results, according to Vajtauer. On the contrary, 'de-nationalisation' could cause a decline in the nation's potential.<sup>77</sup> With this extensive historical narrative, Vajtauer offered an interpretation according to which the incorporation of the Bohemian lands and the Czech population into the Nazi project of the 'New Europe' was beneficial for the 'Czech nation' not only in economic but also in cultural terms.

Vajtauer openly acknowledged the role of the Czech *národní pospolitost* as sub-state nationalism in relation to the *Volksgemeinschaft*. In his view, the German project could inspire the Czechs and lead them on a path that would enable the *národní pospolitost* to perform a similar legitimising function vis-à-vis the new regime as the *Volksgemeinschaft* did for Germans. This line of thinking was not exclusively the concern of leading Czech collaborators. The problem of the authenticity of the *národní pospolitost* was raised by Antonín Zelenka, chairman of the National Trade Union Centre, then one of two Czech trade union organisations in the Protectorate. In an article published in the daily *Národní politika* in June 1940, he wrote:

The German National Socialism is not something that can be exported – but it can be adapted into our Czech national socialism. ... Let us work today and every day on our Czech *národní pospolitost* in the spirit of social justice.<sup>78</sup>

In his view, this did not mean merely transferring the German concept to another national environment. He regarded the basic concepts of 'socialism' and 'nation' as principles from which others could learn and seek to apply them in their own unique circumstances. Zelenka treated the term 'national socialism' as a non-ideological framework for social practice. As noted earlier, the Czech language

<sup>75</sup> Vajtauer, *Český mythus*, 150.

<sup>76</sup> Emanuel Vajtauer, 'Česká politika ve věku strojovém', in *Po pěti letech 1939–1944* (Prague 1944), 112–13.

<sup>77</sup> Vajtauer, 'Česká politika ve věku strojovém', 111.

<sup>78</sup> Antonín Zelenka, 'Národní socialismus', *Národní práce*, 20 June 1940.

distinguishes between the adjectives *národní* (national) and *nacionální* (nationalistic). Therefore, the term *nacionální socialismus* is always used in Czech to refer to Nazi ideology; consequently, the *národní socialismus* proposed by Zelenka must be understood as an attempt to create a distinctive non-German variant of a national ideology that would combine nationalism and socialism into a single political doctrine. Socialism was a principle practised within national communities, and the attribute 'national' therefore served to refer to the social group within which the attributes of socialism were put into actual practice. Zelenka had the personal ideological prerequisites for these considerations. He was a social democrat and, until June 1938, an associate of the ILO;<sup>79</sup> he was also one of the main Czech experts involved in the negotiations on the dismantling of the Czechoslovak insurance system and the post-Munich obligations. Therefore, it seems that by 'adaptation' he meant a socially just nation-state within democratic boundaries, rather than any adaptation of the racialised state and society in the Czech environment.

Zelenka's rethinking of 'national socialism' here shows a creative approach and the many ways in which conversion of the existing ideology into German-style National Socialism could be publicly discussed. He certainly demonstrated his background as a trade union leader when he argued that the only way to implement the objective was through hard work, which would lead everyone to a 'better and more equal path'. It is necessary to note that in 1939/40, Zelenka and others were convinced that the new order of things was going to be around for a long time. They were building for a future that we know will collapse within a few years. Work was a constitutive element of *národní pospolitost*, as it was of *Volksgemeinschaft*. 'Work for the nation' naturally encompassed different messages. The general consensual framework was an active care effort primarily intended to eliminate the effects of the occupation. In practice, one can imagine it as security through social insurance and social welfare. It was all the more important, as Zelenka himself pointed out, that:

Nothing can be put off with a convenient excuse, it's war. Especially for us Czechs, this excuse cannot be an excuse because ... we do not defend our country with arms in our hands.<sup>80</sup>

Czechs were not being sent to the front; at most, they were sent to Germany to provide labour. However, there were other pitfalls behind the front lines, including supply shortages and limited availability of assistance in case of illness or injury.

Both Vajtauer's and Zelenka's arguments were remarkable attempts to outline a uniquely Czech path. But the significance of *národní pospolitost* continued to

<sup>79</sup> Security Services Archive Prague (ABS), German Courts in the Reich Collection, Sign. 141-425-14: Biography of A. Zelenka provided to the interrogators in the trial against him, 15 May 1942.

<sup>80</sup> Zelenka, 'Národní socialismus'.

be hampered by its vague functions in political culture, as well as by the uses of the term in other contexts. Indeed, it appeared occasionally in public texts of the Czechoslovak exile government in London, where it replaced the term 'nation'. However, *národní pospolitost* referred to the vision of post-war Czechoslovakia as a new nation-state. Neither then nor later did anyone attempt to trace any similarities with the new national ideology in the Nazi Protectorate.<sup>81</sup> This terminological overlap between the language of the Protectorate and the language of the exiles, however, shows that the building of the post-1945 nation-state to some extent continued the legacy of national unification efforts in post-Munich Czecho-Slovakia and during the Nazi occupation. It was these tendencies, which in 1938 and 1939 were mainly driven by the non-Nazi domestic political forces active during the reconstruction, that significantly facilitated the implementation of the nation-state vision after the liberation of Czechoslovakia in May 1945. Post-war Czechoslovakia, however, realised the fundamental transformation of the interwar multinational state into a nation-state of Czechs and Slovaks through extensive and rapid national cleansing.<sup>82</sup>

### Germanisation and nationalisation

The transformation of a liberal democracy into an authoritarian state and then into the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was accompanied by efforts to improve the social situation and the distribution of social protection among selected population groups. If we describe this process in terms of the changing perception of the nation in the context of foreign and domestic policy, it is understandable in the historical context. However, describing the practices aimed at the social stabilisation of Bohemia and Moravia after occupation by the German army in March 1939 may prove more difficult. Indeed, how could a policy of care coexist alongside a policy of destruction in a highly ethnically conflicted and hostile time?

One usually reads in the historiography that neither policy was ever intended to apply to the entire population since from the very beginning the race policy (exclusion) and the national policy (inclusion) were pursued simultaneously in the Protectorate. While racial principles were the legal framework of the Nazi ideology, the national policy here refers to a specific, perhaps limited room in which national consciousness was allowed to manifest itself publicly through language and symbols, but also through activities that took place within a cultural

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Edvard Beneš, *Demokracie dnes a zítra* (Prague 1947), chapter on the 'Theory of National Socialism', 150–87.

<sup>82</sup> See Benjamin Frommer, *National Cleansing: Retribution against Nazi Collaborators in Postwar Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge 2005); on post-1945 Czechoslovak public discourse see Christiane Brenner, *'Zwischen Ost und West': Tschechische politische Diskurse 1945–1948* (Munich 2009).



and social welfare framework.<sup>83</sup> The national policy in the Czech environment was underpinned by the ideology of *národní pospolitost*. It is clear that having a national policy was not at all commonplace in the territories occupied by Nazi Germany, as John Connelly has shown in the hierarchy of German favour received by the various nations in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>84</sup> It was much more common in Western Europe, as was consistent with the concept of 'supervisory administration' as proposed by Werner Best in the early 1940s. The national policy combined a new conception of society and the implementation of racial principles with the application of a performance perspective by which an individual's work discipline and political adaptability were judged. In practice, however, these requirements were to be offset by adequate wages and state-guaranteed social and health care. Why was this the case of the Bohemian lands and the Czech population?

The course of the Second World War had a significant impact on conditions in the Protectorate, even though the front was far from its borders. The war was undoubtedly a provisional condition in which more was allowed for the moment, provided that the country remained calm and its economic performance stable, at the very least. To this end, the national policy could contribute relatively reliably, as Robert O. Paxton noted in the 1970s in his assessment of the Vichy regime. The Nazis themselves were not interested in stimulating a French national revival or in the Nazification of France, but rather in securing the territory from which they planned to conduct their final military operations against the United Kingdom.<sup>85</sup> The Protectorate had similar strategic importance, mainly as a substantial economic base for the Third Reich that contained a vital workforce and material capacity.

The Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was something of a combination of the approaches taken by the Nazis in Eastern and North-Western Europe. There were far-reaching plans for the Germanisation of the Czech-inhabited lands, but up to the end of the war Czech schools continued to operate (with the exception of the universities from November 1939), Czech plays were staged in theatres, Czech music was played in concert halls, Czech literature was published, and a system of public social and health care for the Czech population continued to exist throughout the period of Nazi occupation. Of course, that all happened within limits. For instance, the prominent contemporary writers and journalists Ferdinand Peroutka and Milena Jesenská were arrested and placed in a concentration camp, where Jesenská later died. In contrast, one could not find a similarly

<sup>83</sup> See Nuremberg Laws of September 1935, namely the *Reichsbürgergesetz* (RGBl. I, 1935, p. 1146), the *Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre* (RGBl. I, 1935, p. 1146) and the *Reichsflaggengesetz* (RGBl. I, 1935, p. 1145).

<sup>84</sup> See Connelly, 'Nazis and Slavs'.

<sup>85</sup> Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940–1944* (New York 2001), p. xxxiii.

preserved national culture in areas such as the General Government or occupied Ukraine. The national policy had a consistent form in the Bohemian lands, although it was a synthesis of initially very different domestic political positions and competing visions united by Czech anti-liberal nationalism.

The race and national policies were allowed – and expected – to exist in the Nazi Protectorate in parallel. However, the goals of the two policies, as well as the means to achieve them, were profoundly different. The escalating race policy, applied especially with respect to the Jewish and Roma populations, aimed at the complete destruction of selected ethnic groups. The national policy, which applied exclusively to Czech actors, radicalised ideas about the *národní pospolitost* and its internal exclusive and inclusive mechanisms. There existed certain analogies with the Bohemian lands and Slovakia during the First World War. At that time, spontaneous anti-Jewish sentiments among the people, often expressed in stereotypes such as ‘Jew the usurer’, corresponded to the semantic codes according to which the nation was resisting anti-national acts committed by the Jews.<sup>86</sup> The anti-Semitism spread during the Autumn Revolution helped construct the unity of the ‘Czech nation’. Despite some Nazi thoughts about the extermination of a part of Czech society which originated in the pre-war period, such policies were never applied in their purely destructive form against the ‘Czech nation’ as a whole during the entire existence of the Protectorate. Nevertheless, after his arrival in Prague, Reinhard Heydrich began to take concrete steps in this direction.

The propensity of the occupation policy to opportunistically adapt its strategy in the occupied territory to the current situation in no way precluded the preparation of Germanisation plans. As Isabel Heinemann has noted, Germanisation was a long-term goal in the Protectorate and was preceded by preparatory steps in the form of political measures.<sup>87</sup> The Nazi ethnic policy in the Bohemian lands aiming for the Germanisation of ‘blood and soil’ had clearly defined objectives at the beginning of the occupation and was later systematised by Heydrich. The Germanisation of Bohemia and Moravia was accompanied by the Aryanisation of private property and projects to strengthen the ‘German element’. At the same time, these included land and settlement policies, the strengthening of German language enclaves, the building of ‘land bridges’ between the territorial islands populated by Germans and other policies.<sup>88</sup> In general, it can be considered exploitative in character, which corresponded to the filling of decision-making

<sup>86</sup> Frankl and Szabó, *Budování státu bez antisemitismu?*, 97.

<sup>87</sup> Isabel Heinemann, *Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut* *Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas* (Göttingen 2013), 127–86.

<sup>88</sup> See Josef Mikš and Dagmar Stryjová, *Ztracené domovy. Germanizační plány okupantů a jejich realizace na Vyškovsku v letech 1939–1945* (Vyškov 1987); Tomáš Zouzal, *Zabráno pro SS: zřízení výcvikového prostoru Böhmen v letech 2. světové války* (Prague 2016).



**Figure 2.2** Heydrich after his arrival in Prague. Prague Castle, 28 September 1941.  
Source: National Archives, Prague, Karl Hermann Frank Photo Collection, no. 905.

positions or the appointment of supervisory bodies overseeing the exercise of public administration.

While the ability to control the territory went hand in hand with activities that increasingly integrated Bohemia and Moravia into the economic area of the German Reich, the Germanisation of the Czech population was a much more complicated issue. On the one hand, it constituted an utterly separate agenda from the a priori exclusion of the Jewish and Roma populations; on the other hand, it required further investigation to determine the racial disposition and Germanisation potential of the Czech population. The ‘Czech question’, as Detlef Brandes has shown, was widely debated and allowed for the expression of long-standing anti-Czech animosities as well as the existence of competing strategies within the German administration.<sup>89</sup> This was particularly manifested in the Germanisation plans proposed by the representatives of the adjacent Reichsgau Sudetenland and representatives of the Sudeten German Party, Hans Neuirth and Ernst Kundt, and the Wehrmacht plenipotentiary Erich Friderici. Characterised by a nationalist rather than a racial assessment, the strategies that

<sup>89</sup> Elaborated in Detlef Brandes, *‘Umvolkung, Umsiedlung, rassische Bestandsaufnahme’: NS-‘Volkstumspolitik’ in den böhmischen Ländern* (Munich 2012).



**Figure 2.3** State Secretary and later German State Minister of Bohemia and Moravia Karl Hermann Frank, the most powerful Sudeten German and, after Heydrich's death, the central figure in the occupation administration of the Protectorate, in his office at Černín Palace. Photo taken on 20 October 1941. Source: National Archives, Prague, Karl Hermann Frank Photo Collection, no. 998.

emerged from the Sudeten German camp were usually more radical than the concepts formulated by the Reich Germans.<sup>90</sup> However, the Sudeten Germans had only a limited influence on the actual developments in the Protectorate. Reich Protector Konstantin von Neurath and Karl Hermann Frank, the German State Secretary and the highest-ranking Sudeten German in the Protectorate administration respectively, agreed to maintain the territorial integrity of Bohemia and Moravia, which was confirmed by Adolf Hitler on 23 September 1940. Hitler opted for a 'long-term assimilation process' which was to cover 'a large part' of the Czech population, excluding the racially and politically 'inadaptable' individuals.<sup>91</sup>

The Germanisation of the Bohemian lands was a long-term objective which in practice comprised several individual programmes. In accordance with the policy of Germanisation, measures were taken against the Czech language and Czech education and the administration and economy began to be supervised

<sup>90</sup> Brandes, 'Umvolkung, Umsiedlung, rassische Bestandsaufnahme', 10–28.

<sup>91</sup> Brandes, 'Umvolkung, Umsiedlung, rassische Bestandsaufnahme', 24f.

by German experts. Nevertheless, the Bohemian lands were not a part of the large-scale project for the German colonisation of Central and Eastern Europe (Generalplan Ost), consisting of several successive projects based on the racial and biological principles of Nazi ideology. From the spring of 1940 onwards, several institutions, starting with the Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Nationhood (Reichskommissar für die Festigung deutschen Volkstums), translated these theoretical concepts into policy. The Protectorate, however, had its place in the General Settlement Plan (Generalsiedlungsplan), which was linked to the Generalplan Ost, and some of its practices were also to be applied in the Bohemian lands.<sup>92</sup> Reinhard Heydrich, for whom the expulsion of part of the population and its transport to the east essentially amounted to direct extermination, probably worked with this assumption.<sup>93</sup>

The Germanisation of Bohemia and Moravia was supplemented by a specific methodology in 1941 and 1942. At the end of 1941, an External Office of the Race and Settlement Main Office was established in Prague and later in other Protectorate cities to collect data in order to draw a more accurate picture of the racial structure of the Protectorate population. A similarly rational approach was taken by Deputy Reich Protector Heydrich, who intended to conduct a 'racial inventory' (*rassische Bestandsaufnahme*) to systematically examine the Protectorate's population. However, it was not clear how this kind of mass examination should be carried out. In March 1942, therefore, new identity cards (*Kennkarte*) were introduced following the Reich model, which contained a column on the racial characteristics of the holder.<sup>94</sup>

According to some historians, the Nazis' unclear intentions towards the Czech population are evidence of a 'double-faced policy'. Detlef Brandes attempted to describe this ambiguity by quoting Adolf Hitler, who on 9 June 1942 told Protectorate President Emil Hácha that nothing could prevent him from expelling several million Czechs from Bohemia and Moravia. A day later, however, Joseph Goebbels wrote down in his famous diary another of Hitler's quotes: 'Our Protectorate policy must be very much one of wait-and-see for the time being.'<sup>95</sup> Even after the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich on 27 May 1942, Czechs were not publicly denounced in Germany and anti-Czech propaganda remained unwelcome. However, the destruction of the villages of Lidice and Ležáky and the slaughter of the local population as an exemplary case of punishment after Heydrich's death speak of a possible degree of terror that the Nazis could repeat at

<sup>92</sup> Czesław Madajczyk, 'Vom "Generalplan Ost" zum "Generalsiedlungsplan"', in *Der 'Generalplan Ost': Hauptlinien der nationalsozialistischen Planungs- und Vernichtungspolitik*, ed. Mechtild Rössler, Sabine Schleiermacher and Cordula Toomien (Berlin 1993), 18.

<sup>93</sup> Brandes, 'Umvolkung, Umsiedlung, rassische Bestandsaufnahme', 32.

<sup>94</sup> Bryant, *Prague in Black*, ch. 4, 'Heydrich Imposes Racial Order', 139–78.

<sup>95</sup> Bryant, *Prague in Black*, 33.

any time. Part of the explanation of this strategy lies in the war's progress. From the Battle of Moscow at the end of 1941 onwards, the fortune of war was turning against Germany, which underlined the importance of the occupied territories and especially the workforce recruited there. An openly anti-Czech approach could have brought disintegration and resistance from the local population.

The most interesting contribution to the set of contemporary concepts for the Germanisation of Bohemia and Moravia consists in a memorandum by Bernard Adolf, president of the Central Federation of Industry for Bohemia and Moravia and one of the most influential figures in the Protectorate occupation administration. Adolf's mid-1941 memorandum, entitled 'The Role of the Economy in the Germanisation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia', describes a shift in the thinking of the Nazi elites that was characterised by strong pragmatism as opposed to emotional hatred.<sup>96</sup> In the memorandum, Adolf stated that the goal of German policy in the Protectorate was 'the integral solution of the Czech question.' This almost magical formula, often repeated by Czech historiography, also meant, in Adolf's interpretation, the Germanisation of the Bohemian-Moravian territory and the 'destruction of Czechness as an independent nation.' From the point of view of the analyses and plans that had existed so far, Adolf did not come up with anything new and only confirmed his intention to combine Germanisation and displacement in his approach to the Czech people. The memorandum is worth closer attention for another reason. While previous analyses had formulated the Czech question as a primarily political issue, Adolf based his definition of the three stages of Germanisation of the Bohemian lands on economic priorities. This perspective is evident in various parts of the memorandum. He viewed the 'Czech nation' as 'an organism that is presently an integrating part of the Greater German and future European economic area' and that fulfils special functions there. The displacement of the entire 'Czech nation', potentially creating an undesirable vacuum with adverse consequences for the whole of Germany, was not feasible at the time for economic reasons. The method was supposed to ensure that the workers, as the decisive force and part of the 'Czech nation', were not disturbed – politically, culturally, ethnically or economically. According to Adolf, the process of Germanisation could only be started in earnest when all strategically important positions in the economy were occupied.<sup>97</sup>

Viewing Germanisation plans through the lens of economic priorities in the Protectorate was related to social policy in two ways. According to Adolf, the insurance market tied up considerable capital consisting mainly of insurance policies taken out by Czechs with Czech insurance companies. Taking over these

<sup>96</sup> NA, German State Ministry Collection (NSM Coll.), Sign. 110-4/2, Carton 12, Folio 56: Die Aufgaben der Wirtschaft bei der Eideutschung des Protektorats Boehmen und Maehren.

<sup>97</sup> NA, NSM Coll., Sign. 110-4/2, Carton 12, Folio 56: Die Aufgaben der Wirtschaft bei der Eideutschung des Protektorats Boehmen und Maehren.

institutions by the installation of German management was intended to control the accumulated financial resources. The second was the search for a balance between workers' performance and Czech national policy, where the provision of social welfare was intended as the means of influencing it. The slogan 'hunger creates revolutionaries', recalled by Adolf, characterised a policy that was in some ways more 'friendly' towards the Czechs. Adolf was by no means an advocate of the 'Czech nation', but he approached the matter pragmatically and in economic terms. He assumed that an improvement in the standard of living would theoretically lead to increased birth rates, and therefore it was necessary to seek a 'reasonable middle ground'.<sup>98</sup> The assumption that economic growth would lead to an increase in the nation's birth rate, which was considered counterproductive from the perspective of the policy of Germanisation, was very simplistic. While the birth rate of the 'Czech nation' showed the strongest growth from 1940 to 1944, it happened for quite different reasons, which will be examined in more detail in [Chapter Six](#).

The desire to balance the performance and daily needs of the population in order to ensure maximum exploitation of the occupied country constituted one of the main factors that determined Nazi strategies in Bohemia and Moravia. Efforts to stabilise the internal situation of the Protectorate were evidenced, among other things, by the minimal number of foreign workers deployed there. Karl Hermann Frank, who considered their presence to be a disturbance to the national composition of the Protectorate, still believed in the summer of 1944 that the very low number of foreign workers in the Protectorate was one of the most important reasons for the 'hitherto peaceful state' of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>99</sup>

The German policy towards regional group identities can also be explained through the prism of balance. The Bohemian lands were culturally and linguistically very compact, but especially in the eastern parts, in Moravia, there were distinctive regional traditions. By supporting regionalism in south-eastern Moravia, especially in the areas called 'Moravian Slovakia' (Moravské Slovácko) and 'Wallachia' (Valašsko), the Germans sought to undermine the fragile unity of the 'Czech nation'. The local circumstances of ethno-national identity and cultural traditions, combined with the alleged political marginalisation of these regional identities during the interwar period, created an explosive situation.

A contemporary German analysis of the phenomenon of Moravian Slovakism, written in February 1942 by Chief Government Councillor Anton Zankl, discussed the new situation that had emerged in March 1939. Zankl wrote about the identity of the Czech population living along the south-eastern border with Slovakia, whose

<sup>98</sup> NA, NSM Coll., Sign. 110-4/2, Carton 12, Folio 56: Die Aufgaben der Wirtschaft bei der Eideutschung des Protektorats Boehmen und Maehren.

<sup>99</sup> NA, NSM Coll., Sign. 110-1/20, Carton 2, Folio 9: Niederschrift über die Dienstbesprechung der Oberlandräte, 14 July 1944.

representatives were happy to repeatedly appear alongside Nazi representatives. According to Zankl, the Moravian Slovaks allegedly expected from the Germans a solution to Moravian-Slovak regionalist aspirations after the establishment of the Protectorate, hoping for a 'proper settlement' with the government in Prague. The exclusion of Prague elites from positions at the top of public administration and economic institutions and their replacement by Moravian Slovaks, or some other form of 'preferential treatment', constituted the basis for dialogue between Moravia and the occupation administration. Here, too, marginalisation paved the way for collaboration. Many radical but marginalised parties and movements in the occupied countries followed a similar path, which is why Martin Conway stressed the need to understand collaboration as a product of pre-war Europe.<sup>100</sup>

The occupiers counterbalanced Czech nation-building by accentuating the cleavages. On the one hand, they provided a space for *národní pospolitost* as a Bohemian-centric construct of national unity; on the other, they promoted regionalism, which was subversive to the national community. The ambiguous identity of the Moravian Slovaks may have served this purpose quite well. The Germans identified in them an 'equivocal national consciousness', as they rejected Bohemian domination but – in the words of Anton Zankl – felt 'culturally superior to the Slovaks'.<sup>101</sup> The irredentist aspirations of the Moravian Slovaks, which they, according to the Germans, could not and in fact never wanted to fulfil, were a tool for the occupiers to discipline the Czech political leaders in Prague. Strong anti-Czech and anti-Prague animosities led representatives of Ethnographic Moravia, an ethnographic group and political movement with links to the Czech fascists, to terminate relations with the only permitted Czech political party in the Protectorate, National Partnership, and to cooperate closely with the occupation authorities instead.<sup>102</sup> Thus, regionalism at the local level might have seemed to be a way to effectively assimilate or at least ensure the cooperation of an ethnically Czech population. It is no coincidence that this demand may resemble the 'self-Nazification plan of Dutch society' with the help of a unified national movement and united labour organisations, as the Reich Commissioner Arthur Seyss-Inquart, who headed the occupation administration in the Netherlands, tried to promote it from 1940 to 1941.<sup>103</sup>

The ideology of the Czech *národní pospolitost* was shaped on the one hand by the Czech demands of the Autumn Revolution and on the other by the

<sup>100</sup> Martin Conway, *Collaboration in Belgium. Léon Degrelle and the Rexist Movement, 1940–1944* (New Haven, London 1993), 18.

<sup>101</sup> NA, ÚRP-ST Coll., Sign. 109-4/76, Carton 16: Bericht. Besonderung in der Mährischen Slowakei, p. 4.

<sup>102</sup> On ethnographic Moravia, see Ivo Pejčoch, *Fašismus v českých zemích 1922–1945: Fašistické a nacionálněsocialistické strany a hnutí v Čechách a na Moravě* (Prague 2011), 251–63.

<sup>103</sup> Gerhard Hirschfeld, *Fremdherrschaft und Kollaboration. Die Niederlande unter deutscher Besatzung 1940–1945* (Munich 1995), 32.



Nazi Volkstumspolitik (nationality policy). The activism of the Czech national movement and its efforts to do everyday political work 'for the nation' undoubtedly clashed with Nazi ideas about the solution to the 'Czech question'. However, wartime conditions did not allow the Nazis to implement them immediately. The principles of Volkstumspolitik, which remained among the most pursued political goals throughout the occupation, were enforced in the Protectorate by means of soft power rather than forced Germanisation. Overall, the *národní pospolitost* could fit well into the practices of occupation policy and Germanisation plans, helping to maintain the appearance of autonomous administration by Czech political elites and legitimise the role of the Czech national government.<sup>104</sup> The ideology of *národní pospolitost* framed the collective identity of the Czech population and helped to channel public expressions of dissent through seemingly apolitical patriotism.

### **National Partnership and the institutionalisation of *národní pospolitost***

The interventions into the party system of former Czechoslovakia, which until the Autumn Revolution was highly fragmented based on national, social and class lines, were aimed at a fundamental reduction in the number of political parties. This was a reaction to the overinflated party system and the chaotic political life of the interwar republic, and a symptom of the emerging authoritarian order. It resulted in the formation of two political parties, the right-wing National Unity Party and the centre-left National Labour Party. The National Unity Party, which described itself as a 'movement of constructive nationalism [whose] task and mission is to build a new state, to carry out a revival of national life and to lead the nation to new heights', automatically took over the government.<sup>105</sup> As mentioned earlier, it did not have significant opposition in the National Labour Party. During the short existence of the Second Republic, both parties worked on their programmes, built their party structures and together created the consensual political basis of post-Munich Czecho-Slovakia. However, this state of affairs was not permanent. Even before the arrival of the German armies in Bohemia and Moravia in mid-March 1939, voices demanding complete national unity were heard, especially from the centre-left.

The transformation of *národní pospolitost* from a propaganda catchphrase to the central political category of Czech sub-state nationalism in the Protectorate was

<sup>104</sup> NA, NSM Coll, Sign. 110-4/2, Carton 12, Folio 56.

<sup>105</sup> Gebhart and Kuklík, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české*, Volume 15a, 223.



**Figure 2.4** The chairman's table of the meeting of the National Partnership headed by Chairman Jan Fousek, who from May 1940 also led the Czech Association for Cooperation with the Germans. Symbolically, a personal union was to be established between the two institutions. Undated. Source: National Archives, Prague, National Partnership Collection, carton 21.

not such a linear process as the formation of the German Volksgemeinschaft. The *národní pospolitost* incorporated the main demands of the Autumn Revolution and was formed through a dialogue between two political groups with unequal levels of power – the National Unity Party and the National Labour Party. The dissolution of the two parties led to the formation of a single political entity – the National Partnership (*Národní souručenství*).<sup>106</sup> On 21 March 1939, less than a week after the establishment of the Protectorate, this step created an all-national political platform based on a new unifying ideology. The National Partnership, for which the alternative name ‘National and Social Community’ (*Národní a sociální pospolitost*) had initially been considered, institutionalised national unity and became the main vehicle for the ideology of *národní pospolitost*.<sup>107</sup> This reorganisation was carried out by agreement between the two parties, even though the idea to form a *de facto* ‘national political unity’ had already emerged before March 1939 within the opposition National Labour Party.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>106</sup> *Amtsblatt* No. 131/1939 (9 June 1939).

<sup>107</sup> Gebhart and Kuklík, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české*, Vol. XVa, 207.

<sup>108</sup> Jaroslav Rokoský, *Rudolf Beran a jeho doba: Vzestup a pád agrární strany* (Prague 2011), 437.

What was the National Partnership all about? It served as the only Czech national political movement in the Protectorate, but it also functioned as a cultural corporation and a social platform for the organisation of social welfare.<sup>109</sup> The leader of the National Partnership was the President of the Protectorate, and the organisation of the movement was to be based on the principle of corporatism. In April 1939, a fifty-member (later enlarged) National Partnership Committee was formed whose task was 'to rebuild all our political components into a single powerful movement capable of charting new paths in political life', as the daily *Denní listy* explained on 22 March 1939.<sup>110</sup> The members of the Committee, which was to replace the dissolved Czech-Slovak Parliament, were appointed by the President. Through the composition of its membership, the National Partnership was to fully realise the idea of a nationwide political body, where tradesmen, workers, farmers, craftsmen, civil servants, industrialists, academics, clergymen and others were to meet.<sup>111</sup> However, a number of prominent persons from scientific circles and public figures became members, among them the promoter of corporatism Stanislav Berounský, the technocrat Emanuel Šlechta and the demographic statistician Josef Talacko. The aim of the National Partnership was to unite the Czech national forces:

To create a unity of the nation strong as never before. We must return to the natural and higher spiritual community of the nation, which is a common family, a common homeland, a common history, common endeavours, from which the national self-confidence sprouts, mindful of the honour and dignity of the nation at all times.<sup>112</sup>

The chairman of the Committee, the former Agrarian Party politician Adolf Hrubý, spoke thusly about the first steps of the National Partnership on Protectorate radio on 24 March 1939, declaring that 'we want to create unity not by force, but by work, self-sacrifice, honesty, love and brotherhood'.<sup>113</sup>

Nevertheless, the process of uniting the population within the ranks of the National Partnership was accompanied by the exclusion of Jews from the 'Czech nation'. As early as 24 March 1939, the Committee's National Economic Commission submitted a proposal for an immediate inventory of all 'non-Aryan' property and a ban on its disposal.<sup>114</sup> However, the powers of the National Partnership did

<sup>109</sup> NA, Ministry of Social Welfare Collection (henceforth MSP Coll.), Carton 239: Explanatory report on the draft government decree on the establishment of the National Partnership, p. 4.

<sup>110</sup> The National Unity Party and the National Labour Party had forty members on the Committee; the remaining ten were representatives of fascist groups (the National Fascist Community, the National Rebirth Action, *Vlajka*). NA, National Partnership Collection (NS Coll.), Carton 21: Chronicle of the National Partnership), p. 28.

<sup>111</sup> NA, National Partnership Collection (NS Coll.), Carton 21: Chronicle of the National Partnership), p. 28.

<sup>112</sup> NA, National Partnership Collection (NS Coll.), Carton 21: Chronicle of the National Partnership), p. 42.

<sup>113</sup> NA, National Partnership Collection (NS Coll.), Carton 21: Chronicle of the National Partnership), p. 42.

<sup>114</sup> NA, National Partnership Collection (NS Coll.), Carton 21: Chronicle of the National Partnership), p. 46.

not allow them to do more than submit the proposal to the Protectorate government as an initiative. Although the National Partnership represented all political groups, its position in the legal system remained unclear for a long time. Particularly in an environment that advocated open cooperation with the occupiers, the National Partnership was received ambiguously.<sup>115</sup> The tension between the National Partnership and the Czech fascists was noted by Andor Hencke, the representative of the Reich Foreign Ministry to the Reich Protector.<sup>116</sup> In February 1940, he reported to his office in Berlin on three competing 'right-wing opposition' projects seeking to destroy the National Partnership, but according to Hencke, their strength was negligible.<sup>117</sup> The 'opposition' to the National Partnership was a relatively small and fragmented regional group with limited influence, for which the representative of the Reich Foreign Ministry estimated public support among the Czechs of 1.5 per cent.<sup>118</sup>

The National Partnership based its legitimacy on nationwide support. Therefore, it attracted considerable German attention. In his report, Hencke stated that the 'Czech National Partnership was beginning to take the shape similar to Volksgemeinschaft'.<sup>119</sup> He went on to comment on his observations to date:

The National Partnership is the only political organisation of this nation, namely in the sense of a national socialist and social movement, which also lays its claim on every Czech abroad. Nationalism, according to its programme, is 'modern' as proclaimed by our own movement, from which it is inferred that Greater Germany will respect Czech national identity and Czech life needs. The principle of Volksgemeinschaft was expressed by this.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Tomáš Pasák mentions particularly the position of Emanuel Moravec, a leading Czech collaborator and later Minister of Education. Tomáš Pasák, *JUDr. Emil Hácha (1938–1945)* (Prague 1997), 78,

<sup>116</sup> Institute for Contemporary History Munich (henceforth IfZ), File Reference No. 3723/66, Sign. MA-713, Berichte u. Meldungen zur Entwicklung der Lage im Protektorat, díl 1, 1939–1940: Der Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren, Der Vertreter des Auswärtigen Amtes an das Auswärtige Amt in Berlin, 23. February 1940.

<sup>117</sup> The latter were followers of the Ostrava-based wholesaler Jakub Niemczyk, who succeeded Radola Gajda in March 1939 and organised the fascist guards. Pejčoch, *Fašismus v českých zemích, 1922–1945*, 119.

<sup>118</sup> IfZ, File Reference No. 3723/66, Sign. MA-713, Berichte u. Meldungen zur Entwicklung der Lage im Protektorat.

<sup>119</sup> IfZ, File Reference No. 3723/66, Sign. MA-713, Berichte u. Meldungen zur Entwicklung der Lage im Protektorat. In German original: 'Der ČNS [Tschechische Nationale Einheitspartei] beginnt, eine Volksgemeinschaft zu werden.'

<sup>120</sup> IfZ, File Reference No. 3723/66, Sign. MA-713, Berichte u. Meldungen zur Entwicklung der Lage im Protektorat. In German original: 'Die Nationale Gemeinschaft die einzige politische Organisation dieses Volkes sein und zwar im Sinne einer nationalsozialistischen und sozialen Bewegung, die auf jeden Tschechen auch im Ausland Anspruch erhebt. Der Nationalismus ist nach dem Programm ein "neuzeitlicher", so wie ihn unsere eigene Bewegung verkündet hat, woraus gefolgert wird, dass Großdeutschland die tschechische nationale Eigenart und die tschechischen Lebensbedürfnisse achten wird. Daneben wird der Grundsatz der Volksgemeinschaft aufgestellt.'

The support of a uniform political project as the only legal political entity after the Protectorate proclamation fulfilled the Autumn Revolution's idea to simplify political parties as much as possible, even at the cost of an authoritarian form of government. At least initially, the National Partnership appeared as a coherent political force representing Czech national interests. It was an entity that constructed its identity so broadly that it accommodated more or less all political currents capable of adapting to the demand for universal discipline and harmony within a nation under threat, as observed by Emil Sobota, the renowned lawyer and journalist who served in the President's Office during the occupation but was later arrested and executed.<sup>121</sup>

In the spring of 1939 the construction of the National Partnership's organisation – from the Central Committee to the district and local organisations – began. Interest among the Czechs was great. This was due to a very thorough mechanism of recruiting members. The confidants of the National Partnership went house to house and helped people fill in applications. In public, this effort was accompanied by the displeasure of the press and the German authorities, which, according to some contemporary observers, ensured that recruitment was truly voluntary and that signing the application form meant one thing only – committing oneself to the unity of the 'Czech nation', supposedly without any further political messages.<sup>122</sup> Membership in the first year was limited to men over the age of twenty-one and youth. Women were only allowed to join the National Partnership in 1940. The National Partnership set the gender criterion in view of the fact that 'the woman is the protector of the home, while the man the protector of the fatherland'.<sup>123</sup> In its initial refusal to grant membership to women, the National Partnership was even stricter than the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, NSDAP). While women were formally excluded from the Nazi Party's leadership and higher positions, they routinely joined the NSDAP as members before 1933.<sup>124</sup> By the time the Nazis took power in Germany, women (approximately 34,000 housewives) made up at least 5 per cent of the total NSDAP membership. Some caution is in order regarding these figures because it is not known exactly how many female employees, workers and officers were involved.<sup>125</sup> Meanwhile, Jews were completely excluded from the National Partnership. The ultimate instruction to not accept Jews was issued by the National Partnership

<sup>121</sup> Emil Sobota's essay titled *Co to byl protektorát* (What Was the Protectorate?) (Prague 1946) was published after the war, but the author composed it during the occupation. Sobota did not live to see the end of the war; he was executed near the end of it in April 1945.

<sup>122</sup> Sobota, *Co to byl protektorát*, 57.

<sup>123</sup> NA, NS Coll., Carton 21: Chronicle of National Partnership, p. 91.

<sup>124</sup> The share of women among NSDAP members was unrepresentative (in December 1934, the NSDAP membership was 94.5 per cent male and only 5.5 per cent female), yet many women became active and militant members of the movement. Michael H. Kater, 'Frauen in der NS-Bewegung', *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 31 (1983), No. 2, 206.

<sup>125</sup> Claudia Koonz, *Mütter im Vaterland: Frauen im Dritten Reich* (Hamburg 1994), 73.

only on 6 October 1939, and on the basis of this instruction, the lower organisational bodies were to examine all 'disputed applications' in less than ten days. Thus, the non-admission of Jews was not just a rhetorical category, because in practice there was a mechanism for controlling the 'purity' of the Czech national movement.<sup>126</sup>

The popularity of the National Partnership among the Czech population was unmissable. In July 1939, the membership stood at 2,096,338 adult male members, and the National Partnership Youth organisation at the same time counted 535,972 girls and boys. After the recruitment of women in the following year, the total membership grew to 3,320,498 – roughly 45 per cent of the entire population living in the Nazi Protectorate. It was even 30 per cent higher than the peak membership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in 1948 when it seized power.<sup>127</sup> However, in the following years, the National Partnership could not maintain this high membership figure. The decline in membership caused by the departure of men and women for work in the German Reich and the inclusion of younger people in the National Partnership's youth wing, the Board of Trustees for the Education of Youth in Bohemia and Moravia (Kuratorium pro výchovu mládeže v Čechách a na Moravě), the Czech equivalent of the Hitler Youth established in May 1942.<sup>128</sup> The reasons were undoubtedly political as well. In some cases, the structures of the National Partnership were used to create resistance groups; such local branches were immediately disbanded once this was discovered. In other cases, political indifference probably provoked some members to stop paying their membership fees.

The National Partnership was based on kinship, national solidarity and unity, which was expressed by members officially addressing each other as 'brothers'. Each member of the National Partnership committed himself to these principles by the oath he had to take when joining the party, declaring as follows:

I solemnly and publicly commit myself to the Czech národní pospolitost, to the community of all members of the nation ... united by the unbreakable bonds of blood, common language, history, learning, work and responsibility for the future. I commit myself to the Czech fatherland, to the Bohemian lands, which are and

<sup>126</sup> According to the established principles, the following could not become members of the National Partnership: (1) Jews – persons having at least three grandparents who were fully Jewish by race, where the determining factor was their affiliation with a Jewish religious community; (2) Mixed-race Jews – persons having two fully Jewish grandparents who (a) belonged on 15 March 1935 to a Jewish religious community or were later admitted to it, (b) were married to a Jew on 15 March 1935 or later entered into marriage with a Jew. NA, NS Coll., Carton 8: Organisational instructions for National Partnership officials., Volume 1, 6 October 1939, No. 1, p. 1.

<sup>127</sup> As of 31 December 1948, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) had 2,267,688 members. František Štverák, *Schematismus k dějinám Komunistické strany Československa (1921–1992): Základní informace o ústředních orgánech a bibliografické údaje o vedoucích představitelích stran* (Prague 2010), 427.

<sup>128</sup> NA, NS Coll., Carton 114: Unspecified document [1943].

will remain forever my nation's living space, given by nature and sanctified by history. I believe that only the fraternal cooperation of all Czechs, without distinction of origin, education, property and profession, will secure the nation and ensure its future development.<sup>129</sup>

For the new identity of the 'Czech nation', the National Partnership sought support from the population and the German occupants. It is, therefore, difficult to describe it as a project of anti-Nazi resistance, even though since the end of the war this is how it has mostly been portrayed. Plans to incorporate record numbers of Czechs into its structures were accompanied by equally ambitious cooperation with the occupation and Reich authorities. The National Partnership naturally accepted the idea of establishing a solid national formation, following the German model, which would comply with the requirements of the new order. Czech Protectorate President Emil Hácha himself came up with the idea in his request for the closest possible relationship between the National Partnership and the NSDAP, which Reich Minister Rudolf Hess received in June 1939. 'In its declaration of 7 June 1939, the National Partnership placed particular emphasis on the relationship with the NSDAP', Hácha wrote, 'and at the same time expressed the wish to achieve the closest and most sincere cooperation.'<sup>130</sup> The letter went unanswered by the Germans. Jiří Havelka, head of the President's Office, explained this initiative in his memoirs written long after the end of the Second World War by claiming that it was an expression of 'the political tendency of the nation' and a request that Berlin did not look 'unfavourably' on the National Partnership.<sup>131</sup> By wearing the badge of the National Partnership, Hácha was allegedly also making it clear that he was serious about the idea of national unity. The German authorities intervened in the affairs of the National Partnership exclusively through intercessions with the Protectorate President. The Czechs thus remained largely dependent on their own skills and ability to adapt politically. However, the National Partnership could claim to be an authentically Czech national movement.

The National Partnership possessed the characteristics of both a political party and a special-interest movement based on the emotional attachment of its members to the unity of the nation when it was under threat. The strengthening of the national spirit not only encouraged the creation of a defensive organisation against external pressure but also initiated the collective response of the 'Czech nation' to the challenge of what form its participation in the building of the New Europe would take. A more concrete idea was to be provided by the programme of the National Partnership. A programme committee, under the leadership of

<sup>129</sup> Pasák, *Pod ochranou říše*, 97.

<sup>130</sup> President's Office Archive, No. 1261, Carton 187: Collection of speeches, Part VII/50. Cited from Jiří Havelka, *Dvojitý život: Vzpomínky protektorátního ministra*, ed. Robert Kvaček and Josef Tomáš (Prague 2015), 187–8.

<sup>131</sup> Jiří Havelka, *Dvojitý život*, 40.



**Figure 2.5** Czech President Emil Hácha leaves a meeting with Reinhard Heydrich on 17 December 1941, accompanied by August Popelka (left), head of the Chancellery of the Czech President, and Heydrich's adjutant Hermann Kluckhorn (right). Source: National Archives, Prague, Karl Hermann Frank Photo Collection, no. 1184.



the Czech historian Josef Matoušek, had the first draft ready by June 1939. In the field of public administration, the authors of the programme emphasised solidarity and the estates as the principles organising life in the Protectorate, which was to represent 'the organisational expression of the idea of *národní pospolitost* in economic and social life'.<sup>132</sup> Nor was the 'Aryan purification' of Czech society left out, because 'Jews, on account of their alien race and because of their activities which severely damaged the nation, are excluded from participation in the *národní pospolitost*', as the programme proposal stated.<sup>133</sup> 'National life' was to be organised according to three basic pillars: *národní pospolitost*, social justice in corporatist terms, and morality and education in the national and Christian spirit.<sup>134</sup> The manifestations of Czech anti-Semitism appearing in the debate on the emerging programme were underscored by the dispute over the 'Jewish question' and the power struggle within the National Partnership. The movement thus rested, for the time being, on relatively loosely formulated ideas that offered ample room for anyone interested in working for the nation. As Jeremy King has observed, the initiators of the National Partnership proceeded from the premise that 'Czechness' was not defined subjectively by one's own self-identification, but objectively by demonstrating knowledge of the language. According to King, the leaders of the National Partnership could thus pursue a practical goal. By forming a new national identity on the basis of a political platform, they could discourage Czechs from having an interest in Reich citizenship.<sup>135</sup>

The National Partnership never published its programme. The ambiguity surrounding it can be interpreted in terms of difficulties in achieving the goal and, in part, as an intention. The loose definition of the movement did not commit current or future members to a single interpretation and allowed a wide range of individuals of various political beliefs to be included in the structures of the National Partnership. The marginal representation of fascists in its ranks, and, conversely, the strong participation of former Social Democrats and representatives of the right-wing conservative National Unity Party, showed close cooperation of members of the former political parties during the occupation and their inclination towards the reconstruction of the state and society in the spirit of the Autumn Revolution. However, the National Partnership could not avoid scandals. It was consistently attacked by Czech fascists for its inadequacy and alleged political backwardness. As late as June 1940, Kurt Ziemke, Reich Foreign Ministry representative to the Reich Protector in Prague, reported to Berlin that the reduction

<sup>132</sup> Jan Gebhart and Jan Kuklík, 'Počátky Národního souručenství v roce 1939', *Český časopis historický* 91 (1993), No. 3, 436.

<sup>133</sup> Gebhart and Kuklík, 'Počátky Národního souručenství'.

<sup>134</sup> NA, NS Coll., Carton 21: Chronicle of the National Partnership, p. 100.

<sup>135</sup> Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948* (Princeton, Oxford 2005), 180.

of membership and changes in the Committee of the National Partnership merely mirrored the post-Munich 'Beran-Hampl'-type alliance, referring to the former leaders of the Agrarian and Social Democratic parties, Rudolf Beran and Antonín Hampl. According to Ziemke, this alliance even lent the Committee an 'Agrarian-Marxist character'.<sup>136</sup>

After the formation of the National Partnership, there were attempts to more precisely define the idea of *národní pospolitost*. The definition of the 'Czech nation' became crucial. According to the National Partnership, the nation was the essential collective entity that 'decided' on its future and 'accepted' its tasks in the implementation of the New Europe project. The population formed a compact group, the hallmark of which was Czech nationality conditional on a non-Jewish origin. While it included other smaller collective identities (e.g. workers and employed women), it explicitly excluded the Jewish population, political opponents (resistance fighters) and, after the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, Czechoslovak exiles. The anti-Jewish orientation of the National Partnership was expressed by its representatives very early on when, shortly after its formation, they encouraged the Protectorate government to promulgate an official definition of the term 'Jew' based on religious affiliation.<sup>137</sup> In this very exclusive form, however, the *národní pospolitost* was primarily part of the language spoken by the solidarity community of non-Jewish Czechs.

Despite its obscure position in the Protectorate political system, the National Partnership's political aspirations remained high. This showed that the movement was not a form of camouflage in political partisanship but an expression of lofty ambitions in the field of public administration and legislation. In mid-May 1939, the Protectorate Ministry of Social and Health Administration assigned to its Presidium a Chief Ministerial Commissioner and his deputies, whose task was to mediate a permanent and effective link with the National Partnership.<sup>138</sup> The Partnership exercised ideological control over government policy, and its leadership also took a very active interest in the broader government agenda. The instruction given to members of the Protectorate government to maintain close contact with representatives of the National Partnership, as well as the Protectorate Prime Minister's suggestion that 'all Government proposals and drafts be submitted to the National Partnership's Committee for consideration and comments prior to being discussed', demonstrate the effort that was made to consistently coordinate government policy with the activities of the National Partnership.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>136</sup> Gerald Mund (ed.), *Deutschland und das Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren. Aus den deutschen diplomatischen Akten von 1939 bis 1945* (Munich 2014), Document No. 257, 387.

<sup>137</sup> King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*, 180 and 181.

<sup>138</sup> NA, Ministry of Social Welfare (henceforth MSP Coll.), Carton 239: Ministry of Social and Health Administration: Memorandum No. 92: Cooperation with the National Partnership.

<sup>139</sup> NA, MSP Coll., Carton 239: On competences of the National Partnership and its Committee, 31 May 1939; similarly also Memorandum of the Presidium of the Ministry of Social and Health Administration No. 105, 9 June 1939.

In this respect, the single political party was in an exceptional position. By order of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, a collective body consisting of the Protectorate Ministers, it could request reports on what position the government had taken regarding its proposals and why, or request explanations for why the government had deviated from the National Partnership's suggestions. The participation of the National Partnership in law-making was to some extent a procedural complication that slowed down the entire legislative process.<sup>140</sup> This difficulty could have been resolved by involving the National Partnership in the commentary procedure, as suggested by some observers. However, the new practice would have elevated the National Partnership to the same level as a ministry and thus it would have received draft bills simultaneously with other government bodies, as expressed in the proposal regulating the participation of the National Partnership in the legislative work of the government formulated in January 1940.<sup>141</sup>

The political and social importance of the National Partnership for the national movement led to the use of its structures to form anti-German groups and to attacks from Czech fascists. The National Partnership quickly fell into crisis as the dependence of the Protectorate institutions on the occupation administration grew, and this development culminated after the assassination of Heydrich. The National Partnership was basically a failed project for all parties involved. In fact, this was how the actors themselves came to understand it. A possible way out of this crisis was described by Otakar Havel, a member of the National Partnership Committee, who from the beginning was one of the advocates of a far-reaching political reconstruction, which, in his opinion, was to lead to the integration and development of national forces. According to Havel, 'national distinctiveness' was essential, and he argued that:

The degree of [a small nation's] freedom and its rights is determined by the degree of its usefulness to the community of nations in a larger whole.<sup>142</sup>

As a strong critic of the activities of the National Partnership in the first years of the occupation, he was committed to its necessary transformation associated with the expansion of its competences, as he also tried to express by proposing a new name: the Czech National Social Workers' Partnership. Havel's dissatisfaction was shared by others. The possibilities for social reconstruction through the National Partnership were diminishing, especially due to the interference of the occupation administration in the activities of the Protectorate authorities.

<sup>140</sup> NA, MSP Coll., Carton 239: Presidium of the Ministry of Social and Health Administration, Memorandum No. 122, 26 July 1939.

<sup>141</sup> NA, MSP Coll., Carton 239: Participation of the National Partnership in legislative procedures of the Government, 7 January 1940.

<sup>142</sup> Otakar Havel, *Zkouška české životaschopnosti* (Prague 1941), 15.

Around 1942, the National Partnership was transformed into a cultural and social corporation. This process was preceded by several significant events, including the German attack on the Soviet Union (June 1941), Heydrich's appointment as Deputy Reich Protector and the beginning of the siege of Leningrad (both September 1941), and the Wannsee Conference, which decided the fate of the European Jews (January 1942). The National Partnership largely abandoned politics and was engaged in cultural and social roles, especially in relation to its members and people in need. Its activities had stopped resonating with the Protectorate as a whole, but they had certainly not ceased completely. Prior to the liberation of the Bohemian lands in May 1945, the National Partnership focused mainly on the organisation of lectures, public courses, theatre and film performances and political education of its members. Between January and June 1944 alone, it organised or co-organised 11,694 events throughout the Protectorate, which were attended by almost three million visitors.<sup>143</sup> It was also involved in the care of internal migrants, people who were forced to move as a result of the Protectorate's land policy. In the late Protectorate, the Partnership participated in public life as an auxiliary organisation, while some of its existing, especially political roles were transferred to other institutions.

### **From the national to the working community and solidarity**

The ambiguity of the Autumn Revolution, with too much diversity of opinion, caused the German intervention in Czech affairs. As early as 1940, one contemporary observer described embarrassment at the ongoing reconstruction.

The Czech nation, too, is turning away from liberalism, but it is still in a quandary as to what it should do so that it as a whole could lay a firm and secure foundation for its future national existence in its own country.<sup>144</sup>

The reconstruction of the state and society as envisaged by Czech politicians and social elites during the Autumn Revolution was slowed down by the interventions of the German authorities in the autonomous status of the Protectorate. Its autonomy – as defined in Adolf Hitler's decree of 16 March 1939 – was a prerequisite for the reconstruction initiated from within the nation and from above by the Protectorate institutions. It became the basis for political considerations on social protection and demographic growth of the 'Czech nation'. Restrictions of autonomy threatened the reconstruction programme and, on the face of it, social protection for the members of the nation. Critics argued that the National

<sup>143</sup> NA, NS Coll., Carton 8: Věstník Národního souručenství No. 6/1944, No. 8, 15 August 1944, p. 62.

<sup>144</sup> František Havlena, *Pracovní výchovou k blahobytu* (Prague 1940), 13–14.

Partnership failed to balance all political currents and allegedly became similarly chaotic to interwar politics and delegitimised the reconstruction process. The new outline of the working and social community (*pracovní a sociální pospolitost*) as it emerged between 1941 and 1942 is symptomatic of the period following the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich on 27 May 1942, although even then the national rhetoric was not entirely abandoned. The ideology of the *národní pospolitost* did not disappear, but it lost support in the National Partnership and the Protectorate government, and it was becoming rather hollow as the official doctrine of the Czech national representation.

The failure of the reconstruction was linked to the crisis of the Protectorate's institutions. They were believed to have failed, and the nation was hesitant in building the New Europe. The specific reasons for the failure of the National Partnership were named by Oldřich Kuba, a journalist from the daily *Lidové noviny* (People's newspaper) and a member of the Social Committee of the National Partnership.<sup>145</sup> Kuba, the lesser-known Czech collaborators with the Nazis, was one of the most active and, at the same time, the most central supporters of the reconstruction and was also one of the creators of the ideology of the *národní pospolitost* as a form of sub-state nationalism. According to him, the dismal state of public institutions was already evident in the autumn of 1941. The Czechs had been 'seduced by the appeals of the exiles', who had meanwhile established a Czechoslovak government in exile in London. The German Reich had 'rightly' punished them for this and supported 'a new governmental direction of positive and activist forces' leading to the creation of a 'unity of opinion' between the Czech President and the Czech government, which occurred in January 1942.<sup>146</sup> The unity of opinion Kuba refers to here is none other than the first openly collaborationist Czech government, which was appointed during Heydrich's tenure in Prague. The use of Protectorate institutions to form anti-German resistance groups, which Kuba pointed out in his commentary, encouraged the occupation authorities to carry out persecutions and security measures. This was first manifested on a larger scale in the autumn of 1939 with the closure of Czech universities, which increased distrust and fuelled fears for the continued existence of the nation. Later, the events of the first and second martial law – declared after Heydrich's arrival in Prague in September 1941 and again after his death in May 1942 – further exacerbated this situation.

The loss of positions and the increase in German control over the Protectorate authorities' activities systematically undermined the fragile attitude of the Czechs

<sup>145</sup> Oldřich Kuba worked as a contributor to the daily *Lidové noviny*, the Press Service of the National Partnership and the School Publishing House. Kuba is listed with the title of doctor in the list of journalists whom the purge committee of the Syndicate of Czechoslovak Journalists expelled from the journalist union and banned from further journalistic activities after the Second World War. However, this information is partly put in doubt by another document from the Ministry of Finance. Jan Cebe, *Spolkový život českých novinářů v letech 1945–1948* (Prague 2015), 251.

<sup>146</sup> Oldřich Kuba, *Bud – anebo! Pohled na českou skutečnost* (Prague 1943), 159.



**Figure 2.6** What was secretly said among ordinary people? So-called whispered propaganda (*šeptaná propaganda*) was one of the tools of domestic resistance. At the same time, the moods and observations of the people were closely monitored and captured by the Nazi security service. Here the Protectorate authorities warn that whispered propaganda is ‘harmful to the future of our (Czech) nation’ and must be ‘suppressed’. Source: Military Central Archive – Military Historical Archive, Prague, Poster Collection 1939–45.

towards the building of the New Europe, in which, however, Czech participation was increasingly desirable from the point of view of the German occupiers. Racial surveys and especially economic prospects showed this. While the tendency to unite the nation was perhaps even stronger in a time of publicly declared violence, the efforts to adapt the 'Czech nation' to the world being built by Nazi Germany were increasingly losing pace and potential effectiveness. Czech national unity was actually taking shape, but it was characterised by a different value orientation than that sought by the Czech political representation and the Nazis in the Protectorate.

The ineffectiveness of the ideology of *národní pospolitost* resulted from the untenable position of the Protectorate political leadership vis-à-vis the Czech fascists and the occupation authorities. The National Partnership was also greatly resented by Reinhard Heydrich himself because it reminded him too much of the German NSDAP. Obviously, the Czechs were not supposed to adopt proven German recipes. Speaking of the National Partnership, Heydrich stated at a meeting of his staff in October 1941:

It would be a mistake to give to the Czechs what makes us strong in the Reich. It must therefore not become a permanent fixture so that the nation can be truly depoliticised and retain no organisational connection to support itself.<sup>147</sup>

Heydrich contemplated replacing the relationship to the nation with a relationship to the respective corporates or replacing the National Partnership with a corporates-based organisation where the relationship of the individual to their relevant estate would be paramount – to divide 'the population into political estates which will let the interests of the little man dissolve completely in the material thoughts concerning his occupation', as he suggested.<sup>148</sup> However, the plan Heydrich had in mind was never implemented on this scale. Originally, it was assumed that the National Partnership would be replaced by another organisation, headed not by the Czech President but by the Reich Protector. Primarily, the Germans feared the reaction if Emil Hácha was removed from participation in a unified political platform. However, corporatism was not a coherent programme here, but rather a tool to facilitate the political passivity of the Czech population.<sup>149</sup>

Corporate-based politics gradually disappeared from Heydrich's occupation strategy, but some of its features may have persisted. They were echoed in the shift away from the national community towards the working community that occurred during the period of rethinking of the results of the Autumn Revolution in 1941 and 1942. Corporatism may have been reflected in the genesis of labour communities, for example, by the building of 'factory communities', expressing the unity

<sup>147</sup> Miroslav Kárný, 'Hlavní rysy okupační politiky Reinharda Heydricha', in *Protektorátní politika Reinharda Heydricha*, ed. Miroslav Kárný, Jaroslava Milotová and Margita Kárná (Prague 1991), 37.

<sup>148</sup> Kárný, 'Hlavní rysy okupační politiky Reinharda Heydricha', 37.

<sup>149</sup> Kárný, 'Hlavní rysy okupační politiky Reinharda Heydricha', 38.

of interest between employees and employers. Factory communities were to help prevent class conflict within the enterprise, which was one of the aims of the corporatist state. However, the Protectorate can hardly be regarded as such. Under the Nazi slogan of 'through the benefit of the whole to the benefit of the individual', the collective aspect of the overall organisation of the Protectorate society was emphasised even more. At this point, social policy in the Protectorate also allegedly ceased to be 'social' in the ordinary sense of the word. It was becoming 'socialist' because it applied to all workers, as the Czech economist Jaroslav Halbhüser noted at the end of 1942.<sup>150</sup>

The transformation of the *národní pospolitost* into a working community occurred gradually and never completed. At the beginning of the greatest crisis of the Protectorate, which took place during the second state of emergency, declared after the assassination of Heydrich, there was a brief escalation of radical Czech nationalism. After Heydrich's death on 4 June 1942, tensions and persecution escalated in the hunt for the 'assassins' – parachutists sent by the Czechoslovak government in London – to which many individuals as well as the villages of Lidice and Ležáky, razed by the Nazis, fell victim. The language of Czech radical nationalism was made explicit when the 'Czech nation' assembled in Prague and other major Czech cities in the Protectorate shortly after the assassination. It was exclusively Czechs who were required to show up, and it was only the Czech press that encouraged people to do so. The aim was public condemnation of Heydrich's assassination and the assassins. When Jaroslav Krejčí, the Prime Minister of the Czech government in the Protectorate, stood before a crowd of 60,000 on Old Town Square in Prague at 8 p.m. on 2 June 1942, he said to the Czech people:

One nation, which has its own President, its own Government, its own autonomy, its own schools, its own extensive press and its own great culture, stands on solid foundations. Therefore, to speak of a threat to national existence ... is nothing but irresponsible incitement and service to the enemy.<sup>151</sup>

Krejčí was reacting to the events immediately following the assassination of Heydrich. He called for firm national unity within the protective bond of the German Reich and outlined the choice that the 'Czech nation' was currently facing. The Czechs were either to accept their role in the New Europe or to stand in opposition and symbolically declare war on the Germans. This first demonstration was followed by further public agitations in the squares of large Bohemian and Moravian cities. They always followed the same script. The assembled people publicly condemned the assassination and expressed their loyalty to the Reich. The

<sup>150</sup> Jaroslav Halbhüser, 'Zásady nové politiky mzdové', *Naše doba. Revue pro vědu, umění a život sociální* (1942), No. 2, 54.

<sup>151</sup> NA, Reich Protector's Office – Supplements I Collection, Sign. IV Pro 123/6, Carton 53: Draft speech of Jaroslav Krejčí.



rally then concluded with the singing of 'Where is my home,' the Czech national anthem used since 1918.<sup>152</sup> The manifestations had a very symbolic meaning, which still demonstrated the strength and cohesion of the Czech národní pospolitost.

Maintaining a dialogue between the Protectorate authorities and the Czech population was one of the main features of Protectorate policy in the first years of the occupation. This can also be observed later but under completely different circumstances. It was characterised by explicit anti-Soviet propaganda, which in January 1944 led to the establishment of a new Czech organisation, the League Against Bolshevism (Liga proti bolševismu). Its incorporation under the Ministry of Education and Popular Enlightenment, led by the leading Czech collaborator Emanuel Moravec, made it an undisguised and public collaborationist entity from the outset. In the spring of 1944, however, it was a body that stood at the top of the organisation of national life in the Protectorate. It had no lower organisational branches, but it used the lower levels of the existing network of institutions, especially the National Partnership and the Czech trade unions. The founding of the League six months before the Allied invasion of Normandy represented a change in strategy consisting of the use of negative propaganda and more rigorous supervision of the Czech administration by the German authorities. This change is illustrated by the commentary of Karl Hermann Frank made at a meeting with the inspectors of the German State Ministry, an essential occupation authority after Heydrich's death, which Frank headed. In April 1944, when asked by the inspectors what the League Against Bolshevism was planning to focus on, Frank spoke of several political events and added that 'the German party needs to support these activities extensively, but its direction must not be revealed in any way'.<sup>153</sup> The coordination of Czech national policy by the German authorities became an increasingly prominent feature of the occupation policy, a legacy of Heydrich's tactics in the Bohemian lands.

The intervention of the Germans was not the only reason for the gradual loss of legitimacy of the national government in the eyes of the people. In an attempt to maintain as much legitimacy as possible, the national governments in the occupied territories tried not to betray the population by their actions and tried to incorporate Nazi and national demands into their rule. They usually lost legitimacy when concessions to the occupiers became dominant. The government, which answered to the occupying power, was held responsible for the general unrest, strikes, demonstrations and acts of sabotage committed by the population in response to the government's actions. For example, after widespread general anti-German manifestations and street clashes in 1943, the Danish government

<sup>152</sup> Elaborated in Radka Šustrová, 'Ve jménu Říše a českého národa: Veřejné manifestace po atentátu na Reinharda Heydricha', *Paměť a dějiny* 6 (2012), No. 2, 48–59.

<sup>153</sup> NA, NSM Coll., Sign. 110-1/20, Carton 2, Folio 30: Niederschrift über die Dienstbesprechung der Oberlandräte, 4 April 1944.

was given an ultimatum to take effective steps against the riots, declare a state of emergency and threaten the demonstrators with the death penalty. Otherwise, the German military authorities would intervene. In August 1943, the Danish government responded by resigning.<sup>154</sup> The Czech national government never decided to resign, although it seriously considered doing so in the spring of 1941. This was intended primarily as a gesture of recognition of the Czechoslovak government in exile in London, led by former President Edvard Beneš. In the end, however, the Protectorate government decided to remain in office. It was a choice of the lesser evil – as they believed – which would enable it to shield the Czech population from the effects of the war.

In the eyes of the occupiers, the ‘unreliability’ of the Czechs was a sign of the failure of their national government. It was manifested by their lack of flexibility or even anti-German activities, and later by the extensive support provided to the Anthropoid parachute unit in preparing the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich. The new structure of the social and working community was to provide an even stronger rationalisation for Protectorate policy. In the public sphere, it marked a partial departure from the language of Czech nationalism and a much stronger focus on notions such as labour, performance, remuneration and social and health care. Workers were literally to become ‘guarantors of the community’, as the Czech trade union monthly *Práce a hospodářství* (Labour and economy) reported in 1942. The collective concern of national ideology was manifested in various dimensions of life and, to a large extent, specifically in the social sphere:

Národní pospolitost is the protoplasm of the actions and thinking of interest groups and individuals. Together with the idea of the community as the eternal oscillator of the national will, the národní pospolitost is the only recognised environment in which the individual or any association can work successfully and well.<sup>155</sup>

Purposeful and responsible performance of work duties provided the opportunity to participate in the národní pospolitost and to draw on a range of social services, from social insurance to supplemental indigent care programmes.

Reflections on the národní pospolitost did not disappear during the second half of the war, but there was a transformation of its advocates and an emphasis on the social profile of the community. In 1944, Oldřich Kuba wrote of a true reversal in the political thinking of the Czechs which proved that ‘we are a cultured nation and must prove by our labour that we have the right to the life and a better place

<sup>154</sup> Claus B. Christensen believes the government’s resignation was primarily caused by the loss of its control over the territory it was supposed to administer, not a demonstrative act of refusal to cooperate with Germany. Claus Bundgård Christensen, ‘“The Five Evil Years”: National Self-image, Commemoration and Historiography in Denmark 1945–2010. Trends in Historiography and Commemoration’, in *Hitler’s Scandinavian Legacy: The Consequences of the German Invasion for the Scandinavian Countries Then and Now*, ed. John Gilmour and Jill Stephenson (London 2013), 150.

<sup>155</sup> Vítězslav Slezák, ‘Pracující jako ručitelé pospolitosti’, *Práce a hospodářství* (1942), 191 and 193.



**Figure 2.7** A Czech family looking towards the future with the conviction that they 'believe' in National Partnership. Source: Military Central Archive – Military Historical Archive, Prague, Poster Collection 1939–45.

in tomorrow's Europe'.<sup>156</sup> According to Kuba, the consciousness of the contemporary 'Czech nation' had three levels in the form of national, Reich and European unity. In other words, the Czech *národní pospolitost*, integrated into the broader union with the Third Reich, was to participate in the building of a prosperous and solidary New Europe under German leadership. In this interpretation, it also had a strong social dimension. It demonstrated a recognition of one's duty to the whole community and to all those in need through participation in national collections and other self-help activities. There was a direct line from the national community

<sup>156</sup> Oldřich Kuba, 'Česká politika po Mnichově', in *Po pěti letech 1939–1944* (Prague 1944), 133 and 135.

to the Reich and European community. Kuba understood the determined actions of the members of the *národní pospolitost* to be the result of successful 'de-politicisation' as 'progress in the national consciousness', by which he meant the cessation of political power struggles followed by a focus on performance and merit within the community.<sup>157</sup> Identification with the *národní pospolitost* was the first step on the road to the acceptance of the Reich and European community, in which the Czechs were to be distinct and valid members.

Oldřich Kuba, the most active advocate of the Czech *národní pospolitost*, thought of Czech national ideology in the context of the Third Reich and Europe as a whole. He considered the instruments of this revolutionary act to consist in adherence to the Christian faith and the establishment of an optimal relationship with Germany, as he noted in his text titled *Either – or!* (1943), which he published under a pseudonym. There he relied on the argument that it was necessary for the Bohemian lands to integrate into a larger political and economic whole to solve the 'problem of the small nation', referring to T. G. Masaryk's analytical treatise of the same name, first presented in 1905.<sup>158</sup> Surprisingly, Kuba referred back to Masaryk's legacy already in his book on the development of German thought. In it, he described the German revolution of 1933 as 'true' and related it to the metaphorical expression of the 'revolution of hearts and minds' which, in Masaryk's terms, described the inner transformation of people and their orientation towards the humanitarian ideal as the meaning of history.<sup>159</sup> Kuba believed in the historical inevitability of Czech participation in the project of European integration, which, however, following the experiences of the interwar era, could no longer be implemented on the basis of 'democratic resolutions' but only 'under the leadership of a genius leader'.<sup>160</sup> Participation in the New Europe was conditioned on the internal reconstruction of society and the revival of political thought and thinking about the nation. Instead of the racial terminology and community exclusivity mentioned by Vajtauer, Kuba focused on the function and role of the individual and his integrative potential, as he demonstrated in the following words from 1944.

To mould a 'great' Czech man is to make of him a moral, cultural and working type who would not only fulfil the ideal of Czechness but at the same time make a working, moral and cultural contribution to Adolf Hitler's socialist Europe. Such meaning must be given to Czech patriotism today if we want to save our nation for the future. There should be no national chauvinism. First of all, one needs to be an honest and hard-working man: that is patriotism.<sup>161</sup>

<sup>157</sup> Kuba, *Česká politika po Mnichově*, 133 and 135.

<sup>158</sup> T. G. Masaryk, *Problém malého národa* (Prague 1937).

<sup>159</sup> T. Masaryk, *Česká otázka* (Prague 1895); Jan Zlom, *Vývoj německého myšlení* (Prague 1941), 7.

<sup>160</sup> Kuba, *Bud' – anebo!*, 83.

<sup>161</sup> Kuba, *Bud' – anebo!*, 88.

The emphasis on patriotism and the values espoused, despite the thorough revision of Czechness in the context of Kuba's interpretation of belonging to the Nazi Reich, reflected the situation of the second half of the war and the Nazi occupation. However, they were not unique to the Czech experience. Protectorate President Emil Hácha, Philippe Pétain, the head of the French government in Vichy, and the Dutch political leader Hendrik Colijn were just as patriotic. Patriotism did not preclude collaboration, just as collaboration could be accompanied by authentic patriotism. In practice, it entailed not only a commitment to the reconstruction of the state and society but also a role in Germany's victory in the war. Its central framework was the total mobilisation of manpower and material along the lines of Hitler's decree of 13 January 1943 calling for the 'adaptation of the Reich's autonomous administration to total war'. Its implementation was entrusted to the Reich executive authorities and to the General Plenipotentiary for Labour Deployment, Gauleiter and Reich Governor Fritz Sauckel, who ordered the conscription of Czech men aged sixteen to sixty-five and Czech women aged seventeen to forty-five for 'effective work'.<sup>162</sup> The messages about confident belief in a better life that Protectorate propaganda continued to use supposedly showed a more welcoming and encouraging side of the Protectorate regime. In return, however, it demanded hard work for the ultimate German victory in the war.

Czechs did not experience the Second World War as soldiers on the front lines. They went to Germany on work deployments, watched the war unfold from behind the lines of one of the principal belligerents and read about it in the newspapers. The wartime battlefields in the distant Pacific, the emphatic news of Germany's imminent victory, as well as the information about the Protectorate's 'socialism of action' presented in the press, were intended to help the population concentrate on work in war-relevant industries. The sequential creation of community – from the family to the nation, to the political union with the German Reich, and finally to the European cultural community – was to mark a path that was binding on the members of the Czech *národní pospolitost*.<sup>163</sup> The emphasis on working community and solidarity became the mainstay of the legitimisation strategy in the late Protectorate.

The reconstruction of state and society had a wider impact than is usually noted. The Autumn Revolution was supposed to give rise to a homogeneous national community of Czechs. The ideology of *národní pospolitost* reinforced the notion of an exclusive community of Czechs constructed on racial grounds. While at the beginning this vision was defined by the construct of a Czech national community without the participation of Carpathian Ruthenians, Slovaks, Jews or Roma, but also Germans, who formed their own 'enclosed community', later the

<sup>162</sup> Gebhart and Kuklík, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české*, Volume 15b, 191.

<sup>163</sup> Kuba, *Bud' – anebo!*, 157.



**Figure 2.8** Photograph from the visit of the General Plenipotentiary for Labour Deployment Fritz Sauckel on 8–9 June 1943 in Prague. Sauckel (right) in conversation with K. H. Frank and German General Rudolf Toussaint. Source: National Archives, Prague, Karl Hermann Frank Photo Collection, no. 1801.

central role was played by the interest of the Protectorate quasi-state in welfare and the official topic of the ‘Czech nation’s’ unity. Czech ethnic nationalism, as it manifested after the Munich Agreement and during the Protectorate period, had a far-reaching effect on the people’s perception of themselves and others. The dynamics of Czech nationalism in the Protectorate and among exiles led to plans for a post-war settlement and the removal of three million Germans from Czechoslovakia after the war.

The idea of a ‘national cleansing’ of the Bohemian lands by the removal of the Germans was contained in the programme of the Czechoslovak government in exile under pressure from the Czech domestic resistance in the Protectorate.<sup>164</sup> The question of what post-war Czechoslovakia would look like was an important part of the negotiations with the domestic resistance on supporting the exiled President Edvard Beneš, who sought recognition of his office in London as the legitimate Czechoslovak government in exile by the French and British governments.

<sup>164</sup> Gebhart and Kuklík, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české*, Volume 15b. Specifically on national cleansing see Frommer, *National Cleansing*.

The 'For Freedom to the New Czechoslovak Republic' programme, which was being finalised in February 1941 among the Czech non-communist resistance groups, quickly embraced the idea of a post-war nation-state and the expulsion of Germans, albeit so far only those who openly supported the Sudeten German separatists and the Nazis.<sup>165</sup> Behind the radical solution of a population transfer was a vision, however, which was first outlined by the Prime Minister of the first Second Republic government, Jan Syrový, in November 1938. The 'monolithic national wholes', as Syrový called them, had since become a lived reality in the Protectorate and conclusively also the political programme of the Czechoslovak exile government.<sup>166</sup> The idea of a nationally homogeneous state spread from the homeland to the exiles, who applied this form of organisation in an even more rigorous form.<sup>167</sup> The solution to the 'German question' thus gradually shifted to an arbitrary solution in the form of the expulsion of all Germans from post-war Czechoslovakia. The origin of this idea lay in the post-Munich Second Republic and had its basis in the Czech concept of *národní pospolitost*. After the autumn of 1938, living in an environment strongly permeated by the idea of the exclusivity of one's own community must necessarily have influenced the way Czechs thought about themselves and others. The adoption of the language and mentality of 'uniform national entities' thus had a fatal impact on post-war development.

### **'Cooperation' as a meaningful act**

The expansion of Nazi hegemony, as we can trace it on the map of Europe from the spring of 1938 at the latest,<sup>168</sup> was a process of implementing the power structures, law and ideology of National Socialism, from the complete domination of space and the establishment of a colonial German administration to occupation regimes effectively and efficiently using domestic political forces. In addition to these external stimuli, domestic political tendencies were of considerable importance, contributing to the convergence of political forces on the German and occupied sides. Czechoslovakia was not exceptional in the late 1930s or early 1940s in its

<sup>165</sup> *Za svobodu do nové Československé republiky* (Prague 1946), 76.

<sup>166</sup> The creation, if possible, of a nationally homogeneous state was the goal of Edvard Beneš's policy in exile, as stated by the British diplomat and representative to the Czechoslovak government in exile Bruce Lockhart, to whom Beneš explained his concepts in September and October 1940.

<sup>167</sup> This is shown, for example, by the exchange of despatches between the representatives of the exile government and the domestic resistance at the end of 1940, where the unacceptability of the plan to create three German districts within Czechoslovakia was confirmed, as well as other solutions for the Central European region based on negotiations with the representatives of the Sudeten Germans.

<sup>168</sup> The remilitarisation of the Rhineland in March 1936 can, in fact, be regarded as the first step in Nazi expansionist policy. However, in terms of reshaping the political map and regimes in Europe, which is of most interest to me here, we can speak of the period beginning with the annexation of Austria to the German Reich in March 1938.

move towards 'national unity' and the strengthening of national tradition.<sup>169</sup> Certain parallels can be found in pre-war history. Despite their fragmentation and often political insignificance, the domestic fascist or Nazi Germany-sympathising movements in the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Belgium and Czechoslovakia were a phenomenon that stemmed from dissatisfaction with the development and functioning of the interwar democracies and the consequences of the Great Depression. However, a few years later, they grew stronger because of the Nazi occupation, which coordinated domestic politics that cooperated with the occupier. Beyond that, however, the fascists were only a segment of the national forces that came into power after Germans took over the country. They were complemented by representatives of various political trends and movements, forming together an all-national political camp.

This section seeks to illuminate how and why national actors served the administration established by Nazi Germany in occupied countries, particularly in reference to the Czech case. When talking about nationalism and visions of the nation in the New Europe, it is highly challenging to avoid the concept of 'collaboration', which – as Hans Lemberg pointed out – was only shaped by experiences during the war.<sup>170</sup> National movements effectively worked in favour of constituting the legitimacy of the occupational regime at various levels of political, economic and social action. The collaboration of national governments with the occupying power – the German civilian or military administration – occurred in many countries occupied by Nazi Germany. Nevertheless, collaboration as a term that encompasses a wide range of practices and behaviours shows the overlap of resistance and collaboration in between the extreme poles of fascist and Nazi collaboration and illegal resistance.<sup>171</sup> This very specifically relates to the Protectorate, which was generally one of the calmest territories occupied by Germany during the Second World War. The relative tranquillity that characterised Bohemia and Moravia can largely be seen as a consequence of the involvement of the national forces in the public administration of the occupied area. However, the patriotism that historians have rightly attributed to many Czech national leaders was equally well displayed by Philippe Pétain in Vichy France or Hendrik Colijn in the

<sup>169</sup> Historian Jan Tesař was the first to critically analyse the Czech national revival in 1938 onwards. See Jan Tesař, "Záchrana národa" a kolaborace, *Dějiny a současnost* 10 (1968), No. 5, 5–9; Tesař, *Traktát o 'záchrane národa'*.

<sup>170</sup> Hans Lemberg, 'Evropská kolaborace se Třetí říší okolo roku 1941', in *Porozumění Češi – Němci – východní Evropa, 1848–1948* (Prague 1999), 304.

<sup>171</sup> See Hirschfeld, *Fremdherrschaft und Kollaboration*; Jan T. Gross, 'Themes for a Social History of War Experience and Collaboration', in *The Politics of Retribution in Europe*, ed. István Deák, Jan T. Gross and Tony Judt (Princeton 2009), 15–30; Karl Heinz Roth, 'Die Sozialpolitik des "europäischen Großraums" im Spannungsfeld von Okkupation und Kollaboration (1938–1945). Bisherige Forschungen – Quellenprobleme – erste Ergebnisse', in *Okkupation und Kollaboration (1938–1945). Beiträge zu Konzepten und Praxis der Kollaboration in der deutschen Okkupationspolitik*, ed. Werner Röhr (Berlin 1994), 461–560.



occupied Netherlands. Patriotism did not exclude collaboration, just as authentic patriotism could accompany collaboration.

In this book, however, I lean towards the concept of 'cooperation' rather than 'collaboration' with the Nazis. In her analysis of relations between occupiers and occupied in Norway, Maria Fritsche distinguishes three categories of relations: relations of conflict, relations of cooperation and realities of solidarity.<sup>172</sup> Relations of cooperation, describing instrumental relations that were primarily profit-oriented, became a fundamental basis of everyday interactions at various political and expert levels. The interaction of actors and the common will to reconstruct the state and society opens up questions concerning the forms and extent of cooperation between domestic forces that entered public service within the structures of the Protectorate. Actors did not set to work to rebuild the state and society, assuming they would serve the criminal regime. They entered the service of the new state administration with their own programme of 'unity and protection of the nation' and were willing to work for its implementation personally. Antonín Zelenka, a former ILO fellow, as mentioned earlier, is an excellent example. His essential role in the constitution of the Protectorate is rather underscored by the fact that in 1942 he was investigated for contacts with Antonín Hampl, a former leader of the Czechoslovak social democratic party, officially for alleged 'conduct hostile to the Reich'.<sup>173</sup> Although many actors came from different ideological backgrounds, sometimes critical of the Nazi project of the New Europe, in the interest of the 'Czech nation', its protection and unity, they decided to help prevent chaos by ensuring continuity and stability. For a time, thanks to their expert knowledge, they became partners to German officials in the administration of the Nazi Protectorate as they worked together to build a functioning state structure. They cooperated and tried to be good administrators of the Protectorate.

Participation in the reconstruction ensured the stability of the territory and its population. Consequently, however, it was also significant for shaping the legitimacy of the National Socialist regime in Bohemia and Moravia. The government engaged in symbolic communication with the population, using social protection and national unity arguments. Either *národní pospolitost* or, from the second half of 1941, the working and social community were not slogans of Nazi demagoguery.

<sup>172</sup> Maria Fritsche, 'Spaces of Encounter: Relations between the Occupier and the Occupied in Norway during the Second World War', *Social History* 45 (2020), No. 3, 362. See also Susanne Heim, Carola Sachse and Mark Walker, 'The Kaiser Wilhelm Society under National Socialism', in *The Kaiser Wilhelm Society under National Socialism*, ed. Susanne Heim, Carola Sachse and Mark Walker (Cambridge 2009), 3. In their research on the collaboration of scientists with the Nazi regime, they concluded that 'cooperation' was a more appropriate term, without relativising the possible effects of the collaboration of experts with the Nazi state. They argue that 'collaboration' or 'collaborative science' can be misleading because it associates scientists with being 'traitors' to science. See also Gross, 'Themes for a Social History'.

<sup>173</sup> Security Services Archive Prague, German courts in the Reich Collection, Sign. 141-425-14: Biography of A. Zelenka provided to the interrogators in the trial against him, 15 May 1942.

The steps taken towards the social protection of the 'Czech nation' and the provision of social stability contributed to the formation of the legitimacy of the Protectorate order, even though it was an occupation, easily recognisable by the presence of German soldiers on the streets.

Cooperation between domestic actors and the occupier is, in a broader sense, a question of domination, institutions of power and the legitimacy of the new order. Legitimacy is not a state but a process of expressing how legitimate the government of the moment is. In the conditions of the occupied Western Europe, the local population constituted an important bar on the scales of political recognition of these governments. In an attempt to retain as much legitimacy as possible, governments tried not to betray the population by their actions and attempted to incorporate the demands of the Nazi power and the local population into their governance. Legitimacy was usually lost when concessions to the occupying power greatly outweighed active government actions perceived as acts in the interest of the occupied nation. In the discussion of occupation regimes, it is indisputable that legitimacy was very fragile and provisional, but it was all the more so when it relied on 'national unity' as an argument for political action and decision-making. In particular, the area of social insurance and social welfare showed that its stabilisation depended primarily on rationally justified Czech activism, which contributed significantly to the legitimacy of the regime in the Protectorate.<sup>174</sup> The Czech government saw itself as the representative and protector of the 'Czech nation', hence its mandate to act at the highest political-administrative level. The growing dependence on the Reich Protector's Office, particularly after the arrival of Heydrich in Prague, was manifested, for example, by the loss of positions in the leadership of important social and economic institutions, causing, as Detlef Brandes has noted, the Protectorate government to 'lose ... its previous influence on the population, from which it derived its legitimacy.'<sup>175</sup>

There were reasons for installing good governance in the occupied territories, expressing aspects of good governance and good administration in response to the bad practices of the previous ruling class. The concept of 'good governance', as elaborated by Martin Conway and Peter Romijn, can be seen as a common programme of the domestic Czech representation and the occupation structures in the March 1939 options.<sup>176</sup> The Protectorate government continued to implement

<sup>174</sup> The concept of rationally justified activism is elaborated in Radka Šustrová, '“Labour that Serves the Good of All”: Technocratic Ideals and Czech Experts in Cooperation with Nazis in Bohemia and Moravia', *Střed / Centre. Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies of Central Europe in the 19th and 20th Century* 12 (2020), No. 2, 36–69.

<sup>175</sup> Detlef Brandes, *Češi pod německým protektorátem: okupační politika, kolaborace a odboj 1939–1945* (Prague 2000), 479.

<sup>176</sup> The concept of 'good governance' comes from the study of management in the 1980s and 1990s. The term conveys a broader framework than simply 'government' or 'public administration' as it invites the study of power, relationships and accountability. See Martin Conway and Peter Romijn (eds), *The War on Legitimacy in Politics and Culture 1936–1946* (Oxford, New York 2008), 119f.

the Autumn Revolution, to stabilise the economic and social situation and to reorient society in a conservative manner. The German authorities consented to this in view of the economic importance of the area and its possible exploitation. Therefore, the stabilisation or even improvement of state-provided social welfare and the situation of the labour market became a newly prominent legitimising instrument, especially in relation to workers. The legitimisation of the regime was influenced not only by actors at the highest level of politics but also, and above all, by the population recognising its government as the authority in the newly formed order. It is therefore more a question of 'legitimacy in practice' and the legitimisation process itself, the study of which is not about the declaration of rules but about the interaction between government and society.<sup>177</sup>

The line between legitimacy and the loyalty (purpose-rational orientation and belief) of the population, as Max Weber noted, can be challenging to discern, especially where there is no alternative to the official social system and mass movements are suppressed.<sup>178</sup> In the Protectorate, as is known from the history of the resistance, the awareness of an alternative was formed among the underground movement circles as a counterweight to, for example, the Czech trade unions. Even at the very beginning of the occupation, when the immediate shock from the presence of a foreign military power on their own territory had worn off, people longed for a return to 'normality' that only the home government could promise under the prevailing conditions. But there were limits to the projection of these popular ideas. From the first state of emergency in the autumn of 1941 at the latest, the Protectorate regime was in a crisis of legitimation. It was also undoubtedly marked by the large, albeit temporary, supply shortages that occurred during the summer of that year. The government was discredited concerning the domestic and foreign resistance by statements supporting the German war, which Prime Minister Alois Eliáš justified in a very unwise manner given his political position, fearing bloodshed and hunger that would drive people into the streets.<sup>179</sup> This fear may have echoed the experience of the First World War, but this assessment was not relevant in 1941. Later, the disruption of the authoritative relationship between the government and the administrative apparatus by the intervention of the occupying power in the autonomous Protectorate structures led to a decline in support among the population and the strengthening of alternative ideas in similar exile and resistance programmes.

Representatives of the non-Nazi cooperation, including Emil Hácha and Alois Eliáš, attract the most attention. The demand to rebuild the state drew actors from across the political spectrum, from conservatives to socialists, into the service of the new political formation. Carpenter demonstrated this unifying

<sup>177</sup> Conway and Romijn, *The War on Legitimacy*, 3.

<sup>178</sup> Max Weber, *Metodologie, sociologie a politika* (Prague 1998), 164.

<sup>179</sup> Gebhart and Kuklík, *Velké dějiny země Koruny české*, Volume 15b, 40.

effect of the Autumn Revolution in a speech by Jaromír Nečas, one of the leading representatives of the National Labour Party and a former Minister of Social Welfare, who was linked with the resistance movement and later became a member of Edvard Beneš's government in exile in London. On 15 March 1939, however, he spoke on Czech Radio in Prague, turning to the Czech audience:

A profound change, going to the foundations of our state, has plunged us all today into the deepest reflection on the future of our nation. ... What is at stake now, first and foremost, is that we should overcome our pain with our reason, that we should not aggravate the political situation of our nation by unprovoked emotional outbursts of grief. ... Keep calm, work and endure now what fate has brought. ... We must orient ourselves correctly and quickly in the living space that remains to our nation. ... We are now a small country. ... Without cooperation with Germany, our biggest neighbour, we would not be able to defend our existence. We live in the middle of the German nation, surrounded by the German people. We have hundreds of economic, social, and cultural interests in common with them. Therefore, our self-interest leads us to cooperate with the German people.<sup>180</sup>

Nečas was among those who took a proactive approach to rebuilding and maintaining functioning representative bodies and a relatively stable public space. They started from their own ideological assumptions, sometimes critical of the ongoing revolution in Europe, as is evident in Nečas's case. However, in the interest of the 'Czech nation', they tried to prevent widespread chaos by maintaining basic economic and social mechanisms. The threat to the republic and the population thus demonstrably brought together divergent opinion groups and encouraged non-Nazi actors, often First Republic democratic circles, to cooperate with their political opponents.

In March 1939, Nečas was also one of the initiators and organisers of the formation of the Czech National Committee, an institution usually described as a fascist project due to the leadership role played by Radola Gajda, a former general of the Czechoslovak army and central figure of the fascist movement in Bohemia and Moravia. However, post-war accounts and some memoirs point to Nečas as the leading personality of the National Committee, ensuring that the institution would be an organ of stabilisation with a more permanent character, setting better conditions for communication with the German authorities. The presence of Jaromír Nečas and other Social Democrats representing the National Labour Party on the Committee shows the unexpected dynamics that the events of March 1939 provided for political deliberation and decision-making.<sup>181</sup> The Committee's

<sup>180</sup> Cited from Tesař, "Záchrana národa" a kolaborace, 6.

<sup>181</sup> Michael Švec, *Jaromír Nečas a jeho role v československo-ukrajinských vztazích*, BA thesis, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University (Prague 2014), 45; Václav Černý, *Křik Koruny české. Paměti 1938–1945. Náš kulturní odboj za války* (Brno 1992); NA, National Court Collection, Carton 164, No: 175: Sentence (Testimony of R. Gajda before the Extraordinary People's Court). A completely different account is provided in the memoirs of Ladislav Feierabend and Zdeněk Fierlinger, both Czechoslovak politicians in exile, which, on the contrary, thematise Nečas's calculating desire for power.

existence was short-lived, and in the following days it was replaced by the National Partnership. However, Nečas did not give up active work even in the following weeks. In June 1939, he took the helm of the Supreme Price Office, one of the most critical institutions set up after the occupation to implement price policy. On his arrival in London, after secretly escaping from the Protectorate, it was this role that he reported to Edvard Beneš:

My activities in the Supreme Price Office were aimed at protecting the Czech people, maintaining their standard of living and protecting the 1,300 officials, among them 500 Czechoslovak officers, who would otherwise have been in a difficult situation.<sup>182</sup>

Nečas's concern for his subordinate officials need not be questioned. However, a side effect of his active participation in political negotiations and in adapting former Czechoslovak institutions to the political conditions of the Protectorate was his personal contribution to ensuring the stability of the territory and thus legitimising the autonomous administration and the new order inclining towards authoritarian welfare.

It is not only the Czech context that shows how difficult it is to determine where the line between collaboration and resistance can be drawn. The Dutch administration in 1940 was oriented towards pragmatic cooperation with the occupation authorities, which enabled its overall successful resistance to Nazi infiltration at the beginning of the occupation, especially at the ministerial level.<sup>183</sup> Similarly, in May 1940, an agreement was reached between the Dutch trade unions and the occupation authorities. Because of the loyalty of the Dutch railway management and their declaration of cooperation with the Germans, the Dutch railways remained in domestic hands. The same people then operated ninety-eight transport trains deporting 112,000 Jews without any of the 30,000 employees of the Dutch railways attempting sabotage or other disruption of the railway operations.<sup>184</sup> Similar contradictory situations occurred elsewhere. In Slovenia, the Nazis countered the growing partisan movement with an expansion of their power and increasing political pragmatism. From the German perspective, the new opportunities for military and civil cooperation were a welcome effect at a time of hardship for the Axis powers. Economic reasons rather than ideology or power were the stimulus. For tens of thousands of Slovenes in Ljubljana, contributing to the German war effort

<sup>182</sup> Document No. 123, December 17, London – J. Nečas, Minister of the Czechoslovak Provisional Government in London, sent E. Beneš an overview of his activities from 15 March 1939 until his flight abroad and, in particular, reports on his contacts with the political representatives of the French and British socialists, with whom he had negotiated on the personal initiative of E. Beneš. Libuše Otáhalová and Milada Červinková (eds), *Dokumenty z historie československé politiky 1939–1943*, Volume 1 (Prague 1966), 150.

<sup>183</sup> Hirschfeld, *Fremdherrschaft und Kollaboration*, 32.

<sup>184</sup> Rab Bennett, *Under the Shadow of the Swastika: The Moral Dilemmas of Resistance and Collaboration in Hitler's Europe* (New York 1999), 50.

meant, above all, the opportunity to continue working.<sup>185</sup> The apparent conflict of competing loyalties created the preconditions for cooperation.

Like the Dutch Union, a national mass movement institution in the Netherlands, the National Partnership was torn between resistance and collaboration. Both sides, Czech and German, were interested in having indigenous forces involved in the administration of the territory, albeit for different reasons: the Czechs clung to autonomous administration with the prospect of at least partial, if in fact rather limited, control by the occupying power, whereas the Nazis saw political actors recruited from local personnel as a convenient instrument for the administration of the occupied territory and a channel of communication with the Czech population. From the point of view of building the Nazi Empire, the political work of the Czech representation was desirable and necessary. It can, therefore, hardly be regarded exclusively as an act of 'goodwill' by the Germans towards the Czechs or as a means of national resistance. The more patriotic the Protectorate government was, the more it contributed to the discipline of the population and, consequently, to the formation of the regime's legitimacy in the Protectorate in the process of finding the role of the 'Czech nation' in the New Europe.

Work on the political reconstruction of the country, as in the case of Hendrik Colijni's Dutch project, could have been a starting point for representatives of various ideological currents. Domestic political and civic elites asked themselves how to establish a dignified place in New Europe, which can be understood as the search for the 'least evil' or even a political 'alternative' to the interwar period's liberal democracy. However, they failed – quite understandably – to foresee further developments. Thus, not only Jaromír Nečas and Antonín Zelenka but also other Czech politicians and experts could be described, in the words of the Dutch historian and translator John Brouwer, as having fallen for the 'escape into illusion'.<sup>186</sup> Brouwer, initially himself an actor in the Dutch reconstruction and later an active participant in the anti-German resistance, which cost him his life in 1943, used these words to express his sceptical view of the revolutionary dynamics of the war. For a moment, he believed that it created the appearance of a newly forming Europe with new possibilities for non-German nations. It is evident that as long as the illusion of building the New Europe was the basis of political thinking about the nation, and domestic politicians were oriented towards practical and profit-oriented cooperation with the occupying power, the support of the population remained with the political establishment.

The Czech political authorities were thus, in effect, involved in the establishment of Nazi power in the Bohemian lands and Nazi hegemony in Europe.

<sup>185</sup> Gregor Joseph Kranjc, *To Walk with the Devil: Slovene Collaboration and Axis Occupation, 1941–1945* (Toronto, Buffalo, London 2013), 199.

<sup>186</sup> Hirschfeld, *Fremdherrschaft und Kollaboration*, 43.

What is more, in relation to the cognitive function of nationality, domestic actors, public engagement and the language they used to speak to the population played a decisive role in the adoption of the ideology of *národní pospolitost* and the ability to enforce authoritarian welfare as one of the central instruments of the new order in Bohemia and Moravia.

## Community-Building through Authoritarian Welfare

The reconstruction of the state and society fundamentally changed the ideology of the nation and its representation. The emerging institutions of national welfare were to serve their national communities exclusively and thus give tangible form to national and ethnic segregation in the Bohemian lands. This chapter leads to an illumination of my argument linking the national radicalisation and the expansion of the welfare state, bringing an attempt at a sort of equal redistribution among the members of the national community. As Samuel Moyn has pointed out, it was national welfare that ‘included more people in a community of distributive justice than ever before.’<sup>1</sup> This was true, even though it came at the cost of creating racial communities. The loss of territory and the expected wave of over a million Czech refugees fleeing from the annexed Sudetenland to the rest of the country in 1938 did not simplify the process of building national welfare, but it gave it momentum. However, the disrupted transport infrastructure, economy and network of social security institutions of former Czechoslovakia needed urgent completion and rebuilding. This was used in parallel to reimagine the system according to national welfare principles. As a result, new institutions were established in the field of social and health care and adjustments were made to public social insurance and social programmes for the needy. The Czech government was increasingly concerned about the distribution of social rights and meeting the needs primarily of the ‘Czech nation.’ This did not change even after the declaration of the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939. The Bohemian lands, however, continued to be a territory also inhabited by Germans, Jews and members of other ethnic groups and nationalities.

The basic framework for the organisation of life in the Nazi Protectorate was provided by the Decree on the Establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia

<sup>1</sup> Moyn, *Not Enough*, 39.



and Moravia, framed by Adolf Hitler after his arrival in Prague and promulgated on 16 March 1939. It established a dual administrative structure and divided the care of the population between the German (occupation) authorities and Czech (officially called Protectorate) authorities, and it fundamentally expanded the institutional basis of social protection in the Bohemian lands.<sup>2</sup> The decree divided the population into two groups according to national and state affiliation. While Germans were to receive the same rights as Reich citizens, the rest of the population were classified as Protectorate subjects, that is, foreigners, and were subject to regulations and powers of the Czech (Protectorate) authorities. Never before in the Czech environment had there been such a consistent erection of abstract and intentionally enforced boundaries within society. In interwar Czechoslovakia, voluntary social welfare organisations were organised along national lines, but the state never enforced segregation in public welfare. The Autumn Revolution changed not only the thinking about nation and ethnicity but also everyday social practice. The welfare commitments of the state were newly discussed in the context of national welfare, in which individual national communities of Czechs, Germans, Slovaks, Jews and other groups were separated from each other.

National belonging was newly determined on the basis of objective features, set by officials, rather than individuals' choice. In this sense, the largest communities in Bohemia and Moravia – the Czechs and Germans – attracted the most attention. The strict segregation of the population was matched by the organisation of social and health administration and education according to nationality. The Protectorate administration formed an important organisational framework for the provision of public social and health services to the Czech population. The Czech leaders were obsessive about their autonomous status, albeit in a system that could hardly be interpreted as a free bond between the Bohemian lands and Germany. However, historians often deny the practical participation of the Czech government in decision-making and the degree of its initiative under the Nazi protectorate. In this chapter, I attempt to undermine this prevailing interpretation by analysing the national welfare system in the context of rebuilding the state and society. In so doing, I investigate the government's programme, formulated in response to the annexation of the Czechoslovak border regions by Germany, and the transformation of the organisational and administrative apparatus and its instruments that enforced the principle of segregated welfare in practice. In the conclusion of the chapter I focus on social policy as an instrument of social exclusion, humiliation and physical destruction as an inherent part of making authoritarian welfare.

<sup>2</sup> RGBl. I, 1939, p. 485: 'Erlaß des Führers und Reichskanzlers über das Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren.'

## The Munich crisis as a catalyst of change

The new territorial division of the Bohemian lands, effective from 1 October 1938, had a significant impact on the scope of social protection provided by the Czechoslovak state. The Munich Agreement made a cut in the functioning network of public administration, but at the same time it accelerated the longer-term trend towards ethnically homogeneous units and national welfare structures. The rapid political transformation of the country was justified in two ways: by the *corrective* function of the measures adopted, which was supposed to stabilise the country socially and economically; and by their *modernising* function, which was to help overcome the functional and ideological shortcomings of interwar liberal democracy. Czech politicians quickly incorporated both of these parameters into the new programme of the post-Munich government and, later, initiated a political programme relying on efficiency, modernisation and protection of the nation in the Nazi Protectorate.

The changes taking place in the autumn of 1938 were manifested in the Bohemian lands by ambitious plans in the area of social policy. Prime Minister Rudolf Beran, in the programme statement of his cabinet delivered on 13 December 1938, promised:

In agreement with public opinion, we are aware that the foundations of the new Czecho-Slovak state will be laid by social policy. However, we understand social policy, in contrast to its earlier concept, as a persistent and deliberate effort to ensure that everyone has an occupation and that he is provided with a remuneration that corresponds to his work performance. This conception of social policy implies that we will help each citizen to find a job, but also impose on him the obligation to work. ... Today's fragmented system of social insurance will be simplified and its financial situation secured by appropriate measures.<sup>3</sup>

A large part of the population could have understood Beran's words as a confident call for reconstruction and a promise of social justice. It remained unclear, however, who that 'everyone' he spoke about was whom the state intended to take care of.

In the autumn of 1938, the biggest changes in the organisation of social policy concerned mainly the Czechoslovak border regions, most of which had been annexed by Germany. Beginning in October 1938, the Reichsgau Sudetenland began to transform its entire institutional structure with the aim of fully integrating the former Czechoslovak border districts into the German Reich. The borders opened up to Reich organisations and officials, who took up their new

<sup>3</sup> Government's programme statement of 13 December 1938. Available at <http://www.vlada.cz/assets/clenove-vlady/historie-minulych-vlad/prehled-vlad-cr/1938-1939-csr/rudolf-beran/ppv-1938-1939-beran.pdf> (4 April 2022).

positions or expanded their territorial scope as experts in Reich law and customs in providing protection and welfare to members of the German nation. Following the annexation of the Sudetenland, Nazi Germany led a campaign promising significant changes in employment policy and an increase in the standard of living of the German population.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, the Czecho-Slovak government was in a different situation and faced three very pressing problems: firstly, it was struggling with the inflow of refugees from the annexed border regions; secondly, it was seeking to stabilise the disrupted network of social and health care institutions; and thirdly, it was negotiating the dismantling of the insurance system, that is, dividing up the insured persons and the assets of the insurance companies on the basis of the new territorial arrangement.

The increase in the number of migrants who had left their homes in the border regions with their entire families and fled to the interior required increased provision of social and health care. This was not the first time that Czechoslovakia had faced a refugee crisis, even though it was now its own citizens who were the refugees. The deteriorating international situation following the Nazi seizure of power and the attempted Nazi coup in Austria, which was felt especially by Jews and political opponents, also affected Czechoslovakia throughout the 1930s. Specifically, in December 1937, the Czechoslovak government took a negative stance towards Romanian political emigrants, especially refugees of Jewish origin who were fleeing the country ruled by the fascist and anti-Semitic National Christian Party. The inclination to accommodate international developments – to build symbolic borders for the nation and to share the fear of the influx of Romanian refugees – was demonstrated by the increasing indifference of Czech ministerial officials. As Kateřina Čapková and Michal Frankl argue, in the first years after the political events of 1933 and 1934, the authorities granted refugees asylum on the grounds of racial discrimination as a legitimate reason for fleeing their home country. However, when the Nuremberg Laws were passed in 1935, Jewish refugees were increasingly often included in the secondary category of ‘economic migrants’. As autumn 1938 approached, officials were gradually applying progressively stronger restrictions on refugees.<sup>5</sup> The changing paradigm of state ideology during the emerging Autumn Revolution, accompanied by a strong anti-liberal movement and an escalated nationalism, was much more straightforward in the course it pursued.

At the end of September 1938, there were approximately 25,000 refugees, but by 1 September of the following year their number had risen eightfold.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See Volker Zimmermann, *Die Sudetendeutschen im NS-Staat: Politik und Stimmung der Bevölkerung im Reichsgau Sudetenland (1938–1945)* (Essen 1999).

<sup>5</sup> The emphasis on the shift in Czechoslovak refugee policy, through which the authors adjust previous claims made in Czech historiography, is even more noticeable in the granting of status. Čapková and Frankl, *Nejisté útočiště*, 275 and 339.

<sup>6</sup> Jan Benda, *Útěky a vyhánění z pohraničí českých zemí 1938–1939* (Prague 2013), 504.

The care of the refugees, in which both public and voluntary organisations were involved, was coordinated by the Institute for the Care of Refugees (*Ústav pro péči o uprchlíky*), established on 1 December 1938 under the Ministry of Social Welfare.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the provision of refugee care gradually became an act that demonstrated national segregationist practices. Deciding on who was to be cared for and 'resettled' and who was to be cared for and 'expelled', as reflected in the institute's departmental structure, created visible barriers between population groups and stimulated the ethnic and racial homogenisation of Czech society. The status of a refugee was determined by Czechoslovak nationality, granted according to substantiated facts (place of residence, domicile to date) and objective criteria in the form of 'reviewable characteristics' such as nationality, as stated in the regulation.<sup>8</sup> In this case, nationality became the decisive factor, the assessment of which was to be further confirmed by objectively recognisable characteristics such as education or membership of cultural institutions. At that point, anyone other than a Czech, Slovak or Carpatho-Ruthenian was considered an immigrant, an alien in relation to the *Czech národní pospolitost*, and his or her file was forwarded to the emigration department of the Institute for the Care of Refugees.

The complexity of the refugee situation in Czechoslovakia quickly came to the attention of the ILO. The gravity of the situation was examined by the then newly appointed ILO Director-General, John G. Winant, during the first ever visit of an ILO Director to Czechoslovakia, on 22 and 23 January 1939.<sup>9</sup> During his stay in Prague – which was deliberately rather private and took place without publicity due to the sensitivity of the international situation – the possible ways in which the ILO could help Czechoslovakia were discussed. In the materials of the international organisation, which were prepared for Winant before his trip to Prague by Otakar Sulík, the ILO correspondent in Prague at the time, three groups of refugees were identified: firstly, Czechs, Slovaks and Carpatho-Ruthenians; secondly, democratically minded Germans fleeing Nazi Germany; and thirdly, Jews. International assistance was deemed necessary, especially concerning the second and third groups, which, according to Sulík, could not stay in the area defined by the post-Munich borders on a permanent basis. This was made impossible by the economic situation in the country, which was dealing with a lack of available jobs. Simultaneously, there were also fears of creating 'another minority' that

<sup>7</sup> Collection of laws and regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Government regulation No. 292/1938 Coll., establishing the Institute for the Care of Refugees.

<sup>8</sup> Collection of laws and regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Government regulation No. 14/1939 Coll., which supplements the regulations on the residence of foreign emigrants; Government regulation No. 15/1939 Coll., on the re-examination of the Czecho-Slovak citizenship of certain persons; and Government regulation No. 34/1939 Coll., specifying some details of Government regulation No. 15 Coll. I of 27 January 1939 on the re-examination of the Czecho-Slovak citizenship of certain persons.

<sup>9</sup> ILO Archives (ILO A), Cabinet Files, Z 3-17-1 Mission to Czechoslovakia: Visit to Prague (22–23 January 1939).

Nazi Germany's propaganda could easily exploit as a pretext for possible intervention. Last but not least, Sulík mentioned another, this time nation-centric, argument that the democratic values and loyalty that characterised the refugees could not be taken for granted with respect to their descendants.<sup>10</sup> Whatever form the interaction between the ILO and Czecho-Slovakia might have taken, the arrival of the German army and the beginning of the Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia necessarily put an end to all plans, as Germany assumed control of the country's international relations. In January 1939, when the Czech government was still speaking exclusively for itself, it was trying to demonstrate to its international partners the efforts it was making in a situation whose difficulty few could question at the time. During Winant's visit to Prague, the Czecho-Slovak government scored some success. Winant praised the generally 'rational spirit' of the Minister of Social Affairs, Vladislav Klumpar, when he became convinced that the Minister was acting in the interest of social justice. In his assessment of the situation in authoritarian Czecho-Slovakia, Winant apparently adopted Sulík's position, and the Czech government of national unity won his sympathy.<sup>11</sup> To what extent it was deserved is open to question – for now.

There is no doubt about the rational motives of Czech officials. The Czecho-Slovak state provided care to the migrants after quick deliberation but, in doing so, created conditions that reinforced exclusivist tendencies in the concept of the nation and national belonging. Social support for migrants was part of a broader initiative to maintain the social and economic stability of Czecho-Slovakia, especially to secure routine health care. Following the annexation of the border regions, the country also lost a total of sixty-one hospitals and sanatoriums. Specifically, Bohemia gave up thirty-nine hospitals with 9,154 beds, nominally the total bed capacity of all hospitals and maternity wards in Slovakia in 1937.<sup>12</sup> Similar losses were also faced by institutions dealing with the treatment of tuberculosis, which was one of the most dangerous infectious diseases in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. While interwar Czechoslovakia had around 8,000 places available to treat tuberculosis patients, the losses suffered after the Munich Agreement, and later after 16 March 1939, meant that the capacity was reduced by half.<sup>13</sup> This significant reduction further exacerbated the critical condition of health care in the country.

The events of autumn 1938 changed the situation fundamentally. The population movement from the annexed territories, which was then estimated to

<sup>10</sup> ILO A, Cabinet Files, Z 11/3/3 Refugees coming from Czechoslovakia: The I.L.O. and Refugees in Czechoslovakia, 19 November 1938.

<sup>11</sup> ILO A, Cabinet Files, Z 3/17/1 Mission to Czechoslovakia: John G. Winant's letter addressed to Vladislav Klumpar, 31 January 1939.

<sup>12</sup> Stříteský, *Zdravotní a populační vývoj československého obyvatelstva*, 110.

<sup>13</sup> NA, Ministry of Social and Health Administration Collection (MSZS Coll.), Carton 118: Lack of beds for insured persons with tuberculosis, ÚSP letter to the Ministry of Social and Health Administration, 23 October 1940.

increase the total population of Czecho-Slovakia by more than a million, put further strain on the medical facilities.<sup>14</sup> The disrupted network of hospitals required urgent reconstruction, and officials at the Ministry of Health decided in early November 1938 to supplement it according to the 1934 plan, which operated with categories of large, medium and small hospitals.<sup>15</sup> Despite the establishment of the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the revitalisation of the hospital network was not abandoned in the months that followed, and the ministry envisaged investments of millions of crowns (K) in the upcoming years.<sup>16</sup>

While the provisioning of the population and the reconstruction of the hospital network was almost exclusively an internal political matter, the search for a satisfactory solution to insurance was not possible without negotiations with foreign countries involved in the division of the territory and population of former Czechoslovakia. What did this mean in practice? In a situation where an insured person applied for disability or old-age insurance benefits, but their insurance company was located in the annexed territory, there was a possibility he would not receive any benefits and could be left entirely without income. A settlement in the field of social insurance was to resolve this situation concerning the individual countries, that is, Czecho-Slovakia (later the Protectorate), Germany, Poland, Hungary and later also Slovakia. Along with the annexation of the Sudetenland, the obligations towards the insured persons residing in the territory, as well as the corresponding assets of the insurance companies, were transferred. In the autumn of 1938, therefore, negotiations began on a financial settlement between the individual states.

While the politicians and experts sat around the negotiating table, it was necessary to ensure the smooth monthly payment of pensions, which for many insured persons were the main means of subsistence.<sup>17</sup> The Czechoslovak insurance companies did not respond to the situation in a unified manner, which speaks not only of their unpreparedness but also of the acceptance of the emerging national framework. The ÚSP, the most important institution covering employees,

<sup>14</sup> From an estimated 4,470,528 to 5,588,160 due to the arrival of refugees from the annexed territories.

<sup>15</sup> In the case of a medium-sized hospital, three departments were envisaged, that is, internal medicine, surgery and children's ward. Neurology and other social health institutes were also to be established in the larger hospitals. NA, fond MSZS Coll., Carton 118: Minutes of a meeting at the Ministry of Health held on 4 November 1938.

<sup>16</sup> The source of funding for the completion and construction of new hospitals was to be the proceeds from the 'health surcharge', 75 per cent of the proceeds of which had so far been used to subsidise the current operations. The provincial authorities had been redistributing it to individual hospitals, but now it was to be invested in building new hospitals. In concrete terms, this totalled less than K 15 million for Bohemia and almost K 6 million for Moravia. *Zdravotnická ročenka Protektorátu Čechy a Morava 1939–1940*, ed. Jiří Říha and Adolf Řibřid (Prague 1939–40), 41–2; 'Sociálně politický program ministr JUDr. Vladislava Klumpara', *Sociální snahy. List soukromých úředníků a zřízenců věnovaný otázkám sociální péče* (1939), No. 1, 36.

<sup>17</sup> Here, for instance, 'Prozatímní úprava některých otázek v oboru invalidního a starobního pojištění vzhledem k územním změnám', *Sociální reforma* (5 February 1939), No. 3, 38–40.

suspended pension payments during the months of October and November 1938 to all pensioners living in the ceded border territories who had thus lost their Czechoslovak citizenship. The insured Czechs usually tried to respond by quickly moving to the interior and requesting payment of their pensions from their insurance companies. Letters from people suddenly finding themselves without social protection often displayed 'extreme desperation', as the Czechoslovak insurance companies noted.<sup>18</sup> In terms of family incomes, the Munich Agreement represented a real threat to citizens' livelihoods. The response of the insured persons, however, had other interpretations. According to Czechoslovak officials, the growing insecurity of the insured when pensions were cut off was allegedly indicative of the fact that the level of benefits to date, although criticised in previous years, was not insignificant.<sup>19</sup>

Maintaining regular payment of pensions was the main concern of the General Pension Institute (Všeobecný penzijní ústav). Compared with the ÚSP, however, it was a smaller institution. Resettled persons had to apply for payment at a branch office in Prague, Brno or Bratislava and provide proof of their new residence by means of a police record. A similar procedure was required for insurance cases such as disability or death, which were linked to benefit claims by insured persons whose last place of employment was in the annexed territory. If an insured event occurred after 1 October 1938, the first day on which the Sudetenland no longer belonged to Czechoslovakia, the last place of employment was situated in the annexed territory and the employee was also resident there, he had to apply to the Reich Insurance Institute in Berlin. If the employee moved permanently to Czecho-Slovakia, he had to apply again to a branch office in Prague, Brno or Bratislava, which could pay benefits in advance in such cases if the insured person's insurance had ended in the annexed territory.<sup>20</sup> For the ordinary population, the situation may not only have been opaque but also created an immediate social and economic threat.

All measures were provisional and could only be given a more permanent form by international agreements. The future course of negotiations was dictated by representatives of the political and expert authorities at meetings on 13 December 1938 in Prague, when the director of the ÚSP, Vladimír Vydra, met with representatives of the Reich Ministry of Labour and the Reich Commissioner for the Sudeten German Territories to discuss the terms of the division of property in connection with sickness insurance.<sup>21</sup> The participation of Czechoslovak

<sup>18</sup> 'Nejlepší doklady významu sociálního pojištění pro naše dělnické vrstvy', *Sociální reforma* (20 January 1939), No. 2, 29.

<sup>19</sup> 'Nejlepší doklady významu sociálního pojištění pro naše dělnické vrstvy', 29.

<sup>20</sup> 'Nejdůležitější opatření v oboru pensijního pojištění vzhledem k nastávším územním změnám', *Sociální reforma* (5 January 1939), No. 1, 10–11.

<sup>21</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 988: Niederschrift [1938].

experts was crucial due to their knowledge of the environment and the insurance system. Despite an obvious tendency of Nazi Germany to increase its influence in domestic affairs in the Bohemian lands beginning with the period of the post-Munich Czechoslovakia and even more so after the establishment of the Protectorate, Czech officials and experts remained essential. They participated in negotiations on large financial transfers and population welfare. The leading figure on the Czech side was Antonín Zelenka, an elite expert on social insurance and an associate of the ILO, who was mentioned earlier as one of those who considered the Czech *národní pospolitost* as a real form of national identity. From 1927 he worked as an actuary at the ÚSP and in 1935 he became a director at the Pension Institute of Social Insurance Employees. He spent the first six months of 1938 in Venezuela, where the ILO had sent him to build up the country's social insurance system. His political affiliation was with the Social Democratic Party, of which he was a member until the party was dissolved in 1938. Naturally, he eventually joined the National Labour Party and then the National Partnership.<sup>22</sup> Zelenka's work did not end with the proclamation of the Protectorate, however. Negotiations on social insurance were complex and kept officials busy for months, if not years. While in December 1938, the main objective of the talks was to deal with the changes brought about by the Munich Agreement, in the spring of 1939 the whole situation became more complicated. The declaration of independence by Slovakia, headed by a clero-fascist government, on the eve of the arrival of the German army in the Bohemian lands and the establishment of the Protectorate, slowed down the negotiations. From that time, Bohemia and Moravia had no foreign policy sovereignty and became represented exclusively by Germany. Moreover, the social insurance settlement was intertwined with the initiatives for justice, equality and national unity taken by Czech reformers in the spirit of the Autumn Revolution.

### **The quest for power and social stabilisation**

The establishment of the Protectorate caught Antonín Zelenka at a meeting in Warsaw, but in July he continued his work in Berlin. His commitment was noted by the Reich Foreign Ministry, where the negotiations moved in the summer of 1939. Zelenka found himself there in the company of Josef Schneider, an official of the Reich Ministry of Labour posted to the Nazi Protectorate and later probably the greatest expert on Protectorate social insurance. Schneider was one of the officials at the Reich Protector's Office who, from the very first days, carefully studied the foundation of the system of social policy in the Bohemian lands in order to master

<sup>22</sup> ABS, Study Institute of the Ministry of the Interior, German courts in the Reich Collection, Sign. 141-425-14, Folio 23: Der Ermittlungsrichter des Volksgerichtshofs, In der Sache gegen Dr. Antonin Zelenka wegen Vorbereitung zum Hochverrat, 15 May 1942.



it as well as the experts – among whom Zelenka was one. A few years later, at the end of 1943, this was well demonstrated in the passage of the most comprehensive legislative amendments to accident and pension insurance, which Schneider was instrumental in preparing. In the spring of 1939, Zelenka was an active and essential participant in the reconstruction. He took up his role with great vigour, just as he had devoted himself to wage issues from August 1939 onwards at the head of the newly formed trade union organisation, the National Trade Union Headquarters of Employees (*Národní odborová ústředna zaměstnanecká, NOÚZ*); he was also very active in the negotiations on social insurance.<sup>23</sup>

Zelenka did not participate in the process of reconstruction by chance. He was well aware that continuity in the payment of social benefits based on public social insurance was among the instruments for ensuring a smooth transition from one regime to the other. The problem required high expertise, but more importantly, it primarily concerned the people and their social security. But not everyone held this rational view with regard to the dynamic developments of March 1939. Czech politicians and experts most often combined their own reconstruction ambitions with the intuitive belief that the times demanded urgent change. As the daily *Národní práce* (National labour) wrote:

What is at stake here are the most precious assets of the Czech nation, the preservation of the life and health of its members, the improvement of the standard of living of the lowest classes, and the establishment of a fair social base for employees and employers alike; in short, a new and just social order.<sup>24</sup>

The negotiations on settlement in social insurance were unexpectedly complicated by the declaration of independent Slovakia, the annexation of Carpathian Ruthenia by Hungary and the establishment of the Protectorate. The division of roles in the negotiations reflected the fact that from mid-March onwards the foreign interests of the Protectorate were handled by representatives of the German Reich along with Czech experts since the Bohemian lands had lost their international sovereignty. Thus, Germany always concluded treaties on behalf of the Protectorate, but the participation of Czech politicians and technocrats in the negotiations was desirable and necessary. The Protectorate as a contracting party figured only in the convention with Germany concluded on 26 June 1940 and signed by the Protectorate Minister of Social and Health Administration Vladislav Klumpar. The German–Slovak agreement on the settlement between Slovakia and the Protectorate was reached on 14 March 1940 in Prague. After a fortnight of negotiations in Prague, which were attended by the head of the Reich delegation, Hans

<sup>23</sup> ABS, Study Institute of the Ministry of the Interior, German courts in the Reich Collection, Sign. 141-425-14, Folio 23.

<sup>24</sup> 'Sociální činnost Národního souručenství', *Národní práce. Ústřední deník Národní odborové ústředny zaměstnanecké* (9 January 1941), No. 8, 6.

Engel, and representatives of Slovakia and Hungary, an agreement was reached, but some of the treaties were not completed until 1943.<sup>25</sup>

National welfare, especially social insurance, was one of the points on the agenda of multilateral and extensive negotiations on the financial settlement and was handled by a third sub-commission under the chairmanship of Johannes Dormann, a ministerial official at the Reich Ministry of Labour. The negotiations covered a wide range of issues, from government liabilities and assets, banking and insurance matters and transport, to civil servants and other public employees, to issues related to the Wehrmacht and other legal problems. Most interesting for our purposes are the discussions held in the sub-commission on social questions, which covered eight fundamental issues: social insurance, provisions for war victims, unemployment relief, social foundations and funds, factory pension treasuries, state social guarantees and loans (mortgages), housing and the general matters of mortgages relating to the territories of two states. In view of the length of the agreements, I shall concentrate on the issues relating to the settlement between the Protectorate and Slovakia and Germany, respectively, since this is where the most remarkable territorial changes occurred and the largest financial transfers were negotiated.

The negotiation process in all the mentioned areas of public administration took place in the presence of Czech officials, who were commissioned for the negotiations and sent to Berlin by the Reich Protector in early July and August 1939. The agenda included the settlement with Slovakia, which – unlike the Sudetenland annexed to Germany – did not have all the necessary institutions in place. With the exception of sickness insurance, where benefit payments were continuously made through the district treasuries, some insurance institutions, such as the Central Pension Institute and the Slovak Treasury for Agricultural Workers, had to be hastily established in Bratislava during the spring of 1939.<sup>26</sup> The aim of the negotiations was to arrange a smooth transition of obligations to Slovak insurance carriers, and the Ministry of Social and Health Administration was to supervise the cooperation of the Protectorate pension institutions. There is no doubt that Slovakia was in a difficult situation. It was taking over responsibility for the social security of its population, setting up new institutions for this purpose, but it lacked adequate financial resources to cover the costs of the social benefits claimed by the insured persons. A rapid financial settlement with the

<sup>25</sup> Federal Archives Berlin (BArch), Sign. R 3901/20901, Sheet 901: Protokoll über die Verhandlung auf dem Gebiet der Sozialversicherung aus Anlass der Engliederung von ehemaligen tschechoslowakischen Gebieten in das Deutsche Reich, die Slowakische Republik und das Königreich Ungarn, 14 March 1940; RGBL II, 1943, p. 363, Bekanntmachung über das deutsch-slowakisch-ungarische Abkommen über die Regelung der Verhältnisse der Versicherungsanstalt Star in Prag.

<sup>26</sup> Political Archive of the Federal Foreign Office (PA AA), Sign. R 103568: Niederschrift über die Besprechung der Reichsbehörden im Auswärtigen Amt am 29 April 1939.

Protectorate was a condition for assuming all its obligations as an independent and sovereign state, which Slovakia became on 14 March 1939. At the August meeting in Berlin, Schneider, Viktor Hofmann, an authorised representative of the Protectorate Ministry of Social and Health Administration, and Zelenka, as a representative of the insurance institutes, sat at the negotiating table. The Czech administration was sufficiently involved in the process of negotiating the separation of social insurance and was not merely a passive participant. Zelenka himself took the initiative and came up with variants of a possible procedure for the division of assets and liabilities.<sup>27</sup>

The focus was not only on the Czech population. In the spring of 1939, the social security of Reich citizens who were still registered with the former Czechoslovak insurance companies was governed by a preliminary agreement between the Reich Ministry of Labour and the Protectorate Ministry of Social and Health Administration.<sup>28</sup> The agreement on the settlement of social insurance arising from the incorporation of the former Czechoslovak territories into the German Reich, signed on 26 June 1940, covered sickness, accident, disability and old-age insurance and regulated the distribution of insured persons and insurance cases according to the insured person's place of residence.<sup>29</sup> The German and Protectorate institutions assumed responsibility for providing benefits and agreed to take into account the insurance period according to the law applicable to the respective insurance carrier. At the same time, the predetermined assets were transferred from the most significant public Protectorate institutions to the Reich insurance companies. These funds were intended to compensate for the increase in the number of insured persons and the liabilities assumed by the Reich institutes at that time.

It would seem that, compared with the situation existing between Germany and the Protectorate, the negotiations with Slovakia should have been easier. There was no hurry to reach a definitive agreement on the fulfilment of obligations towards the insured persons and pension recipients in Slovakia because even without a contractual arrangement, 'sufficient welfare has been arranged for the time being', as the representative of the Reich Ministry of Labour stated in

<sup>27</sup> Proposals form part of the document Niederschrift über die Sitzung der Unterkommission III (soziale Fragen) der deutsch-slowakischen Regierungsverhandlungen über die wirtschaftliche Auseinandersetzung (...) am 3 und 4 August 1939. PA AA, sign. R 103596.

<sup>28</sup> PA AA, sign. R 103568: Der Reichsarbeitsminister an das Auswärtige Amt, betr. Wirtschaftliche Auseinandersetzung zwischen den verschiedenen Teilen der früheren Tschecho-Slowakei, 25 May 1939.

<sup>29</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 205/1940 Coll.: Convention between the German Reich, represented by the Reich Minister of Labour, and the Government of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, represented by the Minister of Social and Health Administration, on the settlement in the field of social insurance arising from the incorporation of the former Czecho-Slovak territories into the German Reich.

May 1939.<sup>30</sup> Although the contracting parties were Germany and Slovakia, Reich officials acted primarily as intermediaries between Slovakia and the Protectorate. It was chiefly the Slovaks who pressed for the conclusion of the treaty and the implementation of the signed agreement as soon as possible. The treaty concluded in Berlin in April 1940 provided for an agreement in the fields of sickness, disability and pension insurance (see Table 3.1), where the decisive date to which all claims of Slovakia to the Protectorate related was set to 1 October 1938.<sup>31</sup> The setting of this date for all the territories lost by Czechoslovakia, for which the liabilities were calculated, corresponded to the time frame in which the

	Protectorate	German Reich	Slovakia	Hungary	Former Poland	Total
Central Social Insurance Company	5,222.3	774.7	534.2	50.9	36.2	6,618.3
General Pension Institute	3,568.5	492.1	419.1	58.2	22.7	4,650.6
Central Fraternal Treasury	132.3	8.6	7.6	-	0.6	149.1
Substitute institutions	2,864.9	233.3	114.3	11.3	20.6	3,244.4
Accidence Insurance Company in Prague	1,120.6	33.9	-	-	-	1,154.5
Accidence Insurance Company in Brno	6.8	46.2	-	-	3.0	526.0
Total (K)	13,475.4	1,588.8	1,075.2	120.4	83.1	16,342.9
%	82.45	9.72	6.58	0.74	0.51	100.00

**Table 3.1** Actual assessed wealth by region for the purposes of social insurance settlement in 1940 (in millions K)

Source: NA, Reich Protector's Office Collection (ÚŘP Coll.), Carton 996: Veranlagtes Vermögen nach Gebieten (1940).

<sup>30</sup> PA AA, Sign. R 103568: Der Reichsarbeitsminister an das Auswärtige Amt, betr. Wirtschaftliche Auseinandersetzung zwischen den verschiedenen Teilen der früheren Tschecho-Slowakei, 25 May 1939.

<sup>31</sup> In addition to the transfer of insured persons, the treaty also included the transfer of the corresponding assets (Article 12), the method of dividing the net assets based on the claims of insured persons and pensioners (Article 13), tangible assets, as well as loans and mortgages linked to towns in Slovak territory. PA AA, sign. R 103596: Abkommen zwischen dem Deutschen Reich der Slowakischen Republik über die Auseinandersetzung auf dem Gebiet der Sozialversicherung aus Anlaß der Eindliederung von ehemaligen tschecho-slowakischen Gebieten in die Slowakische Republik, 13 April 1940.

individual national communities and national welfare began to be established and take shape.

The participants in the negotiations assumed that citizens located in a foreign country would decide to return to the country of their nationality and the jurisdiction of the relevant insurance institute. This would certainly have made the situation easier, and for Slovakia, it could additionally have brought a strengthening of its influence in selected economic sectors and private insurance, where so far there had been a significant Czech predominance in terms of labour and investment. The departure of Czech workers from Slovakia was supposed to free up jobs for unemployed Slovaks, and Slovakia was thus supposed to take over the funds that would cover the pensions of the Slovak insured persons.

The opportunity to free up space for Slovak workers and to build up the Slovak capital was part of the country's national homogenisation. The Slovak government was pressing for industrial plants to comply with its demands, as pointed out in June 1940 by a company in Dubnica nad Váhom, located in Western Slovakia, belonging to the Škoda Works group based in Pilsen, Protectorate. However, it was not possible to meet the government's demands without disrupting the operations of the arms factory. The management of the plant even anticipated a complete shutdown of operations and the loss of jobs for up to 20,000 Slovaks if the Czech employees had to depart. The company cited a lack of skilled workers among Slovak employees and considered it essential for its survival that Czech workers in technical and administrative positions remain at the plant. Moreover, Czech employees in Dubnica were insured by the Officers' Pension Institute at the Joint-Stock Company in Pilsen (Škoda Works), which had its advantages (e.g. with regard to the amount of the sum insured) over other insurance companies based in Prague and Bratislava.<sup>32</sup> The pension insurance guaranteed relatively high pensions for the factory workers.

The situation in the Dubnica plant documented the spontaneous action of the authorities, motivated on the Slovak side mainly by the wish to achieve national and financial equity. The plant management complained to the German plant safety officer, Paul Kuligowski, about the intention of the Slovak political representation to jeopardise the entitlement of the Škoda plant employees to pension insurance benefits, or at least to give the impression that this entitlement might be called into question. Despite the economic and social risks, the Slovak government refused to grant an exemption to workers who were Protectorate nationals. Referring to the national interest of the newly established Slovak nation-state, the government

<sup>32</sup> PA AA, Sign. R 103596: An Herrn Paul Kuligowski, betr. Schilderung des Verlaufes der Verhandlungen über die Pensionsversicherung der Angestellten der A. G. vorm. Skodawerke in Dubnica n/V /Slowakei/, 19 June 1940.

stressed the readiness of the new Bratislava institute to take over the obligations of the pension institute in Pilsen.<sup>33</sup>

However, the decision of the Slovak government was not final and the situation in Dubnica became one of the points of discussion during additional consultations on the settlement between the Protectorate and Slovakia held in September 1940. Due to German pressure, the Dubnica plant was eventually granted an exception and the Protectorate citizens were allowed to remain insured with the pension institute in Prague, but not beyond 31 December 1944. After this date, all insurance liabilities would be transferred to the Slovak pension institute. The conclusion of bilateral agreements proved that no acceptable solution to disputed situations could be reached without consultation in a wider circle of politicians and experts. This also applied to the financial settlement regulated by the German–Slovak agreement of 13 April 1940, the supplementation of which was to be renegotiated by special commissions consisting of representatives of the Reich Ministry of Labour, the Reich Protector's Office, the Protectorate Ministry of Social and Health Administration and the Slovak Ministry of the Interior at a meeting in Prague, first on 25 and 26 September and then in mid-October 1940 with the participation of Hungarian representatives.

However, the talks held in autumn 1940 did not definitively conclude the negotiations on the division of assets and liabilities. The establishment of the independent Slovak state necessitated massive financial transfers and changes in the ownership of material property, which both Czechs and Slovaks pursued with great attention and caution. The private insurance sector was also significantly affected. The Protectorate government found the contractual arrangements between Slovakia and the German Reich to be 'detrimental' to the Protectorate's private insurance business. The Presidency of the Ministerial Council, the collective body of the Czech government in the Protectorate, therefore asked the Reich Protector in February 1941 to pay attention to the whole matter because the consequences of the agreement could, according to the Czech government, have a significant impact on the Protectorate's economic life. The activities of twenty-one of the twenty-four private insurance companies headquartered in Prague and providing elementary, accident and life insurance in Slovakia were suspended and only the remaining three were granted a licence.<sup>34</sup> In addition, two insurance companies had to limit their activities to life, fire and business interruption insurance, which they had not offered previously. The dispute was about money. The total annual premiums of the twenty-four institutes were estimated at 50 million Slovak

<sup>33</sup> PA AA, Sign. R. 103596: [Ministerium des Innern in Preßburg] Dr. Braxitoris an die A. G. vorm. Skodawerke in Pilsen, Werk, Sache: Pensionsversicherung der Beamten der Skodawerke in Dubnica n/V., [1940].

<sup>34</sup> Die europäische Güter und Reisegepäckversicherungs- Aktionsgesellschaft in Prag, Landesversicherungsanstalt Brünn a Allgemeine Versicherungs- Aktiengesellschaft in Brünn.

crowns (K), while the twenty-one companies which had to cease operations alone were estimated at K 42 million. The Slovak–German agreement of November 1940 obliged the excluded insurance companies to hand over their funds to the institutes mentioned in the agreement.<sup>35</sup> The largest part of the Slovak premiums was to be received by Tatra, a company based in Bratislava, which, however, was established only in 1940; on 14 March 1939 it could not carry out any insurance activities and thus did not immediately comply with Article 1 of the aforementioned treaty.<sup>36</sup>

Czechs and Slovaks strictly defended the interests of their nations – segregated communities of Czechs and of Slovaks. As James Mace Ward explained in his book on Jozef Tiso, the Slovak Catholic priest and political leader, the idea of defending the Slovak nation against the Czechs and Jews was considered by Tiso as a national ‘duty’. Slovak action against Czechs and Jews thus had no racial basis but resulted solely from the need ‘to defend our nation against enemies that for centuries have operated destructively in our midst’, as Tiso justified himself in a letter addressed to Pius XII.<sup>37</sup> This nationalism, targeted only at the Slovaks, was typical of the ruling Slovak People’s Party (SĽS), as examined in detail by Thomas Lorman. Already before 1918 in Hungary, of which Slovakia was territorially a part, and later in interwar Czechoslovakia, the SĽS defended only the interests of ethnic Slovaks. Later, in independent Slovakia after 1939, their nationalism had to be narrow and exclusive.<sup>38</sup> Despite the possible similarity of motives, the actions against the Czechs never took on such proportions or had the same consequences as the actions against the Jews. On an everyday basis, as a committee of the Assembly of the Slovak Republic put it, it was necessary to proceed in such a way

that the Slovak element, so under-represented until 14 March 1939, should also assert itself in this undeniably important sector of the economy.<sup>39</sup>

The Protectorate government adopted a similar strategy. The possible financial losses of the Czech insurance industry and economy gave the Czech government the impetus to ask the Reich Protector, Konstantin von Neurath, to use his influence

<sup>35</sup> Cf. No. 321/1940 Z. z. PA AA, Sign. R 103586, File 068: Abkommen zwischen Slowakischen Republik und dem Deutschen Reich über Fragen der Privatversicherung (Vertragsversicherung).

<sup>36</sup> PA AA, Sign. R 103586: Ministerratspräsidium an den Herrn Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren, betr. Regelung der Verhältnisse der Protektoratsversicherungsanstalten auf dem Gebiet der Slowakischen Republik, 24 February 1941.

<sup>37</sup> James Mace Ward, *Priest, Politician, Collaborator: Jozef Tiso and the Making of Fascist Slovakia* (Ithaca 2013), 255.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Lorman, *The Making of the Slovak People’s Party: Religion, Nationalism and the Culture War in Early 20th-Century Europe* (London 2019), 3.

<sup>39</sup> Assembly of the Slovak Republic 1941, the 650th report of the Social and Health Committee on the Government bill on minimum premiums in life insurance (Document No. 614), available at [http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1939ssr/tisky/t0650\\_01.htm](http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1939ssr/tisky/t0650_01.htm) (5 April 2022).

with the Reich government to renew negotiations between the Czechs and Slovaks and to request a revision of the treaty between Germany and Slovakia.<sup>40</sup>

This was a remarkable moment. The Czechs hoped for the support of Germany, which was to intervene reasonably in the dispute between the two formerly closely linked national communities.<sup>41</sup> This was part of a larger pattern, which Holly Case describes in her book about Hungary and Romania.<sup>42</sup> Neurath considered the possible 'questioning' of the Reich–Slovak treaty to be 'harmful' to the Reich and to his own office.<sup>43</sup> In Slovakia, the whole affair opened up a discussion about the condition and development of the insurance industry in previous decades, and the situation was to be examined directly in Bratislava by an expert in actuarial science from the Reich Supervisory Office for Private Insurance. The Reich Protector found the trip of the Berlin official directly to Bratislava, as he put it, extremely unpleasant. Neurath perceived the matter as delicate, as he wrote in a letter to the German Minister of Economy in July 1941, and considered the transfer of the Slovak funds originally belonging to the Protectorate institutions to be inevitable.<sup>44</sup>

The dissatisfaction of Czech officials in the Protectorate concerned the immovable property owned by Czechs on Slovak territory. Specifically, it concerned mortgages relating to this property, which were to be transferred to Slovak providers. However, the Slovak state was reluctant to continue providing the state contribution, as Czechoslovakia had previously done. In October 1940, therefore, the Slovak representative openly raised the question in negotiations with German experts: 'What would the response be if the Slovak Republic forced property owners to sell their properties in Slovakia?'<sup>45</sup> The Reich Ministry of Labour believed that Slovak action in this matter would provoke a negative response on the Czech side and make reaching a settlement considerably more difficult. However, according to the Reich experts, the Slovak government, which insisted on a strict separation between citizens of the Slovak state and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, should have acted in such a way as to at least protect Czech

<sup>40</sup> Assembly of the Slovak Republic 1941, the 650th report of the Social and Health Committee on the Government bill on minimum premiums in life insurance (Document No. 614).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. 321/1940 z. Z. PA AA, Sign. R 103586: Ministerratspräsidium an den Herrn Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren, betr. Regelung der Verhältnisse der Protoktoratsversicherungsanstalten auf dem Gebiet der Slowakischen Republik, 24 February 1941.

<sup>42</sup> Case, *Between States*.

<sup>43</sup> PA AA, Sign. R 103586: Der Reichsprotector an den Herrn Reichswirtschaftsminister, betr. Übergabe der slowakischen Bestände der Versicherungsunternehmungen des Protoktorats, 27 June 1941.

<sup>44</sup> PA AA, sign. R 103586, Bl. 170: Der Reichsprotector an den Herrn Reichswirtschaftsminister, betr. Übergabe der slowakischen Bestände der Versicherungsunternehmungen des Protoktorats, 26 July 1941.

<sup>45</sup> PA AA, sign. R 103596: Der Reichsarbeitsminister, betr. Vereinbarung über die Wohnungsbaumassnahmen der früheren Tschecho-Slowakei zwischen dem Deutschen Reich und der Slowakischen Republik, Vermerk, 11 October 1940.



property owners in Slovakia from possible financial losses. The final decision gave the Slovaks the right only to those properties whose owners resided in Slovakia.

The situation in Slovakia, however, was not favourable for the Czechs. It reflected a long-standing dissatisfaction with the policies of the Prague government, for which the Slovaks were to pay the price. Protectorate-based property owners were quickly expropriated if they failed to pay two successive instalments. The value of the property was then arbitrarily undervalued by the Slovak authorities, thus literally 'ruining' the Protectorate owners and liquidating their investments. This information reached the Protectorate Prime Minister, Alois Eliáš, who on 10 June 1941 sent a 'Memorandum on the question of the protection of Czech homeownership in Slovakia' to the Reich Protector's Office in Prague and the Reich Foreign Ministry in Berlin. Eliáš quantified the damage incurred by the Protectorate that would result from the loss of property and all claims. In particular, he mentioned mortgage claims amounting to K 163,600,000 now relinquished to Slovakia. Provided that this immovable property of the Protectorate nationals in Slovakia is not encumbered by more than one third of its value, it represented a total value of K 490,800,000. Eliáš described the situation as a threat to the property ownership of Protectorate citizens.

Slovak money-lending institutions are recklessly collecting the annuities and interest owed, without taking into account the fact that the property situation of the owners of these houses had worsened as a result of the constitutional changes occurring in 1939.<sup>46</sup>

The memorandum gave rise to an inquiry by the Reich Ministry of Labour and the Reich Foreign Ministry and to renewed negotiations with the Slovak government with the participation of a representative of the Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>47</sup>

The strained relations between the Slovak and Czech political representations narrowed the space for possible cooperation. The result was the first-ever separation of Slovak and Bohemian lands and national communities. From this point on, social security for Czechs and Slovaks developed separately and autonomously, albeit under the influence exerted by the existing power constellation in Europe and the participation of both entities within the sphere of interest of Nazi Germany. It was only in September 1942 that the ice was broken. Rather than goodwill, it was due to the circumstances of the war and a decision by the German Minister of Economy. From September 1942 onwards, the treatment of Czechs insured in the Protectorate, which had hitherto been carried out mainly in

<sup>46</sup> PA AA, Sign. R 103597: Ing. A. Eliáš, der Vorsitzende der Regierung an den Herrn Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren (Vertreter des Auswärtigen Amtes) in Prag, 10 June 1941; Memorandum in der Frage des Schutzes des tschechischen Hauseigentums in der Slowakei, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> PA AA, Sign. R 103597: Der Reichsarbeitsminister an das Auswärtigen Amt, betr. Schutz des tschechischen Hauseigentums in der Slowakei, 15 October 1941.

Protectorate facilities, could be carried out in popular Slovak spa resorts to treat rheumatic diseases, namely in Trenčianske Teplice and Piešťany. The possibility of using the Slovak spa facilities was a welcome option from the point of view of insurance companies, but also a relatively expensive service. The fixed treatment flat rates in the sanatoriums were considered 'quite high' by the Protectorate insurance companies, but the excellent treatment results achieved by the Slovak facilities allegedly offset these costs.<sup>48</sup>

Throughout the existence of the Nazi Protectorate, Czech politicians found themselves in a never fully resolved dilemma between finding their own path and cooperation with Nazi Germany. The area of social insurance and social welfare shows that rationally justified Czech activism was necessary for the social stabilisation of the country and contributed significantly to the legitimacy of the Protectorate regime. Czech politicians initiated changes to keep the social security system running while making it more efficient, simpler and cheaper to offer social security services. As in Germany and Slovakia, national welfare formed the basic framework with the fundamental goals of sufficiency and equal redistribution among members of the national community. The increasing dependence of the Czech government on the Reich Protector's Office, especially evident after Reinhard Heydrich arrived in Prague in September 1941, was reflected in the loss of positions in the leadership of important social and economic institutions, but it never threatened the social security of the 'Czech nation'.

### Structures of social policy

The regime in the Protectorate was a form of supervisory administration, which was necessarily maintained by using the existing structures and domestic expert capacities. However, as Werner Best discovered during his inspection trip in the autumn of 1940, the size of the German occupation apparatus in the Protectorate was considerable.<sup>49</sup> It could not, therefore, escape the attention of the local people, who were expected to adapt their behaviour and often change their individual strategies according to the new regime and its representation. Officials at various levels of government, from the Reich Protector's Office to the labour offices established at the level of political districts, required adequate communication. In the first months after the establishment of the Protectorate, a number of pragmatically formulated requests were addressed to the Reich Protector demanding various changes, such as adjustments in the retirement age, the levelling of wages

<sup>48</sup> 'Léčení pojištěnců na Slovensku', *Sociální reforma* (20 November 1942), Nos 21–2, 1.

<sup>49</sup> NA, Reich Protector's Office – State Secretary (ÚŘP-ST) Coll., Sign. 109-4/1054, Carton 58: Die deutschen Aufsichtsverwaltungen in Frankreich, Belgien, den Niederlanden, Norwegen und im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren.

and the end of favouritism towards the legionnaires, the First World War veterans who had been instrumental in the creation of Czechoslovakia after 1918. For example, Josef Růžička, a pensioner from a small village called Lhotka, addressed the Reich Protector to draw his attention to what he perceived as social injustice that apparently prevented him from committing to the new system:

General, it is necessary to tell Chancellor Hitler that there are great inequities among municipal and state employees and officials and pensioners. Some officials and pensioners receive six, eight or even sixteen hundred crowns a month. It is necessary to equalise pay because we all have the same stomachs to fill. It is necessary to level salaries at ten to twelve hundred crowns a month and no legionary, war, military benefits ...<sup>50</sup>

The Reich Protector's Office observed the activity of the Czechs with interest, as can be seen from the fact that they translated Czech letters into German for internal official use. In the past, the Czechs had regularly written to the Austrian Emperor and the Czechoslovak President, so appealing to the Reich Protector – addressed in various ways – was merely a continuation of an old practice under new circumstances. For this reason, the Czechs' initiation of equalisation of the social and political system, which incidentally gave rise to a number of amending motions during the occupation, was conspicuous and crucial in terms of building the legitimacy of the occupation regime.

The process of the separation of the individual national communities not only took place on the abstract level of identities but also tangibly affected the system of public social policy institutions. In the context of the radicalisation of the national communities around 1938, authoritarian welfare, developing in parallel in its Czech and German forms, made its way into the public social and health care sectors. After the establishment of the Protectorate, new organisations and state political institutions began to emerge, which underlined the segregationist features of public administration in the Bohemian lands. The following section outlines the structure of institutions active in the field of social and health administration.

### **Central public authorities**

Public administration in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia developed in a dynamic fashion. Throughout this period, the Czech authorities remained the basis for the implementation of social reforms. Their bureaucratic structures

<sup>50</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Sign. 114-124-6, Carton 122: Letter of Josef Růžička to the Reich Protector, no date. A similar message was included in an anonymous letter sent to the Reich Protector's Office in April 1939: 'Esteemed Reich Protector, I approach you with this petition. They let our men retire at 60 years old when they have not served long enough, and we are all harmed by small pensions. Please address the matter and order a postponement of the retirement age to 62 at least – it is 64 years in Germany – so at least by two years after the age of 60.' NA, ÚŘP Coll., Sign. 114-124-6, Carton 122: Anonymous letter of 27 April 1939 sent to the Reich Protector.

and expertise were used by German officials appointed to leading positions in important Protectorate bodies and by the newly emerging institutions of the German (occupation) administration. During the reconstruction, a Czech–German dialogue was conducted, which, although asymmetrical in power, allowed and assumed the cooperation of the Czech representatives. Already in late March and early April 1939, officials of the German ministries of Justice, Finance, Food and Agriculture and Economy set out on a mission to the Bohemian lands to set up expert commissions at the various Protectorate ministries. This was the first step in building the German system of control and government that gave shape to the administrative system in the early years of the Protectorate.<sup>51</sup> Between 1941 and 1942, the structure of ministries and other institutions was transformed as a result of Heydrich's administrative reforms. The Nazis strengthened their position by reducing their own institutions and by placing German officials in Czech public institutions, starting with district and provincial offices. The aim was to save German staff and to make the whole system more efficient and flexible.<sup>52</sup> The administrative reform, which aimed to prepare the Protectorate for deeper integration into the Reich, minimised the room for creative work on the part of the Czech bureaucratic structures and significantly reduced the efficiency of the Protectorate government. Thus, the reconstruction phase corresponded with the 1939–42 period, during which the Protectorate governments produced 200 or more governmental regulations per year, of which more than 30 per cent were related to financial, tax, customs and social insurance issues.<sup>53</sup>

The Protectorate government's performance was in no small measure the work of officials at the Ministry of Social and Health Administration. From December 1938, this department was headed by Vladislav Klumpar, whose programme statement of 3 February 1939 emphasised dealing with the changes and promoting a more economical and efficient system of social and health administration.<sup>54</sup> In January 1939, the organisational structure of the ministry was reduced from the original twelve to seven departments, which were mainly concerned with general social policy, social insurance, care for the health and development of the nation, including the care of youth and combating communicable diseases, and also medicine, veterinary medicine and pharmacy.<sup>55</sup> However, the journey from drafting a piece of legislation prepared by Czech officials to its enactment was

<sup>51</sup> Alexander Klimo, *Im Dienste des Arbeitseinsatzes. Rentenversicherung im 'Dritten Reich'* (Göttingen 2018), 244.

<sup>52</sup> Jaroslava Milotová, *Heydrichova správní reforma v kontextu správněpolitického vývoje českých zemích v letech nacistické okupace*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Charles University (Prague 1988), 236.

<sup>53</sup> Pavel Obermajer, *Protektorátní vlády a jejich legislativní činnost*, Master's thesis, Faculty of Law, Charles University (Prague 2016), 61 and 63.

<sup>54</sup> 'Sociálně politický program ministra JUDr. Vladislava Klumpara', *Sociální snahy. List soukromých úředníků a zřízcenců věnovaný otázkám sociální péče* (1939), No. 1, 39.

<sup>55</sup> 'Sociálně politický program ministra', 39.

not straightforward. The primary condition was to obtain the approval of the Reich Protector, or rather the expert circles concentrated in his Office. That is why the Czech government, when discussing individual legislative proposals, always conditioned the final step, that is, asked for the signature of the Protectorate President, by stating something to the effect of 'if there are no objections from the Reich Protector's Office'.

The body which reviewed the outputs of the Protectorate ministries and forwarded them to the Reich Protector for approval, without which the regulations could not be put into effect, were the working groups and departments of the Reich Protector's Office, modelled on the Reich Ministry of the Interior.<sup>56</sup> The most important body in the context of social policy was 'Group X', which dealt with labour and social affairs and was later subsumed under 'Department II'. Under the leadership of Wilhelm Dennler, a trained lawyer and senior government counsel, the department dealt with all matters relating to the deployment of labour, wage policy, unemployment assistance, social insurance, supply, housing and settlement policy, each of which was to be discussed directly with the corresponding Protectorate ministry.<sup>57</sup> The individual departments were only completed in late 1939 and early 1940, and German officials later carried out their duties at two institutions at the same time. Most often, they simultaneously worked for the Ministry of Economy and Labour (MHP) and the German State Ministry, which were created in the Protectorate – alongside the existing ministerial bodies – in 1942 and 1943, respectively. The most important person in this official body was Josef Schneider, a graduate in philosophy, theology and law, who joined the Reich Protector's Office in May 1939 as an officer for social insurance affairs. From there he worked his way up to head of 'Section IV', which dealt specifically with social insurance issues at the MHP.

The first and second phases of building up authoritarian welfare through legislative reform differed. While at the beginning the occupation structures could not feasibly cope without Czech expertise, later it was German officials who were able to replace Czech experts in this role. As we shall see in the following chapters, the work of Schneider is an excellent example. The most significant difference existed in the preparatory legislative work, which prior to January 1942 was carried out by Czech officials, while Reich experts only reviewed and controlled the preparation of government regulations. After the merger of the occupation and Protectorate administrations in January 1942, German officials were responsible for drafting the individual regulations. For instance, the extensive legislative amendments to

<sup>56</sup> NA, ÚŘP-ST Coll., Sign. 109-1/90, Carton 5: Negotiations between Minister Councillor K. Wilhemini and Minister Councillor Hellbach.

<sup>57</sup> Arbeitseinsatz, Arbeitslosenhilfe, Lohnpolitik, Sozialversicherung, Versorgung, Wohnungs- und Siedlungswesen. NA, ÚŘP-ST Coll., Sign. 109-1/90, Carton 5: Vermerk über die Gliederung der Behörde des Reichsprotectors, 13 February 1940.

pension and accident insurance adopted at the end of 1943 were subject to a commentary procedure that involved the ministries and individual expert and interest institutions.<sup>58</sup> The proposals were commented on by the heads of the Reichsgaus, administrative divisions of Nazi Germany, who were to share their experience with implementing a similar law, as well as by a number of Protectorate-based authorities. Critical in this matter was the attitude of the President of the Central Union of Industry, Bernard Adolf, one of the most influential figures in the occupation structures in Nazi Protectorate. In early January 1944, he complained in a very critical and almost ironic tone to the Minister of Economy and Labour, Walter Bertsch, that he had not been given enough time to comment on the latest versions of the draft government regulations No. 1/1944 and No. 2/1944. Adolf's main criticism was that both of the new regulations brought far-reaching improvements to the population of Bohemia and Moravia in terms of their entitlements vis-à-vis social insurance companies. However, at the same time, they represented a not insignificant burden on the economy and especially on industry, whose interests Adolf consistently defended.

The reconstruction phase allowed the Reich officials, often coming from the Reich Ministry of Labour or the Reich insurance companies, to become familiar with the Czech environment, for which the Czech experts provided the necessary time and space. Compared with the Reich officials, ethnic Germans from the Bohemian lands, who knew the region and its people and often had at least cursory knowledge of the Czech language, had an advantage. In this respect, Bohemian and Moravian Germans remained an indispensable asset, even though they were still underrepresented compared with Reich experts and officials. In persons such as Karl Hermann Frank, the State Secretary and later German State Minister for Bohemia and Moravia, they had a more significant presence in the administration of the Protectorate than the local Germans had in the Sudetenland, where Reich officials arrived better equipped with knowledge of Reich law, which was implemented there due to the annexation of the territory to Germany.<sup>59</sup>

The central bodies of the public administration included the National Partnership. It replaced the abolished representative bodies of former Czechoslovakia but also represented a national welfare project for the 'Czech nation'. It had a very dubious expert background, as it actively brought together enthusiastic reform activists of various professions rather than experienced professionals, who were often already involved elsewhere. This staff situation of the National Partnership

<sup>58</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 1/1944 Coll. and 2/1944 Coll. concerning accident insurance and insurance against sickness, disability and old age could serve as a representative example. NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1016: Der Präsident, Zentralverband der Industrie an den Minister für Wirtschaft und Arbeit Herrn Dr Walter Bertsch, 10 January 1944.

<sup>59</sup> Volker Zimmermann, *Sudetští Němci v nacistickém státě. Politika a nálada obyvatelstva v říšské župě Sudety (1938–1945)* (Prague 2001), 129.

corresponded to its long unclear position in relation to the Protectorate government, as described earlier. Nevertheless, the National Partnership had its own social department, which was intended to demonstrate its seriousness and the degree of responsibility that it assumed as the only central political institution representing the 'Czech nation'. The social department dealt with social and housing security, migrant affairs, social insurance and leisure activities. It also organised its own 'Joy of Life' project, modelled on the Reich's *Kraft durch Freude*, which organised recreational stays for Czech workers and was one of its most prominent activities.<sup>60</sup>

### Social insurance companies

Insurance companies were the central institutions of the public social policy system. In the interwar period, they amassed enormous wealth, and for this reason they became a central object of interest for Nazi officials. Before 1938 there were dozens of insurance institutions in the Bohemian lands, among the most important of which were the ÚSP for workers' insurance, the General Pension Institute for the insurance of private employees, the fraternal treasuries for miners' insurance and the Accident Insurance Company for accident insurance. After the Munich Agreement and later after the declaration of the Protectorate, the Czechs emphasised the reconstructionist ethos in the matter of their organisation. The aim was to simplify the existing system of social insurance and to substantially increase the political influence on their inner workings and organisation.<sup>61</sup> Further politicisation occurred in 1940, now with the approval of the Reich Protector, and strengthened the powers of the leading officials 'in the interests of a more uniform and efficient implementation of sickness insurance.'<sup>62</sup>

The unification and reduction in the autonomy of the insurance companies, undertaken and initiated by the Czech authorities, were accompanied by heated debates in which two opposing camps crystallised. One group saw the unification process as a straightforward way to simplify the institutional network, while the other group, which included the well-known Zlín-based industrialist Jan Antonín Baťa, saw such efforts as merely making up for deficits and covering up the tracks

<sup>60</sup> 'Sociální činnost Národního souručenství', *Národní práce. Ústřední deník Národní odborové ústředny zaměstnanecké* (9 January 1941), No. 8, 5.

<sup>61</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 364/1938 Coll., on certain temporary administrative adjustments in public social insurance; Government regulation No. 52/1939 Coll., on insurance of employees against sickness, injury, disability and old age.

<sup>62</sup> Government regulation No. 76/1941 Coll., on the internal organisation of sickness insurance companies subject to the supervision of the ÚSP, their union, on the internal organisation of the ÚSP and on the appointment of judges of the courts established under the Act on Insurance of Employees against Sickness, Disability and Old Age.

of the mismanagement of failed insurance companies.<sup>63</sup> Consensus existed only about the acceptability of consolidation if several institutes operated in a single district. By the end of 1939, the plans took concrete form. While initially there had existed three unions, the entire sector was now brought together under the umbrella of the Central Union of Sickness Insurance Companies. Interestingly, it was a return to the situation that existed in the Bohemian lands before 1918. According to contemporary observers, this was a ‘unanimous, voluntary and spontaneous resolution of the members of the participating unions’, which was intended to simplify administration and deliberately eliminate competition.<sup>64</sup>

This was in line with the national defensive strategy in the spirit of the Autumn Revolution. However, the reform also brought the Czech system much closer to the Reich insurance scheme, and Czech officials were well aware of it. The Protectorate social insurance institutions did not escape the introduction of the leadership principle, that is, a strictly hierarchical structure modelled on the Nazi organisation. Although the board of directors was made up of the directors of the individual sections (the insurance companies had several such directors), one of them was given privileged powers under the new system. Therefore, it is not surprising that this position became a strategic target for the Nazis to control the Protectorate’s insurance industry.

In the case of the ÚSP, the German authorities’ intervention had begun more than a year earlier, in autumn 1939, and their aim was to occupy this very position. In general, the German strategy was to instal Reich experts in selected leading roles in Protectorate institutions, while the bulk of the workforce continued to be made up of Czech clerks and officers. This procedure corresponded to the principles of supervisory administration, which was to concentrate primarily on controlling developments and heading them in the desired direction. However, the recruitment of Reich officials did not begin with the arrival of Reinhard Heydrich and the reorganisation of the public administration under his tenure. The areas where German supervision had to be established were identified by the occupation authorities immediately after the seizure of the country in the spring of 1939.<sup>65</sup> As was said at a meeting at the Reich Protector’s Office held a few months later:

Because of the large importance of social insurance for the whole economy, it is necessary to ensure adequate German influence in the honorary bodies and the clerical staff of the large Protectorate-wide social insurance carriers and of the insurance carriers operating in districts with a particularly strong share of Germans in the total population.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> ‘Zprávy situační,’ *Sociální reforma* (20 January 1939), No. 2, 29–30.

<sup>64</sup> Jiří Pleskot, ‘Sloučení svazu nemocenských pojišťoven,’ *Sociální reforma* (5 July 1939), No. 13, 177.

<sup>65</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1022: Ministry of Social and Health Administration to the Presidency of the Ministerial Council, 9 November 1939.

<sup>66</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 971: Reichsprotektor f. Böhmen u. Mähren an den Herrn Gruppenleiter, Betr. Unterlagen über die Sozialpolitik im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren – hier – Sozialversicherung, 20 November 1939.



Nationality remained a permanent organising and systemic principle behind all measures that were successively adopted in the Protectorate. The German officials in the Protectorate's insurance companies were tasked with streamlining their existing management of the institutions and defending the interests of German insured persons in a territory with a predominantly Czech population. To perform their jobs 'according to their previous experience and qualifications and to gain respect based on [the officials'] knowledge and abilities in the Czech environment' was part of the contract signed by German employees assigned to clerical positions at the General Pension Institute.<sup>67</sup> At the end of 1939, the General Pension Institute served 250,000 insured persons, of whom only 17,000 were Germans. In January of the following year, a new organisation of the institute's offices came into force. While a single office of the General Pension Institute was set up for Bohemia in Prague, the office in Moravia was divided into two departments – Czech and German. The German department took care of insured persons of German nationality, while the Czech department handled insured persons of Czech and other nationalities. Administratively, the two departments were separate units and shared only the administrative bodies.<sup>68</sup> On 22 January 1940, the General Pension Institute employed thirteen German officials.<sup>69</sup> The previously increasing number of German officials began to decline in 1942 when the 'unneeded' officials were drafted to serve at the war front. In March 1944, only sixteen of the 144 sickness insurance companies in the Protectorate had German officials among their staff.<sup>70</sup>

### Indigent and voluntary care bodies

The formation of a solidarity community was one of the central promises of the Autumn Revolution. The emphasis on concentrating all technocratic and political forces on internal political matters was intended to provide social security for members of the 'Czech nation'. Social welfare measures, not conditional on employment or insurance, were primarily intended to fulfil this purpose, though less generously and comprehensively than insurance companies. The importance of charitable and voluntary organisations grew especially during the Great Depression, as the care of the unemployed depended on them.<sup>71</sup> After the Munich

<sup>67</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 1022: Anlage zum Brief von Fritz Pawellek, DAF, NSDAP an den Herrn Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren, Gruppe X., z. H. Des Herrn Dr. Schneider, 15 December 1939.

<sup>68</sup> *ÚSP Bulletin*, Volume 14, No. 6, 102.

<sup>69</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll. Carton 1022: Antrag betreffend die Eingliederung der im Stande der Amtstelle Prag B befindlichen und einiger anderer Angestellter deutscher Volkszugehörigkeit in die einzelnen Abteilungen der Amtsstelle Prag A und der Zentrale der Allgemeinen Pensionsanstalt in Prag.

<sup>70</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 974: ORR F. Koreis – Vermerk: Anstellung von Kriegsversehrten bei den Trägern der Krankenversicherung im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, 21 March 1944.

<sup>71</sup> J. Rákosník, *Odvracená tvář meziválečné prosperity*, 350.

Agreement and during the Nazi occupation, charity continued to contribute to the care of Czechs in need, but its structure changed significantly. The establishment of the National Relief Fund (*Základ národní pomoci*) in December 1938 marked the beginning of systematic public social care for the ethnically and racially homogenised 'Czech nation', which never ceased functioning during the occupation, although some of its institutional components changed.<sup>72</sup> The National Relief Fund, established based on the initiative of the right-wing National Unity Party in power after the Munich crisis, provided support for socially needy Czechs using funds raised mainly through public collections and donations. It was the first exclusively Czech association established in the context of the post-Munich ethos of building up the *národní pospolitost*.

The National Relief Fund was followed by the National Aid (*Národní pomoc*) association, reiterating the nationally segregated principle of social care organisation in the Nazi Protectorate. There was no legal entitlement to receive support from the National Aid association. The range of services offered was broad and included catering for children and deprived adults, material support directed to municipalities with socially deprived families, and the organisation of events called 'national hospitality' to enable deprived children from the cities to spend their holidays in the countryside. The common thread in all these projects was the idea of improving the eating habits and diet of the Czech population and promoting the traditional family model.<sup>73</sup> From the beginning, National Aid and its later institutional successor, Social Aid (*Sociální pomoc*), appeared to be a clear competitor to existing voluntary public welfare organisations. Their function was not intended to be merely complementary, as they were meant to improve the Czech people's access to public social, medical and counselling support.

The fragmentation of voluntary institutions and charities was, according to Czech officials, detrimental. There were approximately 90,000 different associations operating in the area of social welfare at the beginning of 1939, and many felt that this was not in keeping with what officials called 'securing the future of the nation'. This, they argued, could only be secured by 'unifying forces'.<sup>74</sup> The reorganisation of public indigent care was a protracted process that did not prove entirely successful in the end. Centralisation was to incorporate the historically established organisations under the so-called National Social and Health Care Centre (*Národní ústředí sociální a zdravotní péče*). The National Centre was established in the summer of 1939 as an umbrella organisation for all societies and associations of societies active in the area of social and health care.

<sup>72</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 370/1938 Coll., establishing the 'National Relief Fund'.

<sup>73</sup> NA, Czech Social Aid Collection, Carton 3: Three Years of National Aid, Prague 1941.

<sup>74</sup> NA, PMR Coll., Carton 4148: The explanatory memorandum to the forthcoming Government regulation of 31 March 1939 amending the Act No. 134 Coll., on the right of association, of 15 November 1867, and making certain provisions concerning associations.

The reasons for its creation were summed up by Minister Vladislav Klumpar in the motto 'Efficiency, economy, division of labour and a common plan', as he emphasised at the National Centre's constituent meeting on 24 August 1939.<sup>75</sup> The National Centre was to control the activities and management of all the associations it represented. Personnel links with the National Partnership ensured close cooperation between the entities. Hynek Pelc, a university professor and physician, became chairman of the Centre, assisted by Alois Zelenka, a physician for the health section, and Josef Talacko, a statistician and demographer for the social affairs section.<sup>76</sup> In its organisational work, the National Centre relied on the district aid committees established in each judicial district, which coordinated the activities of National Aid, District Youth Welfare, the Charity and the League Against Tuberculosis at this administrative level. The enormous financial burden on the district aid committees consisted mainly in catering events. In December 1939, a total of 127,184 children were enrolled in the catering programme in 1,465 catering stations in Bohemia alone. The estimated costs were over K 5 million. However, this increased to more than K 11 million in 1941, out of K 39 million paid in total, also including cash grants, clothing, counselling centres, care for families and in institutions, social health and holiday care.<sup>77</sup>

The National Centre created a centralised but intricate and organisationally inflexible institution. Contemporary observers referred to it as a 'behemoth' incapable of functioning efficiently. Its existence was short-lived, and it essentially ceased to exist in 1942, in parallel with the establishment of Social Aid. The later simplification of social care meant there would no longer be strict centralisation of the various institutions but a 'path of voluntary agreement'. In practice, this meant above all the division of tasks and mutual assistance among the individual organisations, as was to be demonstrated by the later cooperation of Social Aid with other institutions.<sup>78</sup> In January 1943, negotiations were underway on the cooperation of the organisations providing voluntary youth care with Social Aid, then a new organisational entity in social and health care.<sup>79</sup> Social Aid began operating on 30 October 1942 and, in terms of its scope of activities, presented nothing fundamentally new but rather was another attempt to consolidate public social welfare institutions.

<sup>75</sup> NA, National Social and Health Care Centre Collection, Carton 1: Memorandum concerning the start of activities, 18 September 1939.

<sup>76</sup> *Zpráva o činnosti Národního ústředí sociální a zdravotní péče, od 1. IX. – 31. XII. 1939* (Prague 1940), 12.

<sup>77</sup> NA, MSZS Coll., Carton 3: Minutes of the meeting of the Third Group of the National Social and Health Care Centre held on 13 December 1939.

<sup>78</sup> NA, Provincial Youth Welfare Headquarters Collection (ZÚPM Coll.), No. 218/141, Carton 37 Meeting on cooperation with Social Aid, 14 January 1943.

<sup>79</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 378/1942 Coll., on Social Aid for Bohemia and Moravia.

Social Aid recalled a linguistic shift from the national to social and labour communities after Heydrich's assassination and the Soviet advances in the war. By the time of its creation, there had already been a significant move away from social policy discussed in national terms. A greater emphasis was put on solidarity within communities. This was also reflected in the spending of funds available to the Social Aid organisation. It supported food, clothing and the running of children's shelters for working mothers, provided contributions for Christmas gifts for children in need, and cooperated with other institutions, particularly those active in combating tuberculosis. Although Social Aid took over many of the activities of its predecessor (National Aid), it was significantly different in terms of its position in the structure of public social welfare institutions. Social Aid activities were supervised by the Minister of Popular Education, Emanuel Moravec, a former Czechoslovak legionnaire and a central figure in Czech collaboration with the Nazis.<sup>80</sup>

Social Aid functioned largely on the principle of solidarity among the Czech population. It was literally 'the torchbearer for the idea of mutual aid to our fellow compatriots', as Prague Mayor Alois Říha described it in November 1944.<sup>81</sup> At that time, the third year of its operation – or what was called the 'Third Work of Social Aid' – was already beginning. To finance itself, it used contributions from the Czech people for various projects in the Protectorate, but also in the Reich, which undermined its popularity. This was reflected in the level of contributions made at collection points, which, at least initially, did not reach the necessary level according to Czech authorities. Dissatisfaction with the lack of commitment on the part of the Czechs to the nation's collective work and the building of the New Europe prompted the Protectorate Ministry of Labour and Economy to adopt a measure in December 1942 that made 'voluntary' contributions compulsory. People thus found themselves in a situation where a public manifestation of support for Social Aid by dropping a coin into a moneybox became obligatory. Less demonstrative, but harder to circumvent, was the 1943 regulation by which the ministry ordered the automatic deduction of the Social Aid contribution from the insured person's benefits. A client of an insurance company could stop this only by a written letter of withdrawal, which he would have to send to his insurance provider.<sup>82</sup> However, after the events of 1942 – the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich and the subsequent repressions – people most likely preferred not to run the risk of having to challenge the authorities in this manner. In the Protectorate, various forms of deductions, taxes or, on the contrary, credits were combined.

<sup>80</sup> NA, ZÚPM Coll., Carton 37: Minutes of a meeting on cooperation between the Youth Welfare Association and Social Aid, 14 January 1943.

<sup>81</sup> 'III. Dílo Sociální pomoci zahájeno', *Péče o mládež* (1944), No. 10, 285.

<sup>82</sup> *ÚSP Bulletin*, Memorandum No. 1480 of 6 January 1943: Social Aid for Bohemia and Moravia, contributions of beneficiaries of the Protectorate and similar retirement and maintenance benefits.

Contributions to the Winter Relief of the German People (Winterhilfswerk), the NSV, the National Relief Fund and the National Aid association could at least be deducted from the pension, general and special income taxes.<sup>83</sup> In the case of the National Relief Fund, this was a possibility from the very beginning, that is, from December 1938.<sup>84</sup>

The accumulated funds were used to assess the degree of the 'Czech nation's' commitment to the Nazi's New Europe. If the published amounts resulting from the collections among the Czech people are to be believed, this was indeed an impressive feat: in 1943, collections increased by 40 per cent, from over K 125 million to K 208 million compared with the previous year.<sup>85</sup> In addition to their propaganda value, public collections were an important financial source for public social care. Social Aid was the sole organiser of the public collections, on the proceeds of which the activities of other social organisations were also largely dependent.

### Workers' care

The increase in industrial and agricultural production in Germany during the war relied heavily on workers' performance. The same was true of Czech workers, who – like their German counterparts – were hard hit by the Great Depression in the 1930s. This made them all the more susceptible to vocal propaganda and the promises of social improvement made by Czech political elites at the time of the Autumn Revolution. Czech workers' welfare was a means by which the Protectorate authorities could effectively communicate the principles of authoritarian welfare: nation, labour and social equality. In the words of Václav Stočes, chairman of the workers' National Trade Union Centre, spoken in early 1941: 'The purpose of today's social policy is to bring the toiling man back into the Czech národní pospolitost.'<sup>86</sup> On this path, the workers were to be accompanied by united Czech trade unions, whose main task was the all-round care of Czech workers.

Union membership was to become synonymous with the fulfilment of 'national duty' for workers. Czech trade union leaders called for 'everyone to join hands in common work and contribute his share to the fulfilment of the social duty'.<sup>87</sup> The ambitions of the trade unionists were close to the goals set by

<sup>83</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 338/1940 Coll., on the tax benefits for the Winter Relief of the German People, the NSV, the National Relief Fund and the National Aid association.

<sup>84</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulation of the Czechoslovak State, Government regulation No. 370/1938 Coll., establishing the 'National Relief Fund', Section 5.

<sup>85</sup> 'III. dílo Sociální pomoci zahájeno', 285.

<sup>86</sup> L. Votický, 'Novoroční přání státního presidenta', *Práce a hospodářství* (1941), No. 1, 3.

<sup>87</sup> All-Union Archive of the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions in Prague (VOA ČMKOS), National Trade Union Headquarters of Employees Collection (NOÚZ Coll.), Carton 106: Unification of the Czech trade unionist movement, p. 3 [1939].

the National Partnership. Instead of strengthening the overall influence of the Protectorate institutions, rivalries were being created among the Czechs. This tension weakened the position of the trade unions and contributed to their later *Gleichschaltung* (forced standardization).

Out of over five hundred trade union organisations in interwar Czechoslovakia, split along professional and political-party lines, a single organisation emerged in 1941.<sup>88</sup> The NOÚZ was to be a more compact platform, easier to administer and control. According to the historian Stanislav Kokoška, the objective was to create a professional trade union organisation that would provide all employees with basic technical services in the performance of wartime economic plans according to Nazi orders.<sup>89</sup> The first chairman of the NOÚZ, then still only one of three trade union organisations into which the Czechs had managed to merge their fragmented array of organisations during the Autumn Revolution, was Antonín Zelenka, a key figure in the negotiations on social insurance.<sup>90</sup> As a trade unionist, however, he was regarded as an ineffectual leader. Zelenka resigned his post after failing to establish cooperation with his German counterpart, the DAF.<sup>91</sup> His departure as chairman was effectively the price to be paid for the strategic manoeuvres of the Protectorate government and the trade unions, committed to pushing for greater equality in wage policy.<sup>92</sup> Given his own professional history, Zelenka believed that the primary mission of trade unionists under the new regime was to strive for fair wages. As Zelenka stated:

Trade unions today are freeing themselves from foreign influences and are becoming an organism whose sole mission is to protect the economic and social interests of their members. All trade unionists have always known clearly that the fragmentation of the trade unions is a great obstacle to every action and that it weakens the weight and importance of the workers in every meeting and at every step. If it was a detriment before, it would be a crime today; in the present situation no one can afford to destroy the work of all for the sake of his own interests.<sup>93</sup>

This time the process of unification was to be driven by the trade unions themselves. According to Zelenka, this was neither an imposed nor an unwanted procedure, but an appropriate step towards the realisation of good working of the trade unions and the effective representation of Czech workers' interests. Zelenka's enthusiasm was not so naive as it may seem to us today. Only later did it become

<sup>88</sup> On the process of the unification of the trade unions, see Dušan Janák and Stanislav Kokoška (eds), *Průmyslové dělnictvo v českých zemích v letech 1938–1948* (Prague 2019), 61–107.

<sup>89</sup> Janák and Kokoška (eds), *Průmyslové dělnictvo v českých zemích*, 106.

<sup>90</sup> The three trade union organisations were the NOÚZ, the Workers' Trade Union Headquarters (Ústředí jednot dělníků) and the Private Employees' Trade Union Headquarters (Ústředí jednot soukromých zaměstnanců).

<sup>91</sup> Václav Stočes, 'Na nové cestě', *Práce a hospodářství* (1941), No. 3, 42.

<sup>92</sup> František Čapka, *Odbory v českých zemích v letech 1918–1945* (Brno 2008), 145.

<sup>93</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll., Carton 106: Mission of the United Trade Unions [1939].

clear that the role of the unions in wage issues was only symbolic, and the reconstruction of the state and society was not a process in which only the Czechs would have a say.

The Trade Union Centre took care of the social and cultural provisioning of Czech workers through several projects, for instance, recreational and catering events, cultural programmes and vocational courses for workers (then known as 'labour schools'). In the late Protectorate, its focus was dominated by legal advice to Czech workers on matters of employment contracts, working conditions and social insurance. Throughout the Protectorate era, it also published its own magazines – *Práce a hospodářství* (Work and economy) for workers in the Protectorate, *Český dělník* (Czech worker) for Czechs deployed for work in Germany, *Žena v povolání* (Woman at work) for Czech women workers – and a number of professional newspapers.

However, the year 1942 brought an unexpected event in the development of Czech trade unions. A social department was incorporated into the structures of the Trade Union Headquarters of Employees, from which the Women's Central Department was split off in September 1942. This was the first time in the history of the Czechoslovak trade union movement that an organisation representing the interests of women workers was established at the very centre of a trade union structure and that women themselves became actively involved in trade union activities. This is all the more interesting because the participation of women in factory councils, the bodies representing workers in individual enterprises, was only sporadic up to that point. Why did women get a voice during the Nazi occupation, of all times? As the demand for labour grew, so did the number of women workers with needs different from those of working men. Other women in particular were able to understand them better. In July 1942, Arno Hais, the vice-chairman of the NOÚZ, recounted at a meeting of women trade unionists:

I had a case here the other day, that a woman complained that she was unable to buy vegetables. For four weeks she was unable to buy anything, because everything was already sold out in the afternoon, bought up by those who had time in the morning to do the shopping. A remedy was therefore sought and arranged by giving the women in the company a special ticket which entitled them to shop with priority in the morning. There are many such issues. It is simply going to be all women's issues. A working woman must have a complete assurance of protection, she must be able to rely on everything being sorted out for her.<sup>94</sup>

The defence of the interests of Czech women and men associated in the Trade Union Headquarters of Employees was to become the primary task of the Czech trade unions. While the women trade unionists were enthusiastic about it and

<sup>94</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll., Carton 236: Minutes of the meeting of women's affairs officers held on 13 July 1942 in the NOÚZ conference room, Prague 1, Perštýn No. 11.

received strong support from German officials, the Czech men trade unionists observed the women's enthusiasm and commitment with something akin to embarrassment. As will be explained further in [Chapter Four](#), workers' welfare and health remained a central concern even under the conditions of war and occupation.

Czechs tended to accommodate demands from the Germans, but they did not remain passive when it came to representing the interests of Czech workers. The NOÚZ was relatively successful in its negotiations with the labour offices, which were the principal authorities responsible for the placement of Czech workers in jobs in the Protectorate and in Germany. As can be seen from the report of the regional secretariat of the NOÚZ in Klatovy, which was then under the jurisdiction of the labour office for Klatovy, Strakonice and Pilsen (south-western Bohemia), trade unionists still noted an 'accommodative attitude' to matters relating to wage policy and morale and the granting of recruitment benefits on the part of the office even as late as March 1945.<sup>95</sup> The trade unionists in Hradec Králové (eastern Bohemia) had a similar experience. In February 1945, they reported to Prague a total of ten interventions in matters concerning special family allowances in recruitment, relocation of employees, the establishment of a factory committee and so forth, and confirmed the office's 'generally favourable response'.<sup>96</sup> There is no doubt that the NOÚZ was becoming more similar to its German counterpart, the DAF.

### **Reich social policy institutions**

Germans living in the Protectorate formed the clientele of the Reich's social policy and welfare institutions. However, in contrast to the Czech population, German welfare had no institutional background at the time of the Protectorate's establishment. The institutions providing social and health care for Reich citizens were essentially built from the ground up in the first months of the Protectorate's existence. German clients were at a significant disadvantage compared to those who belonged to the Protectorate (Czech) authorities, which relied on the former Czechoslovak institutions. Building an organisational structure meant creating a dense network of health and educational institutions in order to provide equal social rights to Germans living in the German Reich and the Protectorate. In 1940–1, for instance, institutions for training in various branches of medical practice began to operate: in 1940, the German Midwives School and the

<sup>95</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll., Carton 236: Regional office in Klatovy to the National Trade Union Centre, Prague 1, Report on the activities of NOÚZ liaison officer for the Labour Office, 15 March 1945.

<sup>96</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll., Carton 236: Regional office in Klatovy to the National Trade Union Centre, Prague 1, Report on the activities of NOÚZ liaison officer for the Labour Office, 12 March 1945.



German School for Medical and Technical Assistants, and in 1941 the German Nursing School, opened their doors to their first students.<sup>97</sup> As demonstrated by the protracted settlement process between the Slovak and Protectorate insurance companies, creating new institutions was not a transparent and straightforward process. This was ultimately one of the reasons why no German insurance companies were established in the Protectorate to exclusively serve the German population. The authorities argued against the principle of autonomy of the Protectorate administration granted by the decree of 16 March 1939 and the difficulties in creating such institutions.<sup>98</sup> The Czech insurance companies served as a transfer conduit for payments between the Reich insurance companies and health care providers, which is why German influence was supposed to be strong within the Protectorate insurance companies.<sup>99</sup> The only exception was the private Reich insurance companies, which could only do business in the Protectorate with a special permit.<sup>100</sup>

The highest-ranking office of Reich social and health care in the Protectorate was the Chief Reich Provisioning Department at the Reich Protector's Office. This department, whose remit covered the entire territory of the Protectorate, supervised the activities of the Reich Provisioning Department at the Oberlandrat in Prague, which provided for the care of war victims and survivors from the ranks of ethnic Germans. As the main contact point for dealing with the Ministry of Social and Health Administration and other Czech authorities, it also administered aid and allowances for ethnic Germans, funds from foundations and other funds and dealt with all matters relating to payments and settlements made through the autonomous authorities. At the same time, it exercised financial supervision over specific departments of the Ministry of Social and Health Administration.<sup>101</sup> Yet the institutional background of care for Czechs and Germans remained unequal.

The institution that balanced the discrepancy between social and health protection for Czechs and Germans was the German Medical Chamber for the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The organisational burden rested largely

<sup>97</sup> Michal Šimůnek, 'Skupina zdravotnictví Úřadu řííšského protektora v Čechách a na Moravě 1939–1942', Part 2, *Dějiny věd a techniky* 41 (2008), No. 1, 16.

<sup>98</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 971: Aufbau der Sozialversicherung im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, Geltung der Reichsversicherung im Protektorat, p. 9.

<sup>99</sup> German officials have joined the management of the largest insurance companies in Bohemia and Moravia: Kurt Wilhelmi as head of the General Pension Institute, Franz Koreis at the ÚSP, Franz Ritter at the Sickness Insurance Company for Private Employees and Dr. Prokesch at the Workers' Accident Insurance Company in Prague. NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 973: J. Schneider an die Deutsche Gesellschaft der Wirtschaft in Böhmen und Mähren, Gruppe Prag, zu Händen von Herrn Dr. Adolf, 20 February 1942.

<sup>100</sup> Tomáš Jelínek, *Pojišťovny ve službách hákové kříže: Prosazování německých zájmů v protektorátním pojišťovnictví, arizace pojistek a mezinárodní odškodňování* (Prague 2015), 95.

<sup>101</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 1046: Aufgaben des Hauptreferats Reichsversorgung beim Reichsprotektor [1940].

on its shoulders. Its main tasks were to represent the Reich medical corporations and to provide medical treatment for insured persons who were formally clients of the Reich insurance companies.<sup>102</sup> Its powers were quite broad. The chamber was established by decree of the Reich Minister of the Interior on 24 September 1940, at the same time as the applicability of the Reich Medical Code was extended to German nationals living in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>103</sup> According to the Reich Minister for Labour, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was not a foreign country within the meaning of the Reich Insurance Code, even though a border did exist between the Protectorate and Germany during the occupation, the crossing of which required a passport.

Belonging to the Volksgemeinschaft went hand in hand with the appeal for social egalitarianism. The Reich insurance companies were required to provide all benefits to their clients in the Protectorate without restrictions and to fulfil the principle of equal distribution of social rights among the Volksgemeinschaft members. The German Medical Chamber was the organisation that was to arrange for the services of the Reich insurance companies to the German insured in the Protectorate. It was the key institution responsible for billing the treatments provided, ultimately for Reich citizens in the Protectorate and Protectorate workers deployed for work in the Altreich – pre-war German territory. The German Medical Chamber was an exemplary product of the process of building public Reich social and health structures in the occupied country. However, it was far from the only such organisation. The Hitler Youth and the NSV extended their reach to the Protectorate, and the DAF attempted a similar expansion.<sup>104</sup>

The NSV was a mass organisation of the German nation which had up to 17 million members in Germany in 1943. It was rightly one of the best-known public institutions and was said to be the most popular organisation in Nazi Germany.<sup>105</sup> The NSV was dedicated to public social care, fulfilling essentially the same role as the National Social and Health Care Centre in the Bohemian lands. The NSV organised health clinics, programmes such as Winter Relief to which Germans contributed through public collections, and ‘Mother and Child’ family care events, and it was also substantially involved in the Kinderlandverschickung project, through which the authorities placed women with children, or children aged between six and

<sup>102</sup> ‘Německá zdravotnická komora a nemocenské pojišťovny,’ *Sociální reforma* (20 February 1942), Nos 3–4, 1–2. On organisational issues see NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 988: Deutsche Gesundheitskammer für das Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, Rundschreiben No. 1/39.

<sup>103</sup> RGBl. I, 1940, p. 1275: Verordnung über die Deutsche Gesundheitskammer im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren; RGBl. I, 1940, p. 1274: Verordnung zur Einführung von Bestimmungen der Reichsärzteordnung im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren; Bulletin of the Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia 1940, pp. 555–9.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Michael Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung für den totalen Krieg. Hitlerjugend und nationalsozialistische Jugendpolitik* (Munich 2003).

<sup>105</sup> Herwart Vorländer, *Die NSV. Darstellung und Dokumentation einer nationalsozialistischen Organisation* (Boppard am Rhein 1988), 1.



**Figure 3.1** Children from the NSV kindergarten play on the playground near Prague Castle. Source: National Archives, Prague, NSV Collection, carton 31.

fourteen, from the Ruhr region and other German industrial regions targeted by Allied bombing raids, in families or shelters situated in safer areas.<sup>106</sup>

In April 1940, the Reich Protector authorised the NSV to extend its operations to the Bohemian lands.<sup>107</sup> The establishment of social welfare for Germans in Bohemia and Moravia had been discussed since the spring of 1939, and there was no consensus on the scope of NSV activities in the Protectorate.<sup>108</sup> The lengthy process of constructing of the NSV made the situation significantly different from that in the Reich. While in Germany, the NSV was gaining more and more responsibilities in social welfare, in the Protectorate, some voices advocated social welfare as belonging exclusively to the municipal administration. In areas with a predominantly German population (not only in German-run cities), there were also supposedly 'adequate numbers' of mayors and other officials who were willing and able to assume social welfare responsibilities with regard to ethnic Germans.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>106</sup> On the reception of NSV in the Czech environment, see Stanislav Richter, 'Dobrovolná sociální zařízení v Říši', *Sociální reforma* (20 May 1939), No. 10, 136–8.

<sup>107</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 352: Der Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren An den Herrn Reichsminister der Finanzen in Berlin, Betr. Amtliche Fürsorge – Betreuung Volksdeutscher, die die deutsche Staatsangehörigkeit nicht besitzen, 8 July 1940 (Erlaß vom 4 March 1940).

<sup>108</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1019: Vermerk, Betr. Ausbau der freien Wohlfahrtspflege im Protektoratsgebiet, 2 May 1939.

<sup>109</sup> Moravian Provincial Archive in Brno (MZA), Reich Protector in Bohemia and Moravia, Office for Moravia, Brno (1939–45) Collection, Carton 29: An Herrn Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren in Prag, Betr. Amtliche Fürsorge für Deutsche im Protektorat. Schreiben vom 9. 12. 1939 – I 2 b –, 21 December 1939.

This view did not take hold, but it did point to the continuing struggles over political power between Bohemian-Moravian and Reich Germans in the Protectorate.

Initially, the activities of the NSV concerned only ethnic Germans of non-Reich citizenship. This practice may have been inspired by an effort to motivate Bohemian and Moravian Germans to apply for Reich citizenship, allowing them to apply for NSV services. Later that year, however, the powers of the NSV were expanded when, from December 1940, it began to provide care to all ethnic Germans in the Protectorate and later even assume decision-making responsibilities regarding the granting and payment of social benefits.<sup>110</sup>

Nazi social policy would not have been what it was without the DAF. In September 1940, however, Reich Protector Konstantin von Neurath rejected the possibility of allowing direct activities by the DAF in the Protectorate without stating his reasons.<sup>111</sup> The strained relations between the State Secretary and later German State Minister Karl Hermann Frank and the head of the DAF, Robert Ley, pointed to another level of dispute between Bohemian-Moravian and Reich Germans over power and influence in the Protectorate. The escalation of the conflict between Frank and Ley continued and the highest Reich authorities had to intervene even as late as the spring of 1945.<sup>112</sup> German workers in the Protectorate were not, however, without representation. The Liaison Office between the Czech Trade Union Centre and the office of the Reich Protector, established in March 1941, was to supervise the Czech trade unions and, at the same time, represent the DAF in the Bohemian lands. The position of the Liaison Office changed in 1944 when it began to be financed by the German State Ministry led by Frank.<sup>113</sup> This happened at a time when a number of jurisdictional disputes were taking place concerning industrial enterprises crucial to the war industry. The need for a clearer delineation of competencies between the Liaison Office and the Central Union of Industry for Bohemia and Moravia, which brought together all industrial enterprises in Bohemia and Moravia and defended the rights of employers, essentially prevented Ley from having any influence over the Protectorate's enterprises.<sup>114</sup>

The DAF assumed responsibility solely for the welfare of German workers in plants with German managers and exclusively German employees. Any other enterprise was considered Czech and lay outside Ley's jurisdiction. However, if at least five Germans worked in this 'Czech' enterprise, the interests of German workers and other employees were represented by a 'spokesman for the Germans', who reported to

<sup>110</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 352: Der Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren an die Dienststellen Mähren, an alle Oberlandräte, an die Parteiverbindungsstelle, 25 November 1940.

<sup>111</sup> Balcar and Kučera, *Von der 'Rüstammer des Reiches'*, 90.

<sup>112</sup> NA, NSM Coll., Sign. 110-9/14, Carton 79: Complaint against Robert Ley sent by Karl Hermann Frank to Hans Lammers, 1945.

<sup>113</sup> From this point onwards as the Liaison Office of the German State Minister to the Trade Unions (Verbindungsstelle des Deutschen Staatsministers zu den Gewerkschaften).

<sup>114</sup> NA, NSM Coll., Sign. 110-5/40, Carton 53.

the local leader of the DAF.<sup>115</sup> Their appointment was supposed to be in the power of the DAF, but in the Protectorate, they were appointed by the Reich Protector, which only further exacerbated the dispute between Ley and Frank's administration.<sup>116</sup>

The conflicts between the representatives of the occupation administration and the DAF made it very difficult for the Reich trade unions to operate in the Czech environment. However, the DAF was never completely pushed out from the Protectorate. It managed to gain decisive influence in the private Star Life Insurance Company (Životní akciová pojišťovna Star), which Tomáš Jelínek considers 'the most dramatic entry of a German entity into the Protectorate market' in the insurance sector.<sup>117</sup> Taking over the old Reich trade union institutions in Germany, the DAF acquired a 75 per cent stake in Star through the Deutsche Ring trade association in Hamburg, with a share capital of K 4 million. It is clear that, unlike in the Reichsgau Sudetenland, the DAF in the Protectorate had only limited influence on workers' welfare, which it compensated for by its activities in the private insurance sector. Ley, however, succeeded in implementing yet another project. While these may have been only partial successes, they demonstrated an effort to incorporate the Protectorate into the sphere of influence of the DAF. One could even argue that the Protectorate became a DAF laboratory, which in 1941 set up its own DAF Research Institute for Factory Injuries and Occupational Diseases in the Bohemian lands. It was founded at the suggestion of Kurt Strauss, a professor at the German University in Prague, and was located in the premises of a former sanatorium for the treatment of bone tuberculosis in Kladruby, near Vlašim (central Bohemia).<sup>118</sup> The institute was considered an important achievement in the field of workers' care because, unlike existing institutes in Germany, it combined research activities and post-accident medical care and prepared the injured persons for a return to work; it also received patients from all over the Reich.<sup>119</sup> The institute's task was to investigate the causes of injuries and to retrain workers with reduced working capacity for other occupations. Heinz Stolz, the director of the institute, described its mission as follows:

In accordance with National Socialist principles, the institute wants to heal the injured not only physically, but also to strengthen in them the awareness that society values their sacrifices and tries to restore them not only to their working capacity but also to cultivate in them the right idea, the feeling that they are proper and equal members of this society.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>115</sup> 'Nařízení o opatrování pracujících Němců', *Věstník říšského protektora* (14 September 1939), 142.

<sup>116</sup> NA, ÚRP-ST Coll., Sign. 109-4/83, Carton 17, Folio: 20-1: An den SS-Brigadeführer Frank, 28 September 1939.

<sup>117</sup> Jelínek, *Pojišťovny ve službách hákové kříže*, 122.

<sup>118</sup> NA, ÚRP-ST Coll., Sign. 109-4/1188, Carton 66, Folio 17: Der Ministerpräsident an Karl H. Frank, 15 April 1941.

<sup>119</sup> Heinz Stolz, 'Nové směry v boji proti podnikovým úrazům', *Práce a hospodářství. Měsíčník pro hospodářství a politiku* (1942), No. 2, 44.

<sup>120</sup> Stolz, 'Nové směry v boji proti podnikovým úrazům', 44.

For this purpose, the institute operated a hospital with three wards and thirty-seven beds, as well as a medical dormitory with apartments and classrooms for thirty physicians. The complex, initially established in 1932 for the treatment of tuberculosis patients, was transferred to the state administration after the Second World War and was used to treat invalids and later musculoskeletal disorders after operations and injuries (which it still serves today).

### Instruments of social protection

Corresponding to the continuity of the institutions was the continuity of the instruments of social security. Social welfare created historically the first organizational structure of voluntary organizations that distributed material needs, food and health care where they were scarce. In contrast to social welfare, social insurance was a modern instrument for preventing adverse social situations. Without either the former or the latter, it was inconceivable to maintain a system of social and health services that would keep the Protectorate stable and its people able to work and to be productive. The Czech political authorities therefore deliberately sought to improve and streamline the instruments of social protection and incorporated them into the contemporary programmes of the post-Munich and Protectorate governments. Again, the German model was tempting, as the editors of the journal *Sociální reforma* (Social reform) noted in April 1939:

If we observe the developments in the German Reich, into whose orbit we were placed, we see that social justice is the basic idea behind its entire state system and all public life. That is why in Germany, too, not only have the former social institutions been preserved, but they are constantly being improved, and new ones are being built.<sup>121</sup>

The extent to which it was possible to learn from Nazi Germany and adopt tried and proven practices would become apparent in the coming months.

Protectorate social policy was characterised by two main features. The first was the effort to deal with the corporatist logic of social insurance and to ensure the uniformity of insurance conditions for all workers. The enthusiasm for the reform of social insurance and its carriers is clear, for example, in an opinion piece published in *Zemědělské zprávy* (Agricultural news) by Oldřich Suchý, a former member of parliament from the Agrarian Party and one of the leading figures of the National Partnership. Suchý stressed the main idea of the reform:

The need to consolidate everything that can be consolidated in the area of social insurance, to simplify it and make it cheaper, and even to clean it up staff-wise, cannot be denied by anyone.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>121</sup> 'V nových poměrech', *Sociální reforma* (5 April 1939), Nos 6–7, 81–2.

<sup>122</sup> 'O připravované reorganizaci sociálního pojištění', *Sociální reforma* (5 February 1939), No. 3, 45.

In interwar Czechoslovakia, this idea was also discussed but failed to be implemented; on the contrary, the corporatist structure of social insurance was strengthened. The regime without a parliament and democratic institutions that emerged after the Munich crisis and during the Nazi occupation changed the circumstances profoundly. Czech officials worked intensively on the consolidation process. The results would eventually be beneficial for the occupation officials as well. The consolidation and reorganisation of the insurance and social insurance structure led to a cheapening and simplification of the system – precisely what Oldřich Suchý had called for – which facilitated the control and supervision of the Czech administration.

The second feature was the preferential treatment of low-income persons and the emphasis on social equality. The solidarity character of the *národní pospolitost* envisaged a higher degree of redistribution, which was to be manifested by workers' participation in this nationwide work. The division of labour was to lead to a fair distribution of benefits. Solidarity was most clearly expressed in the various public collections, which – in addition to the actual collection of supplies and money – were intended to be inclusive and to engage the population in the projects of the Czech national government. Although this class-based redistribution may have been satisfying for the people in need, the system remained fundamentally racially discriminatory, as I explore in the next section.

The provision of social welfare depended on individuals' economic and social situation. It was linked to residence in their home municipality and, as was also the case earlier, carried out by the municipality itself using its own financial resources on the basis of the 'right of domicile'. According to German observers, the Protectorate's social welfare arrangements had the schematic characteristics of purely economic aid and allegedly lacked versatility and targeted use.<sup>123</sup> The occupation authorities were interested in it because – until an institutional network to provide reliable services to Reich citizens could be built up – not only Czechs but also Germans living in the Protectorate belonged to it. It was not until 1 April 1940 that the care of Reich citizens in need passed to the *Oberlandrats* – the lowest administrative offices of the Nazi occupation administration.<sup>124</sup> From then on, the Protectorate's social welfare served exclusively as a platform for provisioning the Czechs. However, efforts continued to steer the development of the Protectorate's institutions in the Reich's direction, which was intended to shine some light on their complex structure and make social care more efficient. The creation of umbrella organisations also accompanied this process.

<sup>123</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 352: Regierungsrat Dr. Walter Hartmann: Das Recht der öffentlichen Fürsorge im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, in: *Nationalsoz. Beamtenzeitung 'Der Protektoratsbeamte'* III. Jahrgang No. 23.

<sup>124</sup> The *Oberlandrat* was the lowest administrative authority for Reich citizens and simultaneously the supervisory authority for the Protectorate administrative bodies at the municipal and district levels. The *Oberlandrats* had jurisdiction over several political districts. In 1942, the system underwent a major reform which transferred part of their responsibilities to the Protectorate authorities and reduced the overall number of *Oberlandrats*. Thereafter they operated only in Prague, České Budějovice, Pilsen, Hradec Králové, Jihlava, Brno and Moravská Ostrava.

In 1941, Czech officials proposed an adjustment that brought the Protectorate's social welfare system closer to the Reich's. Its primary aim was to decouple indigent welfare from the right of domicile.<sup>125</sup> In contrast to the Bohemian lands, in Germany foreigners were not exempted from indigent welfare, but it was limited in scope. In the autumn of 1941, the Protectorate also adopted this scheme.<sup>126</sup> District authorities decided to extend indigent care to foreigners, which consisted of providing needy individuals with subsistence, especially shelter, food, clothing, medical treatment and assistance in case of illness. In this case, however, the Protectorate quasi-state paid for the indigent care instead of the municipalities.<sup>127</sup> The municipalities were exempted from caring for the German population with reference to the Reich's public welfare, but the Protectorate made financial contributions to Germany for its implementation.<sup>128</sup>

Table 3.2 reflects the new regulation of indigent care benefits. In the case of a 'family in need', allowances were calculated for each member of the household on the basis of the categories listed. In the case of a family consisting of two adults and three children under the age of sixteen residing in a category A locality, the father received K 250, the mother K 125 and each child K 75, with a 20 per cent rent allowance calculated on the total sum of K 600. The family thus received K 720 per month.<sup>129</sup> Despite the constant rise in prices (from 1939 to 1942, the average cost of living index for a working-class family in the Protectorate rose by 38 per cent), initially it

Locality	Persons with their own household	Household member under 16 years old	Minor child under 16 years old living with relatives	Minor child in someone else's care
A	250	125	75	150
B	200	100	60	120
C	150	80	50	100

**Table 3.2** Indigent maintenance valid from 1 April 1940 (in K per month)

Source: NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 352: Ministerium des Innern, Durchführung der RVO vom 18 Dezember 1941, Slg. Nr. 22/1942 Sb. Über die Regelung einiger Fragen in den Bereichen der Armenfürsorge. – Richtlinien.

Note: Indigent maintenance was effective from the date of promulgation, 18 December 1940, with retroactive effect from April 1940.

<sup>125</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 22/1942 Coll., on regulation of certain matters in the area of indigent care.

<sup>126</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 403/1941 Coll., on indigent care for foreigners.

<sup>127</sup> NA, PMR Coll., Carton 4159: Minutes of the meeting of the Ministerial Council held on Thursday, 23 October 1941 at 16:30 hours in the Ministerial Council HQ.

<sup>128</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 403/1941 Coll., on indigent care for foreigners, Section 3.

<sup>129</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 352: Richtlinien gemäss § 1, Abs. 3 der Regierungsverordnung č. 22/1942 Sb. vom 18. Dezember. 1941 über Mindestleistungen der Armenversorgung.



was a not insignificant contribution. If basic groceries cost about K 160 per month, and the monthly rent for a one-room apartment in Prague amounted to K 275 per month, the family may still have had money for clothing and other expenses.<sup>130</sup>

However, inflation and continuously rising prices showed that benefits were insufficient by the end of January 1942.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, as the archival sources document, the increase in indigent care rates for the Czech and German populations had quite different dynamics. They developed separately and more favourably for the Germans. While there were repeated increases in benefits for Germans, Czechs did not see any further improvement during the war. Frank did not consider further reform of the indigent care system to be essential during the course of the war and, in 1943, postponed it until 'later'.<sup>132</sup> Unfortunately, not much is known about its intended form, but it was discussed as potentially comprehensive amendment.

Welfare was not a tool exclusively for emergency cases. It encompassed a broad agenda of social and health services aimed at improving the health and habits of the population. During the occupation, one of its most important segments was food and clothing assistance and individual supportive care. The main vehicle for these was the Provincial Youth Welfare organisation, together with its district offices, which later shared its responsibilities with Social Aid. The Provincial Youth Welfare was an established institution with an excellent reputation whose knowledge of the local environment was useful in assessing the public reputation of individual applicants for aid. In parallel, Social Aid kept records of all supported families in what was known as the 'cadastre of supported families', which was intended to concentrate data on all public care and support granted to particular families.<sup>133</sup>

The targeted promotion and advertising of social welfare for the needy served a legitimising function for the regime. Insurance companies were in a more difficult position given the complexity of social insurance issues. They were not visible on the street, and social insurance was only written about in the increasingly unpopular daily press. Nevertheless, social insurance was the main instrument of social protection throughout the Nazi occupation. Its continuity from interwar Czechoslovakia to the post-Munich republic and the Protectorate was also crucial in rebuilding the Czechoslovak state after the Second World War. It did not need to be revived from a state of clinical death, as it had been fully functioning throughout the Nazi occupation.

<sup>130</sup> Specifically counted are expenditures on 6 kg of bread, 1 kg of butter, 2 kg of beef, 4 kg of flour, 1 kg of coffee, 1 kg of lard, 4 litres of milk and twenty eggs. *Statistická ročenka Protektorátu Čechy a Morava. Ročník 1943* (Prague 1943), 122 and 123.

<sup>131</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 352: Der Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren an das Ministerium des Innern, 30 January 1942.

<sup>132</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 352: Kummunal- und Fürsorgewesen I 2 b – Fürs – 8150, Betr. Öffentliche Fürsorge für Protektoratsangehörige, 28 October 1943.

<sup>133</sup> NA, ZÚPM Coll., Sign. 218/141, Carton 37: Memorandum No. 3 of the Provincial Youth Welfare Headquarters, 21 January 1943.

The obligation to participate in social insurance resulted from any employment, regardless of the employee's nationality or employer. In the Protectorate, as previously in liberal democratic Czechoslovakia, sickness, pregnancy, childbirth, the puerperium, breastfeeding and death remained legal grounds for receiving sickness insurance benefits. In the case of disability and old-age insurance, entitlement arose in the event of disability, the attainment of the retirement age of sixty-five years for men and sixty for women, and the death or marriage of the insured woman. The insurance covered persons who were engaged in state service or employment as their primary occupation. According to the amount of earnings, each insured employee was classified in a wage bracket from which the relevant sickness, disability or old-age benefits to which the person was entitled were calculated. For disability, old-age, widows', widowers' and orphans' pensions, as well as the 'outfitting allowance', a benefit for insured women upon marriage, there was a waiting period for payment of the benefit. This elemental principle on which social insurance operated did not change during the occupation.

The reconstruction ethos, which stressed the unity of the nation and the importance of the collective, emphasised the same attributes with regard to social insurance. Insured persons were expected to realise

that social insurance is a collective insurance and that the quality of medical care that is or will be provided from social insurance in the future depends on each insured person; that we all have an interest in ensuring that our institutions can provide treatment by all possible and even the most costly means, that we must have an interest from the point of view of the national economy in ensuring that the sick return to work as soon as possible, etc.<sup>134</sup>

These words, which appeared in the 1940 guidelines on the promotion of social insurance among the Czech population, emphasised the causal link between public social insurance and fitness for work, which was now more than ever in the interests of the national economy, and hence of the Reich's economy.

Nazi officials saw their own interests in the reform. Their main purpose was to map the landscape, get to know the mechanisms and institutions of social policy, ensure their proper control and smooth running, and adapt their operation to German needs where necessary. This practical aim was grounded in concern about hasty interventions in such a complex system as social insurance and about threats to the functionality of social welfare having undesirable effects on the health and performance of workers. In terms of social insurance, one can identify the moments when the principle of national segregation proved unworkable. Nevertheless, the systemic level of social insurance was never an arena where the interests of individual national communities were publicly played out, which was an advantage for the occupation authorities. Propaganda understandably did not

<sup>134</sup> J. Kruliš, 'O propagaci sociálního pojištění', *Sociální reforma* 32 (5 December 1940), Nos 22–3, 257.

draw attention to the organisational deficiency of German welfare. Apart from the financial and personnel costs, the irreplaceable function of social insurance in maintaining the social stability of the Protectorate society was another reason to concentrate on reforming the existing instruments of social protection.

Employment-based sickness insurance, followed by pensioners' sickness insurance and sickness insurance for the relatives of war victims, were of decisive importance. In practice, the establishment of this imaginary insurance hierarchy meant that if a person insured by the ÚSP entered into employment in the German Reich, he became at that moment a compulsorily insured person in the Reich under its regulations. Of course, the system also worked the other way around, that is, the insurance of a Reich worker employed in the Protectorate was taken over by a Protectorate insurance company. Insurance for the survivors of war victims was only possible if the person concerned was not insured in employment and did not receive a pension. However, these were primarily pensioners of German nationality.<sup>135</sup>

### Social policy as an instrument of exclusion

A sort of egalitarian welfare, as imagined by the theorists of the *národní pospolitost*, was strictly limited to the non-Jewish and non-Roma 'Czech nation'. The political leaders of the Protectorate envisioned the Czechs as a nation historically and culturally related to its German neighbour. Jews, Roma, Poles and individuals or groups described as 'asocial' were no longer counted as part of the 'Czech nation' according to the official doctrine and adopted legislative norms. As a result of this exclusion, they lost their civil and social rights. Josef Talacko, a mathematician and statistician and a prominent representative of the National Partnership, considered it essential to remedy the existing 'disproportion of the minority to the state nation', as he wrote in January 1939 for *Národní obnova* (National renewal). Talacko was referring to the disproportionate number of Jews to Czechs, the redress of which was to solve the principal 'social question':

It must be emphasised that what is called persecution is just a necessary self-defence and a legitimate effort to return them [the Jews] to the proper boundaries set by minority rights.<sup>136</sup>

The ideology of the *národní pospolitost* thoroughly intertwined social policy with the construction of a new society with authoritarian features. The excluded people were left at the mercy of a politically and socially hostile environment, which was manifested in the profound deterioration of their civil and social rights and in their social isolation.

<sup>135</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 99/1942 Coll., on sickness insurance of pensioners at the ÚSP.

<sup>136</sup> Josef Talacko, 'Židovská otázka je otázkou sociální', *Národní obnova* (28 January 1939), No. 4, 4.

In the process of exclusion, a two-stage selection system can be discerned. The most stringent inspection focused firstly on a person's racial origin and then on their ability to adapt to the new political conditions. The overlap between 'racial' and 'national' selection was only partial, and it occurred mainly among the Polish population. In November 1940, Reich Protector Neurath instructed the Protectorate's Oberlandrats on this matter:

Former members of the Polish nation are regarded as foreigners in the territory of the Greater German Reich, just as before. Treating these persons as equals to German nationals or Protectorate citizens is to be avoided in every respect.<sup>137</sup>

The position of the Poles differed significantly from that of the Czechs. In the 1950s, the Polish historian Władysław Rusiński published a revealing analysis of the position of Polish workers in the territory of former Poland annexed to Germany. Rusiński mapped out in detail the wage, pension, housing and rationing conditions of the Polish population in this territory after the outbreak of the Second World War. In his account, he compared the social and health services received by the German and Polish people, which showed vast discrepancies between the two groups. He began with wages, which in the case of the Poles did not reach even 50 per cent of German employees' earnings, even though they performed harder work.<sup>138</sup> The general discrimination against Poles increased steadily. All social and health benefits were linked to work performance, and in the event of unfitness for work, the regime lost all interest in the individual. Health care was treated largely as a tool to eliminate epidemics, rather than as a sufficient health service with curative or even preventive objectives. Poles outside the former Polish territory were also subject to a significant tax burden. Taxes and other deductions from the wages of Polish workers also applied to those working in the Protectorate. Rusiński calculated as much as a sixfold burden on workers' wages. Among others, this included the so-called balancing levy, which, in addition to Poles, was also levied against Jews and Roma, as well as the payroll tax and, from mid-1942, the communal tax, which amounted to between RM 1.25 and RM 6 per month. Although Poles were not members of the DAF and no Polish equivalent of this institution existed, unlike the NOÚZ representing Czech workers, Poles contributed 2 per cent of their gross earnings to the DAF from mid-1940. In 1941 the authorities finally designated this contribution as a 'social tax' on Poles to the DAF.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>137</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 352: Der Reichsprotektor in Böhmen und Mähren an die Gruppe Mähren, an alle Oberlandräte, Betr. Befürsorge ehemals polnischer Staatsbürger polnischer Volkzugehörigkeit im Protektorat, 8 November 1940.

<sup>138</sup> Władysław Rusiński, *Położenie robotników polskich w czasie wojny 1939–1945, Na terenie rzeszy i 'obszarów wcielonych'* (Poznań 1955), 62.

<sup>139</sup> Rusiński, *Położenie robotników polskich w czasie wojny*, 35.

The measures directed against the Roma population had similar features in the Protectorate. What distinguished them from the anti-Jewish measures was a different perception of the excluded group. While the Roma were intuitively included by the authorities in the category of 'asocials', Jews were excluded as an assimilated social group with clear elements of discrimination based on economic factors. This does not apply absolutely because there were those among the Roma who had permanent employment. However, within the social stratification of the population, as Talacko noted, Jews were strongly represented in the middle and upper social classes and were allegedly largely responsible for pushing the 'Czech nation' into low-wage working-class occupations.<sup>140</sup> To avoid this Jewish superiority – as it was believed to exist – the Protectorate system sought to establish a new form of social redistribution and mechanisms of the welfare state.

Discriminatory practices were first introduced in the workplace. Jews needed the permission of the labour office in order to be able to work. This could be revoked at any time and the notice period was two weeks maximum.<sup>141</sup> Talacko – although we do not know his opinion on the specific measures – would have welcomed higher taxation and extra deductions from the wages of the Jewish population because they were aimed at excluding Jews from attractive jobs and taking away their rights in favour of those of the 'Czech nation'. Economic and social exclusion was also becoming a daily reality in the Protectorate. Tax provisions discriminated not only against Jews but also against their non-Jewish partners.<sup>142</sup> They were not subject to any tax exemptions, their classification in the first tax bracket automatically subjected them to the highest payroll tax, and they were not allowed to deduct expenses for a person officially considered a Jew when determining pension tax.<sup>143</sup> The authorities in the Protectorate also introduced the 'social balancing levy', as described by Rusiński, in 1943. This amounted to 15 per cent of one's income and was compulsory for all Jews, Roma and Poles, although at this point there were very few Jews remaining in the country.<sup>144</sup> Anti-Jewish and anti-Roma social

<sup>140</sup> Talacko, 'Židovská otázka je otázkou sociální', 4.

<sup>141</sup> NA, PMR Coll., Carton 4160: Outline of a government regulation introducing certain employment measures (1941).

<sup>142</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 410/1942 Coll., on property tax; Government regulation No. 105/1943 Coll., on the deduction of pension tax from wages (payroll tax); Government regulation No. 233/1943 Coll., on pension tax.

<sup>143</sup> Summarised in Helena Petrův, *Zákonné bezpráví. Židé v Protektorátu Čechy a Morava* (Prague 2011), 128–9.

<sup>144</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 119/1943 Coll., on collection of the balancing levy in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

policy measures were comprehensive and affected practically all spheres of social and health care. I will discuss some of them, while the features of the racial construction of social policy in the Protectorate will also be continuously traced in the following chapters.

Social welfare for the needy was the maximum that Jews received. Its public form was changed in the spring of 1940, and – as with the care of Germans and Czechs – it followed the principle of forming an exclusively Jewish welfare system. According to the Reich Protector's decree, Jewish religious communities were authorised to 'care for all Jews' welfare, and for this purpose they were to collect appropriate levies from the Jewish population.<sup>145</sup> Jews were removed from the care of their municipality of domicile, which had been responsible for social welfare since 1863.<sup>146</sup> In August 1941, religious communities became the almost exclusive bearers of 'Jewish voluntary indigent care'. They were to support the Jewish population 'within the limits of their means', and thus Jews lost the right to participate in public indigent care for the 'Czech nation'. An even more restrictive procedure was brought about by a decree of the Protectorate government issued a few months later.<sup>147</sup> Decisions on the allocation of poor relief to a particular person considered by the authorities to be a Jew were now made exclusively by the Central Office for Jewish Emigration (*Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung*) in Prague, the institution responsible for implementing Adolf Eichmann's planned 'final solution of the Jewish question'. Where religious communities did not have sufficient funds, the municipality of domicile was allowed to contribute, but only for basic subsistence in case of illness.<sup>148</sup> Although there were exceptions to the granting of these minimal benefits, they did not in the least mitigate the severity of this political measure. The granting of 'extra' poor relief was permitted only in three cases: that it would encourage Jewish emigration, if the person concerned was a severe war casualty, or if it was in the 'public interest'. What was this 'public interest' supposed to be?

Czechs whose origins were defined as 'non-Jewish' or 'Aryan' became the exclusive clients of the public (originally Czechoslovak) indigent care.<sup>149</sup> The new regulations in the field of public welfare increasingly restricted the possibility for Jews to receive social support. They limited the Jewish population to social welfare

<sup>145</sup> 'Nařízení říšského protektora v Čechách a na Moravě o péči o Židy a židovské organizace z 5. března 1940', *Věstník říšského protektora* (1940), 77–9.

<sup>146</sup> Imperial Law Gazette for the Kingdoms and Lands represented in the Imperial Council, Act No. 105/1863 Coll. betreffend die Regelung der Heimatverhältnisse, vom 3 December 1863, here § 23, paragraph 2.

<sup>147</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 2/1942 Coll., on indigent care for Jews.

<sup>148</sup> According to the wording of Section 24 of Act No. 105/1863 Coll.

<sup>149</sup> 'Nařízení říšského protektora v Čechách a na Moravě doplňující nařízení o péči o Židy a židovské organizace ze dne 5. března 1940, 5. srpna 1940', *Věstník říšského protektora* (1941), 469–70.



**Figure 3.2** Reinhard Heydrich, Deputy Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, at a meeting with senior Nazi officials – (from left) Horst Böhme, the Security Police chief in the Protectorate, who played an instrumental role in repressive actions such as the destruction of Lidice, Karl Hermann, State Secretary, Reinhard Heydrich, Heinrich Müller, the chief of the Gestapo. The photograph was most likely taken in Prague in May 1942. Source: National Archives, Prague, Karl Hermann Frank Photo Collection, no. 2477.

through self-help, which was to operate on the basis of solidarity within the Jewish community. The most critical factor in the exclusion of Jews was the legislative regulation of citizenship. Its revision was part of the process of creating segregated national communities, helping to adapt the everyday practice to ideologically conditioned ideas about Jews' place in society and the system of public provision. In Germany, the eleventh regulation to the Reich Citizenship Law of 25 November 1941, which defined nationality within the borders of Germany and also applied to the Protectorate, provided the necessary legal framework.<sup>150</sup> According to it, Jews located outside German territory lost their citizenship, as well as their right to a pension, and their property was forfeited to the state. If they remained in Germany, they could receive half of the benefit entitlement granted to Germans of 'Aryan' origin.<sup>151</sup> However, their absence from German territory could have had various causes: emigration, but also deportation to one of the concentration camps or other similar facilities in territories annexed to Germany.

<sup>150</sup> RGBl I., 1941, p. 722: Elfte Verordnung zum Reichsbürgergesetz vom 25. November 1941.

<sup>151</sup> RGBl I., 1941, p. 722, here §10.

In social insurance and the payment of benefits, the procedure was complicated. Jews, like the rest of the population, were for many years part of the public social insurance system. They paid insurance contributions and were entitled to benefits in the event of sickness, invalidity and old age. Insured workers in non-worker professions who were considered Jews had to transfer to the General Pension Institute and continued to be entitled to an amount which did not have to correspond to the course of the existing insurance. They were not affected by the increase in benefits or, in future, by the one-off extraordinary pension bonuses.<sup>152</sup> Here, economic anti-Semitism in its concrete form meant fundamental changes in the legal status of Jews in public life, as well as discrimination in terms of the distribution of social protection.<sup>153</sup> From September 1940, Jewish employees were excluded from selected pension schemes.<sup>154</sup>

The ÚSP, the main carrier of insurance for employees, especially workers, followed a similar course. At first, it required its clients to 'declare the applicant's origin', but by the beginning of 1940 it had already begun to systematically intervene in the payment of invalidity and old-age pensions. These affected not only Jews but also their spouses, even those of 'Aryan' origin. The authorities set a maximum amount for their pensions and for lump-sum benefits such as severance pay (a benefit after the termination of a contract) and the outfitting allowance (a benefit paid to insured women after marriage).<sup>155</sup> The monthly amount paid could not exceed K 500 – less than the average monthly worker's salary at the time – in the case of either spouse.<sup>156</sup> If the insured person was entitled to higher benefits, he could not receive them directly but only by payment into an escrow account maintained by a monetary institution authorised by the Ministry of Finance.<sup>157</sup> The escrow account had a weekly limit of K 1,500, which Jews were allowed to withdraw from all their accounts for all the dependents in their household. Jews were subject to very strict social and financial controls. Not only the establishment of a safety deposit box in a bank but also individual requests for higher

<sup>152</sup> NA, MSP Coll., Sign. VI 5290, Carton 3256: General Pension Institute to the Ministry of Social and Health Administration, Payment of Benefits to Jews, 28 September 1940. NA, MSP Coll., Sign. VI 5290, Carton 3256: IV/14 [1940].

<sup>153</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 136/1940 Coll., on the legal position of Jews in public life.

<sup>154</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulation of the Czechoslovak Republic, Act No. 26/1929 Coll., on pension insurance of private employee in higher service positions. Exclusion according to 'Regulation on the Legal Status of Jewish Employees in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia of 14 September 1940', *Věstník nařízení Reichsprotektora in Böhmen und Mähren* 1940, p. 475, here §7.

<sup>155</sup> The 'outfitting allowance' was granted to insured women who married after the statutory waiting period. Its amount was based on their wage bracket.

<sup>156</sup> Circular of the Central Social Insurance Office No. 988, *ÚSP Bulletin* 1940: Declaration of Aryan or non-Aryan origin of applicants for disability and old-age insurance benefits required by sickness insurance companies, 9 July 1940. *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren – Statistická ročenka Protektorátu Čechy a Morava* 2 (1942), No. 1 (Prague), 128.

<sup>157</sup> Circular of the Central Social Insurance Office No. 938, *ÚSP Bulletin* 1940: Payments to Jews on escrow accounts.



withdrawals from escrow accounts were subject to case-by-case approval by the Ministry of Finance.<sup>158</sup>

The withdrawal of benefits to which they were entitled by virtue of paying insurance contributions was the target of the next stage of exclusion. The authorities administering social insurance had to remain flexible with regard to a population that was consistently pushed to the edge of its existence by the threat of deportation or other forms of radical restrictions on personal freedom. According to Alexander Klimo, the officials of the Reich Ministry of Labour who were not directly involved in the organisation of deportations pursued above all the goal not of suspending the payment of pensions, but of keeping these funds in the territory they administered, that is, in the Protectorate.<sup>159</sup> In the case of claims against social insurance carriers made by Jewish employees who had emigrated, Section 7 of the Regulation on the loss of Protectorate citizenship of 2 November 1942 applied.<sup>160</sup> In order for the authorities to intervene in the payment of the entitlement, the insured person first had to be released from Protectorate or Reich citizenship.

Deportation to one of the concentration camps represented the final step in the possible manipulation of social insurance benefits. It is known from the practice recorded in 1943 that while the pensions of persons transported to the Theresienstadt transit and concentration camp were transferred to the Central Office for the Settlement of the Jewish Question in Bohemia and Moravia (Zentralamt für die Regelung der Judenfrage in Böhmen und Mähren) based on confirmation that the person concerned was alive, Jews located in the Łódź ghetto had their pensions temporarily suspended, and Jews located elsewhere in the General Government or in the territories of the Reich Commissariats had their pensions permanently suspended.<sup>161</sup> In the event of deportation to anywhere in the east, there was no certainty that the insured person was still alive.<sup>162</sup> However, there were still doubts about this tactic. Łódź was part of the Reichsgau Wartheland and thus was considered, in contrast to the General Government, a part of Greater Germany, and therefore, according to some voices, the Reich Citizenship Act of November 1941 could be applied. Teetering on the edge of life

<sup>158</sup> Ministry of Finance, Review Department, Decree, Official Letter of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, No. 22, 27 January 1940.

<sup>159</sup> Klimo, *Im Dienste des Arbeitseinsatzes*, 336–7.

<sup>160</sup> In connection with Section 10 of the Thirteenth Implementing Regulation of the Reich Civil Code. 'Verordnung über die Verlust der Protektoratsangehörigkeit vom 2. November 1942,' *Verordnungsblatt des Reichsprotectors in Böhmen und Mähren* (1942), No. 45, 301; RGBl. I, 1943, p. 372. Section 10 provided for the conditions and amount of maintenance support for family members in the event of the death of the person entitled to benefits.

<sup>161</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1001: Sachgebeit Sozialversicherung V 2 c 250/43 an den Herrn Abteilungsleiter V 2, Betr. Verwaltungsbericht für das 2. Vierteljahr 1943, 21 June 1943.

<sup>162</sup> Alfred C. Mierzejewski, 'Taking from the Weak, Giving to the Strong: The Jews and the German Statutory Pension System, 1933–1945,' *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 31 (2017), No. 2, 193–214, 202.

and death could, at any moment, result in the confiscation of one's pension by the camp or ghetto authorities. In practice, a procedure that was intended to prevent potential misappropriation ultimately prevailed. The payment of pensions to Jews in Łódź and in transit camps such as Theresienstadt was suspended altogether.<sup>163</sup>

The Nazis streamlined the system of discrimination and exclusion in late 1942 and early 1943 in connection with the start of the next stage of the Jewish extermination process. On 13 March 1943, the Reich Ministry of Labour issued a decree regulating the participation of Jews in pension insurance in the eastern territories annexed to Germany. Jews were required to contribute to the pension system, but at the same time, they were completely excluded from the possibility of receiving a pension.<sup>164</sup>

Requests to administer Jewish pensions, such as those made in 1943 by the Central Office for the Settlement of the Jewish Question based in Prague, were by no means unique in Nazi Germany. In this struggle for the appropriation of benefits belonging to deported Jews, entities of various types, from police headquarters to special offices administering Jewish affairs, all participated.<sup>165</sup> Among them, in May 1942, it was the Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Prague, the predecessor of the aforementioned Central Office for the Settlement of the Jewish Question in Bohemia and Moravia, which demanded that the Reich authorities transfer the accident insurance benefits belonging to insured Jews to a bank account set up for this purpose. The Central Office for Jewish Emigration, which in the course of time developed into an institution responsible for the deportation of Jews, was to use the originally Jewish pensions transferred to it to cover the costs associated with the Nazi extermination policy. For the highest Nazi officials in the Protectorate, such as Horst Böhme, deputy commander of the Security Police and SS intelligence agency in Bohemia and Moravia, such a solution was 'a matter of course'.<sup>166</sup>

Although the negative effects of social policy in the sense of denying social support to a certain group of people were primarily racial, in specific cases they were applied to the non-Jewish Czech population as a type of punishment. The forms of exclusion of Jews and non-Jews subject to punishment were similar only to a certain extent. As will be made clear especially in [Chapter Six](#), in the case of non-Jews these punishments never had the objective of definitive exclusion from the *národní pospolitost*. The harshest approach was taken in the case of the survivors of persons sentenced to death by the martial courts, who were

<sup>163</sup> Mierzejewski, 'Taking from the Weak', 202.

<sup>164</sup> Mierzejewski, 'Taking from the Weak', 202.

<sup>165</sup> Klimo, *Im Dienste des Arbeitseinsatzes*, 364.

<sup>166</sup> NA, ÚŘP-ST Coll., Sign. 109-4/980, Carton 54: Horst Böhme an Herrn Reichsarbeitsminister, Zahlung von Renten an Juden, 9 July 1942.

subsequently denied maintenance allowances by the authorities.<sup>167</sup> From the point of view of the occupation regime, these rather exemplary punishments were only considered in exceptional cases and, unlike the measures taken against Jews, Roma and Poles, they were never collective and were often applied only for a limited period of time. It must be stressed, however, that this harshest form of punishment was not applied by the authorities in every case of political persecution. If they opted for a milder version of the procedure, it was not out of the goodwill of an occupation official. This is well illustrated by the situation of families of those taken into custody. From October 1939 at the latest, instructions from the Protectorate government were in force stating that ‘family members of arrested persons shall retain all the rights they have under the social insurance regulations.’<sup>168</sup> The principle was to preserve the standard of living of the family of the arrested person. This did not simply mean maintaining participation in all applicable insurance schemes but choosing such a solution that the payment of contributions would not unduly burden the family, or so that the breadwinner released from custody could re-enter the system without difficulty. In the case of sickness insurance, an exception was in place to allow them to switch from compulsory insurance to voluntary insurance at any time. For long-term insurance such as disability, old-age or pension insurance, the procedure was different. The insurance premiums for an arrested person were paid by the provincial authorities in the Protectorate, both the part paid by the employee and the part contributed by the employer, since the employer usually deregistered the employee from the insurance scheme immediately after arrest. The discriminatory function of social policy in the case of members of the Czech *národní pospolitost* gave way considerably in favour of stabilisation mechanisms in the interest of the conduct of the war and the needs of the war industry.<sup>169</sup>

<sup>167</sup> NA, Police Directorate Prague II – stations and commissariats, Lesser Town Collection: Memorandum of the Police Directorate in Prague of 7 March 1942.

<sup>168</sup> NA, MSP Coll., Carton 3250: No. 56207/1939, Supporting family members of persons arrested by official measure – Instruction on social insurance, 23 October 1939.

<sup>169</sup> Category A localities included Prague, Pilsen, Brno, Olomouc, Moravská Ostrava; category B included towns of over 500 inhabitants, while category C included towns of fewer than 500 inhabitants.

## Towards Workfare Communities

Few terms have become so embedded in the discourse and social practice under National Socialism as labour. It was not simply hype but was ever-present in people's minds at the time, becoming a measure of their values. Its significance may be attributed to the mobilisation of labour and, later, Nazi Germany's declaration of war. In this chapter, I use labour (*Arbeit* in German, *práce* in Czech) to define the scope of the topic, and everything related to labour as paid employment. Nevertheless, the term has a much broader reach and deeper meaning. Labour appeared in various phrases in which it was connected to the adjectives *forced* or *commanded*, thereby acquiring an increasingly negative connotation. However, we can attach the same importance to it in the case of labour protection – during the Nazi occupation, accident and pension insurance was once again something of value. The emerging workfare communities embodied a fundamental redistributive principle, conditioning welfare provision on employment.

Labour, or more precisely the employment contract, was a ticket into the social insurance system, which remained unchanged after the proclamation of the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Czechs had experienced the effects of high unemployment during the Great Depression, and they perceived the Nazi regime's obsession with labour, and everything related to it, rather favourably. Being unemployed in the 1930s often resulted in depression due to measurable material deprivation that led to begging and the social isolation people fell into after being fired from their jobs. This social suffering and degradation significantly contributed to the increasing valuation of labour and the intuitive valuation of wages and employment. In 1939, ten years after the New York stock market crash, the social significance of having a job increased massively. Having an employment contract meant that you could provide for your family and integrate into society. During the time of National Socialism, however, this process of socialisation took on a completely different form.

The obligation to work is the precondition to belonging to a national entity and for the protection of all rights. On the other hand, the right to work gives every member

of the nation the opportunity to free himself from constant existential insecurity. ... An individual's right to social security arises from his fulfilled obligation regardless of independent or non-independent employment, his social status, income, and system of benefits. The right to a fair wage for each job corresponds to its duties.<sup>1</sup>

The final minutes of the DAF conference, which took place in Bad Salzbrunn in March 1944, formerly Szczawno-Zdrój, located in German-occupied Poland, contained the message that only proven members of the national community had the right to social and health security. Principles formulated several years earlier were repeated at the end of the war. The new framework of claimable rights was not propaganda but a real ideological instrument of social selection and discipline. Moreover, it changed along national lines: it was used in Germany on the Nazi Volksgemeinschaft and in the Protectorate on the Czech národní spopolitost.

Following the German example, Protectorate propaganda adopted the language of hitherto marginalised social classes to offer them jobs and social advancement. According to this logic, 'human labour is the nation's most valuable asset', and the nation was at the very centre of the public and political interest, in the words of Czech unionists.<sup>2</sup> This reveals the vital connection between an individual's job and work performance, which – in addition to race and political conformity – were the preconditions of one's affiliation to the 'Czech nation'. Labour began to be taken more seriously, so it's not surprising that the sixth edition of the 1898 collection of lectures entitled *How to Work?*, authored by Tomáš G. Masaryk, the first Czechoslovak president, came out in 1940, after several months of Nazi occupation.<sup>3</sup> What labour is, and how it provides a sense of personal fulfilment, were two of the questions that were publicly debated after Munich and during Nazi occupation. At that time, labour issues were being discussed more than ever before.

This first thematically oriented chapter will investigate labour policies and all that they entail. I use the social science definition of this concept as an employment policy that includes a wide spectrum of activities from the regulation of labour and health conditions, through occupational safety, to old-age and disability insurance. Employment is paid labour – workers provide their labour for a specified period and are rewarded with a wage even if their employer does not use it.<sup>4</sup> I will specifically focus on the approaches to social policy clients who were struggling with unemployment, injury and old

<sup>1</sup> BArch, DAF-AWI Coll., Sign. NS 5-VI, Archive Number 30988: 'Zástupci evropské sociální vědy konferovali', *Peněžní a pojišťovací zaměstnanec* 5 May 1944.

<sup>2</sup> *Práce a hospodářství: Měsíčník pro hospodářství a sociální politiku* (December 1940), No. 7, 126.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, the journal *Sociální reforma* reported on the new edition of T. G. Masaryk's *Jak pracovat?* on 20 February 1940, No. 4, 62.

<sup>4</sup> Igor Tomeš, *Úvod do teorie a metodologie sociální politiky* (Prague 2010), 278.

age. The chapter first addresses the development of the concept of labour from a historical perspective and in the Protectorate context of the saturation of the labour market.<sup>5</sup> Increasing employment, work efficiency and performance consistently affected access to accident insurance and, to a large extent, pension insurance. Czech workers were excluded from military service due to their nationality. Therefore, their place was behind the front lines in the hinterland, supporting the German soldiers and arms industry. As the war dragged on, they became increasingly vital to the occupation authorities. Still, responding to the appeal to 'work for the nation', not only Czech men but also Czech women were to find their place in the system of increasing labour production and the parallel expansion of social welfare. Fascinating developments can be noted, especially in occupational safety, accident and pension insurance. Finally, the chapter will illuminate Czechs' engagement in labour force distribution through institutionalised labour science.

### Concepts and practice

Labour is one of historiography's central concepts and figures just as prominently in social policy terminology. Its modern historical phase began in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. During this period, the definition of labour switched from the Christianity-based emancipation of human activity to a specific human ability – its meaning was even abstracted. Labour became a means of coping with man and nature and was thus another social value. In the second half of the 18th century, the distinction between unnecessary and beneficial labour created the first preconditions for its economisation, shifting from an economically and morally understood principle of performance to a tool that gauged the social situation. With the help of economic rationality, labour was to become a joy, a means of averting scarcity and poverty and inducing a feeling of happiness. The right to work was formulated at this time. In addition to the duty to work, it included the freedom of workers to choose their jobs and their place of work. Reinhard Koselleck saw this conceptual shift in understanding the labour formulated by economists as a prerequisite for a revolutionary change in the economic and social-political sense.<sup>6</sup> Later, proponents of economic theory understood the notion of labour primarily as a source of wealth. The gradation of social strata was

<sup>5</sup> On the semantics of labour before and after 1933 see Marc Buggeln and Michael Wildt, 'Arbeit im Nationalsozialismus. Einleitung', in *Arbeit im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Marc Buggeln and Michael Wildt (Berlin 2014). On the development of 'labour' in historiography after the Second World War see Kim Christian Priemel, *Heaps of Work. The Ways of Labour History*, <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/2014-01-001> (10 January 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck (eds), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Volume 1: A-D (Stuttgart 1972), 178.

a factor of production and earning, creating a relationship between the employer and the workforce. The principle of a free market, in which supply and demand were mutually dependent, emphasised the contraction of labour, capital and the social antagonism that grew out of them, as described by David Ricardo and later developed by Karl Marx.

The 1789 French Revolution was a historical turning point in the constant sharpening of social knives that manifested itself in deeper divisions between the working and privileged classes. The principles of liberty and equality newly influenced the understanding of labour as they elevated the lower social strata. When the 'right to work' was first enshrined in the Jacobin constitution in 1794, social and political emancipation had not yet occurred and would not until the formation of civil society in the 19th century, growing out of the Hegelian dialectic of modern man's liberation and alienation through modern work. This became one of the symptoms of a civil society through which the freedom and satisfaction of individuals was derived. The emphasis on the economic factors of labour was characteristic of the next era, when the nation and the ethos of modernising progress were added to it. However, labour and freedom were also increasingly associated with the social question, which was becoming essential for forming a state's social policy during the second half of the 19th and virtually all of the 20th century.<sup>7</sup>

The concept of labour changed from the 19th century onwards in the continuous dialogue between conservatives and socialists. In Germany, where the polarisation between Wilhelmine Germany and the Weimar Republic was evident, the national make-up of labour, characteristic both of Bismarck's 'state socialism' and of the whole period of the establishment of the German Empire, was particularly significant. This concept was so ingrained that the National Socialists later incorporated it into their ideology. 'National labour', however, was suffused with anti-Semitism as an expression of the exclusivist policy of the nation and its race. In fact, Adolf Hitler developed his anti-Semitism from the notion of labour as early as the 1920s, as many others had before him: 'Work is an activity not for myself, but also for the benefit of my neighbours.'<sup>8</sup> Exclusive racial tendencies and an inclusive approach to socially weaker (previously excluded) groups constituted the characteristic duality of the National Socialist ideology. Executives were promised success and advancement in a society in which neither social classes nor privileges played an important role. While the state's task was to provide work, the duty and right of the individual was to responsibly perform it with full commitment and knowledge that it was for the benefit of the national collective. In the German context, work performance was thus an essential prerequisite

<sup>7</sup> On the social and other questions that shaped Europe at the turn of 19th and 20th centuries, see Holly Case, *The Age of Questions* (Princeton 2018).

<sup>8</sup> Quotation in Brunner, Conze and Koselleck, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Volume 1, 214.

for belonging to the Volksgemeinschaft. Those who did not want to work or did not contribute to the growth of the national welfare system were automatically excluded from the national community.<sup>9</sup>

If we look at the Czech situation, Masaryk's ethics of 'small-scale work' (*drobná práce*), specific and real activity, was used to express its equality in value and meaning with spiritual work in the Czech democratic tradition. According to Masaryk, labour was to be the realisation of the depth of everyday thought, and in a broader sense it was the modernisation programme of the socialisation of the Czechs – integrating as many individuals as possible into the nation through increased education, recognition, or the teaching of skills and abilities, civic responsibility training and so forth.<sup>10</sup> Overcoming romanticism led to the understanding that the goal was to sustain life and to work for life.<sup>11</sup> Masaryk's concept of work was based on humanism and liberal democratic integration. Still, the journal *Naše doba* (Our time) printed articles about efforts to hold onto Masaryk's concept during the years of the Nazi occupation; elsewhere, it was recognised only implicitly. The traditional idea of work allegedly so engrained in the Czechoslovak psyche minimised the discrepancies between physical and mental work. In 1940, the journal *Práce a hospodářství* (Labour and economy) encouraged its readers to 'organisationally unite workers and public servants in a common organisation', promoting another step forward.<sup>12</sup>

After the 1920s, however, this universalist humanism was relativised by social practices that were marked by the Great Depression. Its consequences significantly shifted the understanding of work for pay, that is, employment. The economic collapse, and especially the level of social suffering, brought about increasing interest in the concept of labour and its subsequent explosion in nationalist circles. In Germany, hunger was one of the most dominant experiences during the First World War. To a certain degree, this terrible scourge reared its ugly head again in the 1930s. Nazi propaganda therefore frequently used the metaphor of bread.<sup>13</sup> Bread firstly symbolised a basic food that satisfied one's everyday need to eat, but the propagandists depicted it together with other meanings: as a symbol of labour or a daily wage combined with hope that it would ensure a family's decent living conditions and as a symbolic goal for which the faithful prayed. During the 1930s, labour became a permanent part of

<sup>9</sup> Martin H. Geyer, 'Soziale Sicherheit und wirtschaftliche Fortschritt: Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Arbeitsideologie und Sozialpolitik im "Dritten Reich"', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 15 (1989), No. 3, 390.

<sup>10</sup> Miloš Havelka, *Ideje – Dějiny – Společnost: Studie k historické sociologii věděni* (Brno 2010), 325.

<sup>11</sup> Tomáš G. Masaryk, *Jak pracovat?* (Prague 1939), 19.

<sup>12</sup> L. Votický, 'Práce vítězí', *Práce a hospodářství* (1940), Nos 3–4, 63.

<sup>13</sup> Alf Lüdtke, 'What Happened to the "Fiery Red Glow"? Workers' Experiences and German Fascism', in *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstruction Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton 1995), 208.



the National Socialist political rhetoric. It determined social inclusion as well as the degree of social satisfaction and well-being.

The continuing economic and social hardships at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s constituted the first great crisis of the modern market economy. The capitalist disinterest in the worker, which was proclaimed by the illiberal movement, caused a spiral of personal bankruptcies in the lower social classes. Their constant struggle for survival gave points to the right's political opponents and later to the supporters of the Autumn Revolution. The rhetorical return to man and away from the machine, together with the renewed recognition of socially unattractive professions and the poor, encouraged people to favour radical political movements. The conceptual shift in the notion of labour at the very end of the 1930s and in the early 1940s did not just occur in Germany. Thanks to the anti-liberal movement, it also significantly affected the Czechs from late autumn 1938. The evolution of the concept of labour from liberalism to national socialism was described by respected Czech sociologist Jaroslav Šíma:

Today, work is turning from a conscious activity into a subconscious one, regulated by reason and science, defended, and approved by ethics, depicted and idealised by art. That is why thinking people are now thinking about work even when they are resting.<sup>14</sup>

The ethos of progress and modernism penetrated significantly into Czechoslovakia during the phase of reconstruction of state and society. It provided a very convenient argument for the ideological and systemic demarcation between interwar liberalism and the practice of the time.

In post-Munich Czecho-Slovakia, the concept of 'national labour' took hold in an almost identical way to that in the Nazi Protectorate, although it was never set into the same legal framework as was ratified in Germany in 1934.<sup>15</sup> The motto 'working for the nation' (*práce pro národ*), widely popularised to draw attention to the working class, became a way of expressing one's active participation in rebuilding the state and society in the spirit of the Autumn Revolution. According to the *národní pospolitost* ideology, there was a direct connection between increasing demands and working for the nation as the war progressed. The source of these correlations is likely found in Germany, where the categories of labour and performance became the central tenets of Nazi social policy. They did not have as exclusive a character as the racial argument and therefore gave each worker the chance to become part of a newly created society and achieve a solid standing within it. The 'performance principle' (*Leistungsprinzip* in German, *výkonnostní princip* in Czech), a reasonable and effective effort to ensure a sufficient

<sup>14</sup> Jaroslav Šíma, *Práce, společnost a kultura*, Special reprint from *Práce a hospodářství* journal (Prague 1944), 1.

<sup>15</sup> RGBl. I, 1934, p. 45: Gesetz zur Ordnung der nationalen Arbeit.

performance level, became an important element of the new social order that was to be implemented through labour.

When a German finds his place in the national community on the basis of his work and performance therein, this must lead to a new ethical appreciation of work, which ... is an essential part of the journey that the German goes on to develop the quality of his personal attributes.<sup>16</sup>

Although these words by Richard Bargel, Head of the Information Office of the Labour Research Institute of the DAF, described the situation in Germany, similar criteria were used in the Nazi Protectorate. In a dialogue with the Czech population, social justice, respect for work, and the understanding and fair valuation of performance were all signs that the národní pospolitost was a functional entity based on being a member of the nation.

The ideological exchange between the Protectorate and Germany was made possible by *The German Labour*, which was authored by the writer, journalist and cultural historian Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, who is seen as the founder of academic ethnography.<sup>17</sup> According to Riehl, examining the way a nation works could uncover truths about its character. Under the Protectorate, this meant that the approach of the members of a nation to labour, in this case nation-building work done to further the interests of New Europe, was a factor that could anticipate a nation's rise or fall. The community-building ethos of the Autumn Revolution clearly revealed that interwar liberalism, which stood for the disruption of the working life of the nation because it failed to encourage individuals to 'work for the nation as a whole' would significantly weaken the state's power. Rebuilding the state and the society was an unavoidable process that all members of the národní pospolitost, not just its political representatives, would participate in. In order to build a better future, the Czech trade union leader Václav Stočes considered the adoption of a new ideology as the ideal outcome of this transitional phase.

The Czech nation is trying to overcome one such period of national weakness, in which the purpose and mission of labour got lost in the chaos of capitalist enrichment and the liberal abuse of economic 'freedom.' It is looking for a new definition of labour by the individual and the whole, a new 'idea of labour.' ... We therefore must not be blind to the spiritual thoughts that are taking over the world when we formulate our Czech 'idea of labour' and we must not be ashamed to learn valuable lessons, examples, and even patterns from them.<sup>18</sup>

Stočes, as chairman of the NOÚZ, a newly established umbrella trade union organisation, understandably assumed it would have a strong influence on the

<sup>16</sup> Bargel, *Neue deutsche Sozialpolitik*, 12.

<sup>17</sup> Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, *Die deutsche Arbeit* (Stuttgart 1861).

<sup>18</sup> Václav Stočes, 'Práce podmínkou a měřítkem národní zdatnosti', *Práce a hospodářství. Měsíčník pro hospodářství a sociální politiku* (1940), No. 2, 31.

working class with an appropriate ideological message. The motif of reconstruction as it was expressed in parts of the labour policies had a deeper dimension. It was not an empty ideological phrase, but a serious principle that would transform relationships in the public space and the national identity. The Protectorate's political representation, which commanded society to look ahead and seek new points of reference, often in the intellectual environment, defined itself against the interwar Czechoslovak Republic in a similar way to Stočes.

The irreplaceable significance of labour also suited Josef Macek, a reformist and one of the primary movers behind policy decisions for the former Czechoslovak social democratic party. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, he defined 'working for the nation' as a certain 'direction in people's activity' that leads to a general realisation about what constitutes the 'national good'. He based this idea on the hope that 'labour is approaching joy somewhat asymptotically – it will never merge with it but will become ever closer to it'.<sup>19</sup> He considered patriotism and tenacity to be the key preconditions for arriving at the meaning of a new national existence, while, according to Macek, practically the same points were already built into the effort to morally liberate labour from political and economic dependence.<sup>20</sup>

Although we could view the efforts of Czech union leaders and representatives as propagandist hyperbole that had no real impact, it would be hasty to interpret them so simplistically. The level of suffering during the economic crisis in the 1930s, it would seem, was now offset by the cult of work and the celebration of workers, who had not yet received any special attention, let alone recognition. Moreover, the German worker in the Reich received at least the same attention in terms of the manifestation of the cult of work and family, or rather the nation, which resulted in particular social and economic benefits for him. The working class was to be the mainstay of the regime, which addressed it as a marginalised and socially deprived social class. The dejection of the working class in Germany and the Bohemian lands came primarily from the experiences of the economic crisis, which the National Socialists tried to use for their own purposes while promising social satisfaction and a feeling of personal happiness. The systematic expansion of the working class by reassigning workers to branches of the war industry, where they would receive proper care and attention from the state, was also in line with this plan. The Czech worker was seen in the context of his specific work and life environment, and no less important was his relationship to the nation, which developed into loving devotion during the reconstruction process. The repeated references here to work that we also associate with the left-wing movement are striking. However, the Communist Party was, in name, non-national, so there was rhetorical space for nationalist-minded claims about labour and patriotism. The

<sup>19</sup> Josef Macek, 'Názor na práci', *Naše doba. Revue pro vědu, umění a život sociální* (1941), 2.

<sup>20</sup> Josef Macek, 'O práci pro národ', *Naše doba* (1939), 450.

worker would not just remain a working entity on which high labour demands were placed but would become a bearer of cultural and moral values and therefore be publicly celebrated. The honest and devoted work for the nation that he committed himself to was what made him rise up the social ladder. This perspective on the cultural and working world of the working class lasted throughout the Protectorate. An example of this is the announcement of the Union of Workers' competition for new poems and writings in January 1941. The submitted texts, 'dedicated to the life and labour of a Czech worker', who at the time 'completely unselfishly placed the national community's interests before his own', were judged by well-known Czech novelists and poets Jaroslav Durych, Marie Majerová, Josef Hora and – later winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature – Jaroslav Seifert.<sup>21</sup> In the 1920s, Seifert was the main representative of the Czechoslovak artistic avant-garde and briefly a member of the Communist Party (until 1929). Seifert was a left-wing intellectual, but throughout the occupation he worked as an editor at the officially published newspaper *Národní práce*. While the cultural sphere popularised the working-class question in many different ways, the social policy could not make do with empty slogans alone. This will be further explored by examining the context of the state's labour policies, specifically the regulation of pensions, wages and adjustments in occupational safety regulations in the following pages.

### 'Working for the nation'

In its basic essence, employment is a system of controlled and forced labour, to which the Nazi occupation's entire social policy and its organisation has often been unfairly reduced.<sup>22</sup> The problem of how to deal with jobseekers was quickly replaced by a workforce shortage, caused in large part by Germany's efforts, which reflects one of the alleged greatest achievements of National Socialism – the ability to eradicate unemployment easily and swiftly. Although public funds were initially used to support unemployed persons, individuals and groups applying for work would soon encounter new forms and procedures. Job opportunities with better conditions and salaries were, at least in the beginning, also welcomed in the

<sup>21</sup> 'Z práce a o práci českého dělníka', *Národní práce. Ústřední deník Národní odborové ústředny zaměstnanecké* (12 January 1941), No. 11, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Employment is one of the most researched issues in social and economic historiography; see, for instance, František Mainuš, *Totální nasazení: Češi na pracích v Německu 1939–1945* (Brno 1970); Zdeňka Kokošková, Jaroslav Pažout and Monika Sedláková (eds), *Pracovali pro Třetí říši: nucené pracovní nasazení českého obyvatelstva Protektorátu Čechy a Morava pro válečné hospodářství Třetí říše (1939–1945). Edice dokumentů*. (Prague 2011); Jana Havlíková (ed.), *Im Totaleinsatz: Zwangsarbeit der tschechischen Bevölkerung für das Dritte Reich. Katalog zur Ausstellung = Totálně nasazení: nucená práce českého obyvatelstva pro Třetí říši. Katalog výstavy* (Prague 2008); 'Nepřichází-li práce k Tobě? Různé podoby nucené práce ve studiích a dokumentech = 'Kommt die Arbeit nicht zu Dir' Verschiedene Formen der Zwangsarbeit in Studien und Dokumenten (Prague 2003).

Bohemian lands. New jobs, even those located hundreds of kilometres away from home, were almost always thought of as 'working for the nation', that is, taking part in building the 'Czech nation' or the Nazi New Europe. In the following section, I will focus on two separate labour policy aspects: the link between employment and work performance on the one hand, and wage regulation and the distribution of social benefits on the other.

### The distribution of the workforce

During the Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, labour market regulation was one of the most important political and economic priorities for both German and Czech officers. The significance of having an employment policy is evidenced by a number of measures regulating work registration and distribution and job performance. The authoritarian approach of German officials, who, according to some observers' reports, used various forms of coercion, aggravated Czech union leaders in particular.<sup>23</sup> However, there was also the political and economic dimension of this problem, which over time crystallised into an effort to establish a symbiosis between the Reich and the Protectorate labour markets and to coordinate ways to meet their needs.

If Nazi Germany became a model in any socio-political area, it was its employment strategy. At the very beginning, before Wehrmacht forces entered the Bohemian lands in mid-March 1939, the interests of both Germans and Czechs were met in this policy. This was due on the one hand to the constant need for labour that had existed in Germany since the Nazis came to power, and on the other to persistent unemployment in Czechoslovakia. Although the number of still unemployed jobseekers dropped significantly in September 1938 compared with the peak of the crisis, the development of the labour market appeared to be going smoothly. Nevertheless, the level of employment in 1929 was only reached again ten years later, and there were several fluctuations in late 1938 and early 1939. Unemployment went down after the country's territory shrank but went up again when waves of refugees from the Czechoslovak borderlands, annexed to Germany in October 1938, began to flood into the land.<sup>24</sup> Czech authorities sought to regulate this, and the results of these efforts began to be felt in the first half of 1939. From March to June 1939, unemployment in the Bohemian lands fell by 80 per cent, from 90,975 to 16,912 jobseekers, mainly due to recruitment of workers to Germany.<sup>25</sup> A more comprehensive framework was provided

<sup>23</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll., Carton 231: Recruitment of workers in Germany [1939]; František Mainuš, *Totální nasazení*, 13f.

<sup>24</sup> Rákosník, *Odvracená tvář meziválečné prosperity*, 350.

<sup>25</sup> Brandes, *Češi pod německých protektorátem*, 184.

by an intergovernmental agreement between the Czechoslovak and German governments signed on 19 January 1939, which enabled Germany's recruitment of 41,000 Czechoslovak citizens.<sup>26</sup> In addition to satisfying German demands, the effect of this agreement was the outflow of workers from the domestic market – a harbinger of the increasing workforce shortage in the later years of the Protectorate.

Czechoslovak citizens had been moving to Germany for work since the interwar period, but the nationality of those recruited for work during the first half of the 1930s changed. While previously nine out of ten Czechoslovak migrant workers were ethnic Germans, after March 1939 this ratio was reversed. Skilled Czech workers and the persistent German interest in filling positions in companies that were important for arms production created an active labour market. Reich officials began to systematically recruit workers immediately after the creation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, when they formed six regional recruitment committees in Prague, Pilsen, Kolín, Ostrava, Olomouc and Brno and relatively easily acquired tens of thousands of new employees.<sup>27</sup> This resulted in the aforementioned radical decline in unemployment and the first significant coordination between Reich and Czech authorities as well as the elimination of the traditional job search via public and private intermediaries, perusing ads, and going around and asking employers directly.<sup>28</sup> Work was no longer sought but offered, and it became more of a duty than a right. This development led to the gradual liquidation of the labour market.

Recruitment drives took place at public job agencies, which put out calls for workers among those who had previously been employed by private companies and were currently either receiving benefits under the Ghent system as part of the state's food ration assistance or refugee support. According to contemporary observers, this preference had two advantages for the authorities: workers without job commitments could go to Germany almost immediately and government assistance could function as a remarkable instrument of coercion, because if a worker didn't accept a job assignment he could be threatened with 'withdrawal of support in perpetuity' or being placed in a domestic labour unit.<sup>29</sup> When these recruitment drives began, there was a demand for voluntary labour, but it quickly ran out. The promise of better wages and working conditions was only attractive to a certain extent. Work recruitment therefore soon switched to mandatory work in order to coordinate the deployment of labour – the planned management of the workforce to suit the needs of German policy. Personal freedom,

<sup>26</sup> Steffen Becker, *Von der Werbung zum 'Totaleinsatz' Die Politik der Rekrutierung von Arbeitskräften im 'Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren' und der Aufenthalt tschechischer Zwangsarbeiter und -arbeiterinnen im Dritten Reich 1939–1945* (Berlin 2005), 48.

<sup>27</sup> Becker, *Von der Werbung zum 'Totaleinsatz'*, 54.

<sup>28</sup> On the search for work during the Great Depression see Rákosník, *Odvracená tvář meziválečné prosperity*, 369f.

<sup>29</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOUŽ Coll., Carton 231: Recruiting workers for Germany, p. 2 [1939].

voluntary employment and job performance were the central issues in the discourse on labour distribution mechanisms in post-Munich Czechoslovakia and the Protectorate. Although this aspect is not central to my work as I am primarily interested in government assistance for workers and basic social and health services, I shall briefly address it.

In Nazi labour policy, as German officials stated, freedom meant liberation from 'the stress of no job security, freedom from hunger for a reasonable, self-disciplined life.'<sup>30</sup> In this sense, the freedom to work meant much more than the freedom to not work or the possibility to reject or terminate a job. With the occupation regime's labour policy, whether implemented by the occupation or by Protectorate authorities, the freedom to choose one's employment posed a significant problem. State intervention in the labour market dates back to the early 1930s, when the Czechoslovak state attempted to regulate the rising unemployment level, first by establishing community service jobs (1930); second, by forming labour units immediately after the Munich Agreement was signed (October 1938); third, by dismissing married women from the state administration (December 1938); and later, by building prison labour camps designed to discipline 'work-averse' persons (March 1939).<sup>31</sup> These measures show that the freedom to choose, or freedom in general, was being limited. Interference by political agencies that justified their actions in the language of political liberalism by relying on a positive concept of freedom, that is, freedom as a means to achieve a certain objective, which in this case was working for the nation, gradually morphed into increasingly authoritarian positions. The situation in the occupied territories of Bohemia and Moravia was no exception, and it evolved into every conceivable form, from civilian forced labour, to prisoners of war, to prisoners in jail for whom this kind of labour was essentially a method of extermination. Things continued to escalate until total war, warfare mobilising all human and material resources, was declared.

In this book, which focuses on the state's social policy, the clients of the public assistance services provided to the population included in the *národní pospolitost* were mostly civilian female and male workers. Even in this case, however, we cannot avoid the term forced labour. Historiography uses it to describe the working conditions of the forced labour workers in the territories under the patronage of Nazi Germany. Ulrich Herbert once characterised its main feature as non-economic forced labour or non-economic coercion that was decisive at the time.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless,

<sup>30</sup> Ernst Lucke, 'Německá pracovní politika', *Práce a hospodářství* (1942), 212.

<sup>31</sup> Collection of laws and regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Government regulation no. 79/1930 Coll., which regulated productive unemployment care; Government decree no. 223/1938 on labour units; Government regulation no. 379/1938 Coll. on the amendment of certain personnel conditions in the state administration; and Collection of laws and regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation no. 72/1939 Coll. on prison labour camps.

<sup>32</sup> Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerbeschäftigung in Deutschland 1880 bis 1980: Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter* (Berlin 1986), 82; Tomáš Jelínek, 'Nucená práce v nacionálním socialismu', in *Nepřichází-li práce k Tobě*, 16–17. Cf. Wolfgang Benz, 'Vom Freiwilligen Arbeitsdienst zur Arbeitsdienstpflicht', *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 16 (1968), No. 4, 317–46.

as Mark Spoerer noted, what was important was not the involuntary work contracts but, above all, the fact that the employee could not freely terminate the work relationship.<sup>33</sup> In this view, all work mediated by the Protectorate became forced labour because any employment contract violations, for instance unannounced termination or retirement, had fatal consequences for the worker in terms of his or her social and political protection.

This argument can be turned on its head, however. By dutifully following the rules and fulfilling work obligations, workers could basically be permanently employed and sometimes even received preferential consideration for social and health care benefits, even if they were outside the territory of the Protectorate. Taken a step further, one can conclude that there was a direct correlation between employment and the promise of social security for employed Czech workers and their families. However, this only pertained to certain ethnic groups, whose workers experienced coercion but at the same time had the right to complain about living and working conditions, in essence the right to raise their voices. According to Spoerer's research, the Belgians, Dutch, French, Serbs and Czechs all belonged to this group.<sup>34</sup> Czech workers, in fact, negotiated and organised strikes of various sizes practically throughout the Protectorate era.<sup>35</sup> Interpretations of their actions vary widely. Some consider them to be acts of resistance (unrest that slows down production), while others see them as behaviour exhibited by workers adapting to new circumstances and constellations of power (negotiating wages and working conditions). The reality is likely somewhere in the middle. The privileged position of the Czech working class, which was driven home by emphasising the fundamental break with the interwar Czechoslovakia and looking towards the future, the recognition of low-skilled manual workers, and the commitment to level wages and salaries, had to make itself felt somehow. A relatively easy way to achieve these goals was to listen to the voices calling for the promises made by the Autumn Revolution to be kept.

Protectorate workers deserved recognition, and German authorities provided it by preserving their right to claim social security benefits (social and health care distribution) and by maintaining open communication channels with institutions that defended workers' rights. While in the Protectorate working conditions were watched over by the NOÚZ, a worker who left for Germany was no longer under the supervision or control of Protectorate officials. When the idea of establishing Protectorate trade union branches in Germany was allegedly shelved, the NOÚZ together with the Workers' Committee of the National Partnership pushed for the

<sup>33</sup> Mark Spoerer, *Nucené práce pod hákovým křížem. Zahraniční civilní pracovníci, váleční zajatci a vězni ve Třetí říši a v obsazené Evropě v letech 1939–1945* (Prague 2005), 16.

<sup>34</sup> Mark Spoerer and Jochen Fleischhacker, 'Forced Laborers in Nazi Germany: Categories, Numbers, and Survivors', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 33 (2002), No. 2, 175.

<sup>35</sup> Balcar, *Panzer für Hitler*, 127–44.



protection of the fundamental rights of those recruited for work in the Reich. This was foremost about signing fixed-term contracts, taking into account workers' qualifications, checking up on the agreed upon working conditions, providing a week-long leave once every two to three months to maintain family ties and other measures.<sup>36</sup> The active recruitment of new workers created much uncertainty, but the necessity of dealing with unemployment and, later, the hasty conditions of the Second World War impeded the negotiation of the above-mentioned requirements with relevant partner organisations in Germany. However, these efforts never came to fruition. Despite the establishment of generally applicable norms, a worker's experience varied from individual to individual and depended on the place he was sent to work, the total time and hours of his employment, and the relationships in the plant where he worked.

As late as March 1940, the Protectorate authorities still did not have a clear idea of the form and range of the services that a worker from the Protectorate could claim in Germany. Czechs also distrusted the Reich authorities. The conditions under which workers left to take up their jobs were to be further negotiated by the Ministry of Social and Health Administration, which would also supervise the activities of the labour offices to act in the interests of the recruits. Labour offices replaced employment agencies in July 1939. Their job, as it would later be with the introduction of the labour books, was primarily to streamline the distribution of the workforce, eliminate liberal labour market mechanisms and apply the system that had proven to be effective in Germany.<sup>37</sup> They received significant support through a number of government regulations that simplified and accelerated the process of registering workers and assigning jobs.<sup>38</sup> To a large extent, Protectorate law was adopted by the institutions of the Reich labour law, and this was how the occupation authorities exerted direct pressure.<sup>39</sup> This was partly because the system, whether in the Protectorate or other territories controlled by Nazi Germany, had to deal with the fallout from a large migration of workers. An employment contract, which was the basis for social insurance, did not change much in terms of social and health care for persons insured in the Protectorate. Male and female workers were to be protected for the duration of their employment regardless of their place of their employment. The unions'

<sup>36</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll., Carton 231: Record of a meeting on the employment of Czech workers in the Reich held on 28 March 1940 at 3.00 pm in the boardroom of the National Employees' Union in Prague 1 on Na Perštýně Street no. 11.

<sup>37</sup> Collection of laws and regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation no. 241/1941 Coll., that established labour books, on 28 June 1941.

<sup>38</sup> Collection of laws and regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, No. 193/1939 Coll. on labour offices; government regulation no. 190/1939 Coll. on generally applicable labour conditions, government regulation no. 195/1939 Coll., that implemented government regulations; government regulation no. 190/1939 Coll., on general worker obligations.

<sup>39</sup> Jaromír Tauchen, *Práce a její právní regulace v Protektorátu Čechy a Morava (1939–1945)* (Prague 2016), 73.

initial fears that Czech workers would be unprotected abroad were unfounded. In addition to social and health care, they would remain primarily Czech workers, stay in contact with their home and keep their national identity, all of which was in line with the perspective of segregated national communities.

The brochure *Social-Political Lessons* (Sociálně-politické poučení), given to each candidate for work in Germany, sought to allay Protectorate workers' fears of leaving their country and encourage their desire to get to know the technical and social progress that had taken place in the German Reich.<sup>40</sup> This booklet provided a departure checklist and summarised all the legal and employment issues the workers would face, including taxes and social security rights. Although propaganda played an important role, at least for some time, there was an understanding that work performance was fundamentally conditioned by the health and work environment, which profoundly impacted workers' health. In other words, positive motivation was just as important as negative motivation, which consisted of punishments for behaviour that was 'incompatible' with job performance. Authorities were allowed to deny a recruit health insurance and suspend all benefits provided to family members if he refused to perform a task he was ordered to carry out outside the Protectorate. The threat of being fined and imprisoned was intended to discourage undisciplined behaviour on the job. A worker was not allowed to leave his workplace without the consent of the labour office.<sup>41</sup> The definite-period employment contracts were cleverly formulated to last 'until the end of the war'. Early employment termination was possible only rarely and married workers were given leave after six months of service, which was more benevolent than the much criticised interwar Czechoslovak legislation that was in force until 1942.<sup>42</sup>

Leaving for work outside the Protectorate was a complicated administrative process that required considerable organisational skills. I will devote more space to illness insurance in [Chapter Five](#), but I will make a few points about it here. From the very moment he left his country, a Czech worker was the responsibility of the DAF and could therefore contact its offices, or he could turn to his contact person in the factory. In terms of social insurance and family or special assistance, he had to rely on himself. It wasn't so much a matter of denying his legal right to claim these services, but the German view was that a worker had to perform certain administrative tasks himself, such as sending proof of payment to the labour office, making sure he registered on time at the local health insurance company that took responsibility for him during his stay in the Reich, and applying on time for separation benefits if he could claim that he was the family's breadwinner. The

<sup>40</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 988: *Social-Political Lessons* (1942), p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 988: *Social-Political Lessons* (1942), pp. 5 and 9.

<sup>42</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Act no. 67/1925 Coll., that introduced paid leave for employees on 17 April 1925.

same conditions applied to his remuneration, part of which could be sent to the family back home in the Protectorate only once the factory manager had signed the permission slip.<sup>43</sup>

Despite these complex administrative hurdles, throughout the Protectorate's National Socialist regime, Czech leadership obsessively sought to maintain the impression that wages and social and health care were increasingly related to work performance. We will see this in greater detail later by the example of injury and pension insurance. One must admit that the state also made significant strides in this direction even when the Wehrmacht's failures were beginning to multiply and Germany declared a state of total mobilisation in the hinterland. This deployment logically concerned the Czech population as well, including groups that had not yet been ordered to work, such as women aged forty-five to fifty years, mothers with one child who was older than six, adolescents who had completed their compulsory education, students once schools were closed and others.<sup>44</sup>

Deploying juveniles to work in factories abroad was not an easy task. They did not have the necessary expertise, and due to this lack of competence, munitions plants did not have to accept them despite the labour offices' efforts, so they were sent to work in less demanding industries. Besides these job placement issues, problems arose due to the hasty measures taken, which affected workers' health and social conditions. The occupation authorities therefore had to rely on their own efforts and financial resources to compensate for this new reality – the temporary conditions of the occupation and the war and the requirement to maintain order. This demanded measures and so the authorities used the extension of generous social security benefits to get workers to comply. It is evident that the occupation and the ongoing war did not preclude a functional social security system. On the contrary, it seemed to propel it towards a universal approach to this type of care, although it could never be achieved due to its profound racist and anti-Semitic nature.

The Protectorate could have offered better conditions instead of sending people to work in neighbouring countries or in the more far-flung parts of the German Reich that were under constant threat of Allied bombardment. Using the example of Czechs ordered to dig trenches in Lower Austria, we know that their accommodations were so poor that in December 1944, the most prominent German officer in the Protectorate Karl Hermann Frank and the Governor for Lower Austria Hugo Jury had to intervene. The subsequent inspection conducted by the Protectorate Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Adolf Hrubý, one month later, which took place after countless complaints from the parents of deployed adolescents, resulted in the dispatch of food, spirits, cigarettes and shoes to Lower Austria.<sup>45</sup> Frank's actions reveal that he did more than just continue his strategy

<sup>43</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 988: *Social-Political Lessons* (1942), pp. 13 and 18.

<sup>44</sup> For more details see Tauchen, *Práce a její právní regulace*, 129.

<sup>45</sup> Tauchen, *Práce a její právní regulace*, 138.

after Deputy Reich Protector Reinhard Heydrich's death, that is, increasing labour and production for the Reich.<sup>46</sup> He tried to strike a utilitarian balance between war production and meeting the basic needs of Czech workers. His goal was to prevent unrest, which would unnecessarily tax German security forces and slow down production. We can see the same in Frank's strategy towards the General Commissioner for Labour Deployment, Fritz Sauckel. In their summer 1943 conversation, Frank refused to permit the deployment of additional Czechs born in 1924 outside the Protectorate. According to Sauckel, Frank allegedly based his argument of the situation within the Protectorate. One year later, after the successful Allied invasion of France, conditions had drastically changed. Frank could no longer use these reasons to back up his opinions because workforces were needed everywhere in the total war.<sup>47</sup>

Frank's efforts not to contaminate the Protectorate's population homogeneity with prisoners of war and foreign workers and to maintain the population's right to social and health care were an essential part of his political strategy. Starting on 1 January 1945, the heads of the labour offices were allowed to deploy the Protectorate population to participate in emergency services to help the army's defensive positions.<sup>48</sup> This deployment, however, did not create an employment relationship that would be analogous to an employment contract. Labour was reimbursed either by service benefits in the case of people employed at the occupation authorities or by compensation for personal expenses according to the rates set by the Reich Minister of the Interior. But even these replacements did not mean there would be no loss of income. The possible difference between an average wage and compensation was to be made up by support issued by the labour office for integrating the worker into the workforce.<sup>49</sup> If the employment contract did not change, the social insurance ration remained untouched, but some organisational changes did take place. Illness insurance contributions and benefits were calculated based on monthly earnings of 1,500 crowns and contributions to it were covered by the German State Minister as the recipient of the service. In the case of benefits, medical care was provided free of charge in the event of a worker's illness (medical and hospital treatment, medication), or insurance benefits were paid out.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> René Küpper, with justified scepticism, cites Frank's program of 29 September 1943 and repeats his main thesis in his speech in Karlova Studánka (North Moravia) on 30 March 1944. René Küpper, *Karl Hermann Frank (1898–1946). Politická biografie sudetoněmeckého nacionálního socialisty* (Prague 2012), 215.

<sup>47</sup> NA, MHP, add. II Collection (MHP-II Coll.), Carton 246: Fritz Sauckel an Herrn Deutschen Staatsminister für Böhmen und Mähren, SS-Gruppenführer Hermann Frank, Betr. Arbeitseinsatz im Protektorat, hier Abgabe von Arbeitskräften für das übrige Reichsgebiet, 11 August 1944.

<sup>48</sup> Decree issued by the German State Minister. *Verordnungsblatt des Deutschen Staatsministers für Böhmen und Mähren: Verordnung über den Einsatz beim Stellungsbau im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren*, No. 1, 1945.

<sup>49</sup> Government regulation no. 250/1943 on support for integration into the workforce.

<sup>50</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll., Carton 231: Calling for trench work [1945].

As the war continued, the link between the demands of the occupation administration being shouldered by the local population and compensation packages was emphasised. The occupation administration understandably never resigned itself to the disciplinary format of its regulations, but it nevertheless tried its utmost to support individuals' work performance and their willingness to work. Its main tool was wage regulation and various types of bonuses that had not only a real levelling effect, but also to a great extent a psychological effect – they demonstrated the caregiving interest of the state and made individuals feel they were receiving an adequate salary. Except for the black market, however, the savings could not be used to purchase consumer goods of one's choice since command economics made it impossible.

### The regulation of wages and salaries

The improvement of wages became an integral part of the appeal for the reconstruction of the state. When employees organised strikes during the first few months of the Protectorate, they were generally venting their frustration about unsatisfactory wages.<sup>51</sup> Labour and wage conditions in the interwar period were regulated by collective agreements between employers and trade unions. These agreements concerned a large number of workers but did not effectively protect them from being let go during the economic crisis.<sup>52</sup> Right up to the point when it was occupied, Czechoslovakia was unable to pass a special law on collective agreements, and so some factories did not draw up these types of contracts. Additionally, the state extended the validity of existing agreements until 1937 with reference to the first Czechoslovak Enabling Act, issued in the midst of the economic crisis in 1933.<sup>53</sup> However, this decision only prevented undesirable practices by companies in terms of the labour law. As a result, wage and social inequality began to plague the countryside and several industries and the state never found a way to eliminate them.

The 'revolutionary' approach of the architects of the state's reconstruction towards wages consisted in adjusting labour conditions and ensuring the firm commitment of employers to provide employees with fair pay. Post-Munich Prime Minister Rudolf Beran's government announced in December 1938 that, unlike the previous effort, wages and pensions would newly correspond to work performance. However, not only was the establishment of fair pay proportionate to the effort made by the worker, but the type of work (if it was easy or difficult, where

<sup>51</sup> Janák and Kokoška, *Průmyslové dělnictvo v českých zemích*, 73.

<sup>52</sup> Zdeněk Deyl, *Kolektivní smlouvy v Československu, 1918–1938* (Prague 1987), 12.

<sup>53</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Act No. 95/1933 Coll. on extraordinary regulatory power (9 June 1933).

it was performed and what the worker did) was also considered. Another factor was the value of the labour unit, which, according to Emil Zimmler, an engineer, water manager and long-time collaborator of the social democratic think-tank the Masaryk Academy of Labour, was influenced by various other elements, including the worker's race, the climate, political, social and cultural conditions, and supply and demand on the labour market.<sup>54</sup> In workers' eyes, however, the idea of being fairly remunerated for their work was nothing more than the perceived subjective fair relationship between work and wages. After years of economic troubles, this idealistic vision must have resonated with workers at a time when the state promised compensation for interwar liberal capitalism's lack of interest.

The issue of 'fair wages' was tackled at the end of the 1930s by Marko Weirich, Czech economist and advocate of political Catholicism. He derived his definition of pay from the *Quadragesimo Anno* encyclical of 1931 and estimated its amount to be that which was sufficient to support a worker and his family.<sup>55</sup> The general demand for fair wage distribution led Weirich to consider the 'family wage', but in terms of an additional allowance that would be granted regardless of a family's real burdens. Family wages would be paid not only to fathers but also to those who were mature enough to get married.<sup>56</sup> But Weirich's family wage concept was problematic. For one, he thought the principle of fair pay combined with family benefits was promising. However, this would only be possible if fair pay was not feasible – for example, if it was too high for the company – or in the case of large families since it was to cover the needs of workers with an average number of children.<sup>57</sup>

Although Weirich's proposals were justified (family benefits were not paid out on a systematic basis between the wars), along with the principle of work performance, they had little chance of succeeding in the Protectorate. A fair wage was determined by a worker's performance and was based on the premise of 'everyone according to his merits' or 'the same wage for the same work'. Václav Verunáč, a renowned expert in the field of social and economic policy, described what was behind this new labour policy.

The new concept of social tasks and the new wage policy reflected a new direction in the organisation of human relationships (new organisations). The social question no longer concerned labour alone, but now extended to all workers. Social policy has steered away from the purely material course and is understood as including all aspects of life (the beauty of work, the ethics of work, joy of work). A new concept of work has been created and the idea of fair wages has been brought to the fore.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Emil Zimmler, 'Spravedlivá mzda', *Nová práce* (1939), No. 9, 141.

<sup>55</sup> Weirich, *Mzda a rodina*, 22.

<sup>56</sup> Weirich, *Mzda a rodina*, 9.

<sup>57</sup> Weirich, *Mzda a rodina*, 37.

<sup>58</sup> Václav Verunáč, 'Pět let sociálního hospodářství v Čechách a na Moravě', in *Po pěti letech 1939–1944* (Prague 1944), 159.

As Verunáč suggested, this was about implementing new work evaluation criteria formulated by German theorists in the 1930s. The principle of ‘performance wages’, created in the spirit of a ‘performance-oriented community’ (*Leistungsgemeinschaft* in German, *výkonnostní společenství* in Czech), could have played a much more substantial role in the Bohemian lands, however, because they indicated the permeability of seemingly insurmountable social barriers. In 1940, Czech journalist Oldřich Kuba argued its importance for the national community:

This socialism reorders the národní pospolitost according to the principle of work performance. People are different, unequal. However, this socialism gives every able-bodied person the same opportunity to ascend and hold down a job.<sup>59</sup>

How equal these opportunities truly were can be debated, but work performance seems to have been the way to adapt and become part of the national community. In addition to a performance evaluation in the form of a bonus (allowance), national integration was also an important incentivising component. Christmas and New Year’s bonuses, which Jewish employees were not allowed to receive, had a similar function.<sup>60</sup>

Proponents of the rationalisation of labour, among them Emil Zimmerler, gained acceptance during the community-building period and played a significant role in the scientific approach to labour and career planning. However, wages and salaries remained the main political issues for Czech politicians. Aware of the role played by the development of prices and wages in the social conditions of the Protectorate, Social Democrat and former Czechoslovak Minister of Social Affairs Jaromír Nečas took over the leadership of the Supreme Price Office, a new institution supervising pricing policy, and was matched in his energy by Antonín Zelenka, who became head of the NOÚZ during the first months of its existence. Zelenka’s conviction that unions’ most important task was ‘to protect labour and workers, to create and defend reasonable working conditions and fair pay’ did not detract from his social democratic beliefs.<sup>61</sup> People active in the Protectorate’s social administration also shared these views, especially those who decided to advocate for the territory’s social stability. Although unions did not play a significant role in the Protectorate’s wage policy, they did provide clear answers to the question of the purpose and means of the state’s reconstruction. As Zelenka summed it up:

We know that wages today are not freely negotiated and that the Ministry of Social and Health Administration’s negotiations and decisions are subordinate to the

<sup>59</sup> Oldřich Kuba, ‘Nový socialismus’, *Lidové noviny* (17 October 1940).

<sup>60</sup> ‘Vánoční a novoroční odměny. Vyhláška ministra sociální a zdravotní správy č. 1005 z 22. listopadu 1941’, in *Doplňkový sešit pozměňující ustanovení pro dělníky a v obchodě, vánoční a novoroční odměny za rok 1941* (Prague 1941), 29f.

<sup>61</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll, Carton 106: Antonín Zelenka: The mission of united trade unions (1939).

Protectorate authorities. We also know that wages converted to Czech crowns are not the right measure of the value of the wage and that the main thing is what we can buy for it.<sup>62</sup>

Wage regulation in the command economy fundamentally changed decision-making powers, limited the scope of negotiations between the parties involved and strengthened the authority of the state at the expense of employers.

Dealing with the issue of wages and salaries was not just another way of coming to terms with the recent past and an attempt to create Czech form of national socialism; more than anything else, it was an effort to solve a real problem. Prices increased uncontrollably after the Munich Agreement was signed and, in the spring of 1939, had to be capped to protect the interests of the Protectorate and Reich economy, in particular regarding production and exports. This meant that this interest to a certain extent carried over into the wage policy, which came up with a tool to regulate the standard of living in the Protectorate. Despite the continuing uncertainty about how much Czechs could benefit from German social conveniences, a consensus on the need to level prices and wages in the Protectorate with those in the Reich existed from the very beginning. This move would help the Protectorate to become part of the economic zone of Nazi Germany.<sup>63</sup> The policy did not produce the desired outcome, however, and in September 1941, wages in the Protectorate still lagged behind those in the Reich by 20 per cent. Even by the end of the war they had not managed to catch up.<sup>64</sup>

These failures were not unique. The Reichsgau Sudetenland had been dealing with similar difficulties since its annexation by Germany in October 1938. In December 1940, Konrad Henlein, Gauleiter of Reichsgau Sudetenland, pointed out that integrating the Sudetenland into the Reich's social security system could have a negative outcome that would lead to an increase in prices and worse living standards.<sup>65</sup> Prices fluctuated throughout the Sudetenland, creating cost and salary differences and uncertainty about how much pensions would increase. The constant waiting for the promised social improvements that never arrived after the political campaign for the secession of the Czechoslovak borderland resulted in the rapid onset of doubt after an initial burst of euphoria among the German population of the Sudetenland.<sup>66</sup>

Imbalances in prices and wages in the Protectorate could potentially have had a similar effect. Their stabilisation was delegated to the Supreme Price Office

<sup>62</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll, Carton 106: Antonín Zelenka: The mission of united trade unions (1939).

<sup>63</sup> Balcar and Kučera, *Von der 'Rüstammer des Reiches'*, 372.

<sup>64</sup> Balcar and Kučera, *Von der 'Rüstammer des Reiches'*, 378.

<sup>65</sup> RGBl. I, 1940, p. 957: Verordnung über die endgültige Regelung der Reichsversicherung in den ehemaligen tschecho-slowakischen, dem Deutschen Reich eingegliederten Gebieten; NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 970: Der Reichsstatthalterei in Sudetengau, Schnellbrief, 11 December 1940.

<sup>66</sup> Zimmermann, *Sudetští Němci v nacistickém státě*, 189.



and to the Ministry of Social and Health Administration and later, in 1942, its successor the Ministry of the Economy and Labour. At the same time, the situation was closely monitored by officials at the Reich Protector's Office and at the Oberlandrats. The long-term goal of the managed price and wage policy was not only to put economic priorities into effect, but also to lessen social tensions through the unification of regulations and the levelling of labour and wage conditions. Turbulent political changes were to be followed by a period of stability and increased labour productivity. These were not wholly empty promises. As early as the middle of 1939, to put down a strike in South Moravia, the Minister of Social and Health Administration sent representatives of the Reich and the Czech administration to inform the participants in the strike at mines and factories about progress made in negotiations on wages and working conditions.<sup>67</sup> They had much to explain because the first measures froze prices and wages at the current level. The South Moravian strike was far from an isolated incident. In May 1939, eleven strikes took place in which 2,286 workers participated and others followed in the autumn of 1941, with numbers decreasing in later years.<sup>68</sup> The new collective agreement regulations came into effect on the last day of April 1939. By the end of 1939, more than 400 wage adjustments had been issued.<sup>69</sup> The wage policy remained a subject of constant attention in the following months and years.

Due to their importance, wages and salaries were among the main political instruments of the social and economic policy and were used to resolve social conflicts. Tilla Siegel once defined the dual goal of the Nazi wage policy in Germany: to implement wage increases in unavoidable cases and in isolation to avoid strikes and to apply performance wages flexibly to help integrate workers into the Volksgemeinschaft while also encouraging their labour mobilisation potential.<sup>70</sup> The Protectorate's goals were no different. By setting uniform wage and salary ratios, the authorities pursued some of their levelling goals. They found support for this endeavour because they managed to find a partial solution to the continuous growth of prices, which consisted in the granting of various 'weighting' and 'special' allowances or salary 'assistances' to either a selected group of workers, or more widely to employees of the Protectorate economy and civil servants. In the case of private sector employees, the state made it mandatory for employers to pay a specific allowance from their own resources. The most common type of special financial assistance was the weighting allowance that public employees and

<sup>67</sup> NA, PMR Coll., Carton 4149, Folio 511: Minutes of the meeting of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers held on 16 June 1939, here IV. The strike movement in South Moravia.

<sup>68</sup> Balcar and Kučera, *Von der 'Rüstammer des Reiches'*, 373; Balcar, *Panzer für Hitler*, 323.

<sup>69</sup> Tauchen, *Práce a její právní regulace*, 50.

<sup>70</sup> Tilla Siegel, 'Lohnpolitik im nationalsozialistischen Deutschland', in *Angst, Belohnung, Zucht und Ordnung: Herrschaftsmechanismen im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Carola Sachse, Tilla Siegel, Hasso Spode and Wolfgang Spohn (Opladen 1982), 100–1.

pensioners could apply for.<sup>71</sup> This had previously been a visible item on one's pay slip that contributed to a worker's political awareness and supported his or her work ethic, and this was what interested German officials the most.

Prior to 1942, we can observe a consistent price and wage policy characterised by the effort to level the playing field in the Protectorate and Germany. A change in the setting of wages occurred that completely excluded employers from this process. On 1 April 1942, the implementation of the state's wage policy was transferred to the labour offices.<sup>72</sup> Even at this stage, though, any increase in wages and salaries and one-off allowances was not possible without the consent of the Ministry of Social and Health Administration.<sup>73</sup> The newly acquired absolute decision-making power of the state in wage matters resulted in the normative setting of allowances. To replace the cancelled military contribution of 10 per cent that had been collected since 1934,<sup>74</sup> beginning on 1 January 1943 Protectorate members paid a war contribution that was deducted from their annual income. It was determined progressively and could only go up to 6 per cent of one's income, and it benefitted the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>75</sup>

### Working women – 'guardians of the national property'

At first glance, it may seem that Czech women were not involved in the labour policy discourse at all. During the First World War, when men enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian Army to defend the Habsburg Monarchy, women took up formerly male professions, which feminised once purely male work for the purposes of the war.<sup>76</sup> In the interwar period, a woman working for a salary was no longer unusual. After the constitution was ratified in 1920, in the following years up to a quarter of all women worked, a level that remained constant throughout the interwar period.<sup>77</sup> During the Nazi occupation, Czech men were not sent to

<sup>71</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government Regulation No. 299/1939 Coll. on one-off and monthly weighting allowances to state and other government employees on active duty and pension recipients.

<sup>72</sup> Tauchen, *Práce a její právní regulace*, 51.

<sup>73</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government Regulation No. 13/1942 Coll. on ensuring the stability of wages and salaries and work ethic.

<sup>74</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Act No. 266/1934 Coll. on the military contribution.

<sup>75</sup> Low-income individuals with annual incomes of under K 6,000 per year as well as people who were sent to work outside of the Protectorate were exempt from paying a war contribution. Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government Regulation no. 115/1943 Coll. on the collection of the war contribution.

<sup>76</sup> On the contemporary context of the difference between men's and women's work see Jan Hromada, 'Zdravotně sociální předpoklady práce žen v průmyslových závodech', *Práce a hospodářství* (1942), 245–7.

<sup>77</sup> Melissa Feinberg, *Elusive Equality: Gender, Citizenship, and the Limits of Democracy in Czechoslovakia, 1918–1950* (Pittsburgh 2006), 100.

fight on the front line but were entrusted with the important role of providing the industrial backbone of the Third Reich. With increasing demands for job mobility and performance, especially in times of total war, the number of working women increased as mandatory labour applied to them as well. In the rhetoric of the Protectorate's labour policy there are frequent references to the 'new woman'. A closer look reveals that it was merely the repackaged stereotype of the woman as worker with the image of the woman-mother of the Autumn Revolution superimposed on top of it. On the macro level of the national economy as well as the micro level of the individual household women were considered the 'guardians of the national property'.<sup>78</sup> Women's dual roles were not in conflict, however, as motherhood is determined biologically and is therefore a permanent attribute, while work was something that women participated in due to the temporary situation of war, although this was obscured by the image of women's liberation and emancipation.

Women's traditional maternal role will be covered in [Chapter Six](#), and so I will focus on the image of working women in this section. The way this image was promoted did not deviate significantly from the issues of freedom and equality brought up by Czech feminists in the interwar period.<sup>79</sup> The war gave women an irrefutable place in the world of labour and the state's demands paradoxically strengthened women's self-confidence. The female editors of the journal *Žena v povolání* (Women in occupation) described this evolution:

Time has shown that even a woman doing a man's job can be placed on the altar of perfection. Our time clearly shows a woman's place and significance in the new, emerging state. She is no longer counted on merely as the mother of future generations, but as a valid unit of the new state, which it is helping to create according to her strengths and abilities.<sup>80</sup>

The Protectorate mentality was based on a kind of policy of recognition, emphasising the crucial role of women as mothers, while also giving them an irrefutable place at the table as workers. In reality, the Protectorate did so mainly out of economic necessity, because when this new state was being consolidated there was no indication that women would be welcome in public service. Two examples illustrate this. In December 1938, before the Nazi occupation, the Czech government decided to focus on civil servants and thus redress the conditions in the state administration.<sup>81</sup> In practice, this was mainly a question of dual incomes in families – salaried husbands and wives living in the same household. Working

<sup>78</sup> J. Kaslová, 'Žena – strážkyně národního jmění', *Žena v povolání* (1944), No. 4, 1.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Betty Karpíšková, *Žena a socialism* (Prague 1927), 15–17; Marie Bahenská, Libuše Heczková, and Dana Musilová, *Ženy na stráž! České feministické myšlení 19. a 20. Století* (Prague 2010), 262–5.

<sup>80</sup> Marie Černá, 'Ženské sebevědomí', *Žena v povolání* (1943), No. 1, 1.

<sup>81</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Government Regulation No. 379/1938 Coll. on the revision of certain personnel conditions in the state administration.

married women would have to resign by 16 January 1939, in return for a severance payment or some other lump sum. Similarly, the pension benefits of government were reduced by half, even in the case of retired married women. These measures reduced government spending and made it possible for male unemployed workers to get the vacated jobs. The women's movement, however, saw it as clearly limiting women's public activities. While this new regulation was in force, single women working for the state could be permanently retired shortly after they were married. The second example was the denial of membership to women in National Partnership, the nationwide and only officially existing Czech political party in the Protectorate, adopted shortly after its foundation in the spring of 1939.

Economic circumstances and the unrelenting progress of the Second World War soon required a revision of these conditions. Analogous to developments in Germany, statistics show that the number of working women increased in the Protectorate as well. By 30 June 1943, employment offices had found work for 96,422 women, 15.8 per cent more than in the previous year. Women constituted 32.3 per cent of all employees with compulsory health insurance in the Protectorate. The retail and handicraft sectors employed most of the working women.<sup>82</sup> These numbers do not include married women working part time who were not eligible to be insured, and therefore the final number of working women may have been even higher.<sup>83</sup> The occupation authorities insisted on putting women who did not work or women who transferred from other sectors to work and did so with dedication, but not much enthusiasm. They viewed women as more of a hypothetical workforce. Their inferior work experience, strength, stamina and alleged lack of discipline were not met with understanding by some entrepreneurs.

Labour offices provided special 'technical advice' for companies that deliberately avoided hiring women.<sup>84</sup> Not employing women meant not strengthening the productive power of companies that were important for the war effort. Civil servants therefore tried to give them lower workloads and additional benefits compared with men. An argument for not hiring married women and mothers was that they had to care for family members – spouses, children and other members of the household. Employing women in full-time jobs might create instability, households would be impossible to run, and poor hygiene and health complications would ensue. For these reasons, working women had special working conditions, such as a reduced work week, for example. In his letter to President of the Central Association of Industry Bernard Adolf from June 1943,

<sup>82</sup> NA, Reich Protector's Office – State Secretary Collection (ÚŘP-ST Coll.), Archival Sign 109-11/21, Carton 138: Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit an die Herren Leiter der Arbeitsämter, Betr. Fraueneinsatz 1943.

<sup>83</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 971: Circular of the ÚSP No. 1463: Insurance for married women assigned to work under Government Decree No. 154/42.

<sup>84</sup> NA, ÚŘP-ST Coll., Archival Sign 109-11/21, Carton 138: Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit an die Herren Leiter der Arbeitsämter, Betr. Fraueneinsatz 1943.



**Figure 4.1** Protectorate poster that reads 'I too will go to work', which was intended to fully normalise the idea of the working woman. Source: Military Central Archive – Military Historical Archive, Prague, Poster Collection 1939–45.

Protectorate Minister of Labour and the Economy Walter Bertsch laid out the following five priorities: a general preference for women who ran their own household and had children under fourteen years of age; four hours per week would be set aside for shopping if this couldn't happen on their lunch breaks or on the weekend; once a month women would be entitled to one day off for washing; this 'free time' – time for household chores – would only be granted to women who worked at least forty-eight hours a week; and the principle of performance pay also applied to women and therefore if they were dismissed they were placed on unpaid leave.<sup>85</sup> Protectorate authorities introduced 'washing days' in June 1943 as did other parts of the Reich. Although the name seems to denote something precise, their purpose was much more general: to provide time to take care of household duties.

The general contemporary opinion, reflected in professional journals, was that a woman's specific physical condition determined what job she would get. Being assigned a job according to one's individual abilities helped women adapt to the tempo of work and avoid accidents in the workplace, which, as we will see later, was one of the main problems faced by wartime industry. Women were given mostly ordinary positions in professions where it was presumed they could take the place of a man or where their strengths could be put to good use. Women were distributed very unevenly among the various sectors. In the technological sector, for example, they were employed in fine mechanics. The German State Minister for Bohemia and Moravia, a newly established position in 1943, decreed that women could also be employed as social workers in industrial plants.

The social worker in a factory is a new profession unknown to us a year ago, but already well established. Men are not well suited for this job, but it is simply made for a woman. It requires a subtle instinct, devotion to the work, alertness, self-denial, and patience.<sup>86</sup>

This old-new role for women emphasised the element of femininity, the delicate structure of a woman and her physical capabilities as a special disposition that a man could not compete with, but at the same time it elevated women's role in the building of the new social order.<sup>87</sup>

More than anything else, the economic hardship that forced women's inclusion in the industrial workforce was the most important impetus for their 'emancipation' and release from traditional gender roles. Women became gainfully employed, remunerated for their work and socially insured. Their salaries, however, despite the egalitarian rhetoric, were not equal to men's wages. Thus far,

<sup>85</sup> NA, ÚŘP-ST Coll., Archival Sign 109-11/21, Carton 138: Der Minister für Wirtschaft und Arbeit an den Präsident des Zentralverbandes der Industrie, Bernard Adolf, 19 June 1943.

<sup>86</sup> Marie Kindlová, 'Sociální pracovnice v závodě,' *Žena v povolání* (1944), No. 1, 8.

<sup>87</sup> Hromada, 'Zdravotně sociální předpoklady'.

nobody had been able to negotiate for equal pay and the National Socialists did not achieve this either. At least in the Protectorate, though, the difference between men's and women's salaries was in the order of only a few per cent.<sup>88</sup>

As women joined the workforce in great numbers, there was also a growing interest in providing support for them. Therefore, on 15 September 1942, the NOÚZ opened a Women's Division, whose staff originally worked in the union's Social Division.<sup>89</sup> The department, the first female body in the history of Czech trade unions, created a regional network of female clerks and organised visits to plants in order to become acquainted with conditions in the workplace. Their findings were not very good, reflecting the inadequacy of the social and health care provided by the companies they visited, which is likely why the Women's Division worked so diligently at the very beginning.<sup>90</sup> In the year 1943, for instance, it organised 830 public classes that were attended by almost 27,000 women.<sup>91</sup> The Women's Division organised cooking classes that taught busy working women how to make the most of their food rations in the kitchen. The 'normalised cooking classes' lasted up to six weeks and were taught once a week. It was not just about introducing the participants to rationalised housework. The division, in fact, focused its attention on a wide array of social, educational and training activities, the aim of which was to teach women to adapt to wartime conditions – 'to maintain family performance' while 'not weakening the sense of responsibility for the national economy'.<sup>92</sup> Through the lens of the national good it promoted working mothers without running into major complications. Strengthening women's representation in institutions such as the employee union or in industrial plants went hand in hand with the formation of a 'performance community' of Czechs, which is typical of the late Protectorate.

Although the establishment of the Women's Division was driven by social and nationalist motives, it was not a Czech initiative. The Liaison Office of the DAF at the Reich Protector's Office was actively involved in it and supervised the correct application of Reich procedures for care for working women. This was no coincidence, because the 'German woman' was supposed to appear as an icon for women in the Protectorate. This can be observed in the above-mentioned social workers attached to individual factories as proposed by the union's Women's

<sup>88</sup> Stanislav Kokoška shouldn't have been surprised about the significant differences between men's and women's wages. The comparison of the situation in industrial plants in the Protectorate between 1939 and 1943 that he provides shows that women's wages grew from 64 per cent to 74 per cent of men's wages. Janák and Kokoška, *Průmyslové dělnictvo v českých zemích*, 219. For more, see Jakub Rákosník and Radka Šustrová, *Rodina v zájmu státu. Populační růst a instituce manželství v českých zemích 1918–1989* (Prague 2016), 187.

<sup>89</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll., Carton 236: The establishment of a separate women's division.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. reports in VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll., Carton 236.

<sup>91</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll., Carton 236, Sekr. Marie Kytková: Die Frauenabteilung.

<sup>92</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll., Carton 236, M. Waltera: 'Proč jest třeba usměrniti ženy v oboru domácího hospodářství.'

Division. To fill these positions, women familiar with the environment they were to be sent to, such as former plant workers, were selected and subsequently trained by the union. But the social workers' job description and relationship to factory work councils was not clearly defined for a while and this led to internal disputes. A social worker's task was to help workers maintain the normal running of their households, especially if one of them was ill, injured or something sudden had befallen another family member. In addition to health care for the pregnant and the sick, social workers also supervised discipline in the workplace. Combining nursing and disciplinary activities confirmed the social workers' purposeful and functional agenda, which was typical for the Nazi occupation.<sup>93</sup> Social workers helped, for example, with insurance applications, requests for special leave to get married and requests for job transfers due to medical advice.<sup>94</sup>

The war had an adverse effect on working conditions and on the number of workplace accidents. The establishment of special social institutions similar to the Women's Division of the National Trade Union Headquarters can therefore be interpreted as a reaction to this situation and an effort to prevent or at least minimise its impacts. Occupational safety in the Protectorate and the changes in accident insurance are the subject of the following section.

### **Occupational safety and accident insurance**

Healthy, strong individuals were most valued by the German commissioners in their recruitment drives. The persistent labour shortage and the effort to rationalise workforce distribution as much as possible increased the market's interest in those who had been temporarily excluded from employment due to injury or illness. Increasing work demands thus logically made accident and workplace protection plans, the regulation of accident insurance and occupational medicine more attractive. There were systemic reasons for this. Compared with German laws, both Czech and German experts were aware of the flaws in how accident insurance was regulated in Czechoslovakia.<sup>95</sup> While in Germany accident insurance covered all trades with the exception of business and had almost thirty million clients among civil servants and workers, in former Czechoslovakia only machine work and machinists were eligible for accident insurance. Its extension to handicraft trades, agriculture and forestry was expected. In agriculture, workers often took the opportunity to take out insurance policies with private

<sup>93</sup> 'Sociální pracovnice v závodech', *Národní práce* (14 April 1944).

<sup>94</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll., Carton 236: The ZVD's warning to working women. Hradec Králové, 5 May 1944.

<sup>95</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 971: František Ježek, Social insurance and measures in the Reich and in our country; Gruppe II 4 c 730/41: Aufbau der Sozialversicherung im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren (1941/2).



companies but were at a disadvantage in terms of their legal entitlement. There were valid objective reasons for thinking about ways to improve the situation, that is, to expand the range of clients via an amendment of the law. It could be assumed that this new regulation would satisfy both expert and political circles, as it would extend protections to other Czech workers (the protection of the 'Czech nation') and reduce the risk of their becoming unemployed (the priority of the wartime industry), which was amenable to the occupation authorities.

German accident insurance was better equipped, and Czech experts appreciated its complexity.<sup>96</sup> Besides the much higher benefits it offered, German accident insurance companies provided treatment and support during an insurance holder's illness. For the first thirteen weeks, an insured person received sickness benefits from his or her accident insurance plan, followed by a disability pension. Accident insurance also included job support, which consisted of professional training sessions after the accident so that the worker could more easily return to his or her job, get a new job in the same field or be retrained for another profession. German laws did not leave out the children who were dependent on the pensioner. The Czech equivalent were the so-called childcare allowances, which were only offered as part of disability, old-age, fraternal and pension insurance. The German occupational safety and immediate assistance was also far more modern than what was offered in the Protectorate. To provide these services, German companies spent around RM 10 million annually on these policies.<sup>97</sup>

At the time, German accident insurance was considered as the main model for the amendments to the Czechoslovak Accident Act. In the words of the former Czechoslovak Minister of Public Health and Sport and, from February 1939, the director of the General Pension Institute in Prague, František Ježek:

German accident insurance can be a guide to our accident insurance laws in order to achieve better regulations, something that we have been waiting for in our country since just after the revolution.<sup>98</sup>

Waiting for reform for more than twenty years must have been frustrating. In Ježek's comparative critical analysis of social insurance in both countries, which was based on the lecture he gave at the Union of Retail Workers, Tradesmen, and Transport Employees in Prague on 29 January 1940, Ježek did not ingratiate himself with the German officers.<sup>99</sup> We can therefore consider his words as

<sup>96</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 971, František Ježek, Social insurance and measures in the Reich and in our country, p. 6.

<sup>97</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 971, František Ježek, Social insurance and measures in the Reich and in our country, p. 7.

<sup>98</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 971, František Ježek, Social insurance and measures in the Reich and in our country.

<sup>99</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 971: Der Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren and die Gruppe Arbeits- und Sozialangelegenheiten beim Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren, Betr. Broschüre über Versicherungsverhältnisse im Altreich und im Protektorat, 1 March 1940.

fairly credible and honest, and they also reflected the intellectual environment of Protectorate experts and politicians. Ježek was not alone in thinking this way, moreover. According to Doctor of Mining Engineering and associate professor at the University of Mining in Ostrava (North Moravia) Petr Otásek, the shift towards modern occupational safety and its rational management would have a significant macroeconomic effect.<sup>100</sup> The national economic requirement was to ensure a retirement pension payment amount that would depend on a worker's performance. Illness or injury reduced the contribution of individuals to this system, creating a situation in which an individual became a 'passive actor that needed to be sustained by the rest of the workers.'<sup>101</sup> This anti-socialist and anti-solidarity argument was not based on Otásek's idea of the targeted destruction of the social security system, but on the effort to minimise economic losses as much as possible. Otásek relied on the statistics of the Workers' Accident Insurance Company, where he worked as an inspector during the Nazi occupation. Between 1887 and 1935, fatal accidents among employed workers decreased from sixty-five to thirty-seven per 100,000 accidents per year, but serious accidents that were eligible for compensation, or a disability pension, rose from 650 to 2,460 cases.<sup>102</sup> As a result, the insurance company's costs increased, and the flow of industrial production was significantly affected.

This development could have been caused by a whole host of factors.<sup>103</sup> Defective factory equipment, poor management, insufficient worker training, or worker incapacity and error could have been prevented by introducing and complying with safety regulations that would have established proper guidelines and trained the individual to perform his duties responsibly. These measures (accident prevention) would benefit everyone, from the worker whose health would be protected, to the company whose accident burden would be lowered, and insurance policy holders would save money. As in the case of illness, which will be addressed in [Chapter Five](#), greater emphasis was placed on prevention of accidents rather than post-accident care. It could be assumed that changes in

<sup>100</sup> Petr Otásek, born 20 May 1886 in Křimice near Pilsen (Western Bohemia). In 1905 he graduated from the University of Mining in Příbram (Central Bohemia), and in 1922 he defended his doctoral dissertation and acquired the title Doctor of Mining Engineering. He worked as a mining inspector while studying for his doctorate. In the academic year 1939/40, he was an unpaid associate professor at the University of Mining in Příbram, where he lectured on accident prevention. At the same time, he worked as an inspector for the Workers' Accident Insurance Company for the Czech community in Prague. He published works on topics such as insurance and the steel industry. Archive of the University of Mining, University of Mining in Příbram Collection.

<sup>101</sup> Petr Otásek, 'Ochrana před úrazem povinností celku!', *Práce a hospodářství* (1940), No. 7, 117.

<sup>102</sup> Otásek, 'Ochrana před úrazem povinností celku!', p. 118.

<sup>103</sup> Otásek's texts published during the occupation drew attention to the imminent threat in various industries: *Ochrana před úrazem v lomech* (Prague 1940); *Nebezpečí pádu do výtahových šachet* (Prague 1941); *Svařuj bezpečně* (Prague 1942); and his most comprehensive work on the occasion of a major amendment to accident insurance: *Zabraňte úrazům! Úrazová zábrana v podnicích průmyslových a živnostenských* (Prague 1944).

accident insurance policies, unlike what the authorities had to do during the tense time of total war, did not create much friction between Protectorate officials and the occupiers. While Czechs looked for an opportunity to improve accident insurance in the Protectorate, the German side mainly reacted to the further declarations and development of the war, which made the extension of protection and security that much more urgent.

Concentrating on employee health care since the beginning of the occupation, authorities wanted to establish favourable working conditions and eliminate situations in which a worker's health and life could be endangered. Their planned changes could be considered progressive for the time.<sup>104</sup> The Second World War necessitated a number of improvements in accident prevention and post-accident care, but at the same time it became the main cause of violations of the newly adopted regulations. Critical moments during the war, especially in its second half, resulted in supply shortages – although work clothes and shoes were essential according to the valid standards – and increased the workload of some departments. The worst impact was probably felt by patients, whose claims of poor health were often not believed. A worker on accident or sickness benefits was continuously checked and his or her health was subject to repeated official review. I will discuss work disability at length in [Chapter Five](#), but the point I would like to make here is that another solution for workers on disability was to reassign them to other jobs, which did occur in some cases.<sup>105</sup>

Although the authorities gradually tightened the labour laws, this did not have the desired effect of minimising accidents and injuries. In fact, in 1940 the Workers' Accident Insurance Company registered 54,388 accidents and sixty-six cases of workplace illness, but between the second half of 1942 and the second half of 1943 the number of accidents increased by 25 per cent according to the records of the Reich Protector's Office.<sup>106</sup> In the first period, 85,524 accidents were reported, of which 61,166 were injuries sustained on the job; in the second half of the following year there were 107,089 accidents, of which 75,320 occurred at the workplace.<sup>107</sup> Accident statistics were closely monitored, especially from the end of

<sup>104</sup> Jaromír Tauchen lists several specialised legal regulations: The Decree of the Minister of Social Affairs and Health No. 54/1940 Coll. from 19 December 1939, which prescribed a uniform identification mark for finished paint and paste products containing 2 per cent or more of lead, or Government Decree no. 181/1940, which established the regulations for the health and safety protection of workers who worked with compressed air. Tauchen considers the latter to be 'relatively progressive' for its time, for it regulated the means of employee health protection. Tauchen, *Práce a její právní regulace*, 187.

<sup>105</sup> Here I am referring to the example offered by Tauchen, although it is a relatively specific situation. A female worker undergoing menopause was working at the Hakauf & Synové rubber factory in Hradec Králové (Eastern Bohemia). In 1943/4, the woman experienced nausea repeatedly and after finding out that these cases required an individual approach, the authorities proposed to reassign such women to less demanding jobs with no set wages and lower risk of injury. Tauchen, *Práce a její právní regulace*, 189.

<sup>106</sup> 'Úrazová pojišťovna dělnická pro Čechy v roce 1940', *Práce a hospodářství* (1941), No. 1, 16.

<sup>107</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1085: Bericht über den Stand der Krankenversicherung, 19 April 1944, p. 4.

1943, when it became mandatory to report fatal, serious and mass accidents to the labour offices.<sup>108</sup> However, the continuous increase in reported injuries can also be observed throughout the interwar period, so in this respect the Protectorate years were no exception.<sup>109</sup> The reason for this unfortunate development was most likely the hurried work in important industrial plants, where particular attention was paid to productivity and worker overload was ignored, as evidenced by the increase in work shifts.<sup>110</sup> Changing rooms and showers were kept, but the higher pace of work had a direct impact on the application of regulations pertaining to working hours and leave. In other words, suspending leave and extending work hours in the interest of production did not pose a major problem for senior officials.

As with accident prevention, the authorities were also interested in accident insurance, specifically in benefit regulations and the scope of protection they provided. As elsewhere, the first order of business was dealing with the upward direction that prices and wages were taking. Annual earnings that would make one eligible for a pension increased. Up to then, the limit had been K 12,000. In 1938, almost 74 per cent of the injured satisfied this requirement, 22 per cent earned between 12,000 and 18,000 crowns and were insured, and less than 3 per cent had an income of up to K 24,000.<sup>111</sup> As a result, the pension amount was not commensurate with the loss of a salary. According to Czech trade unionists, this situation required a reform of the Accident Insurance Act by expanding factories' insurance obligations and increasing benefits.

The first amendment of the Accident Insurance Act came into effect in July 1940.<sup>112</sup> It mainly changed the wage limit from 12,000 to 18,000 crowns, newly reintroduced pensions for apprentices after they reached the age of twenty-one, and adjusted disability pensions issued before 1 July 1940. Finally, the regulation terminated pensions for persons with a maximum workload loss of 10 per cent two years after the end of treatment. Pensioners would receive a one-year pension as severance pay. Although this termination of pensions brought small savings, the amendment to the Accident Act was accompanied by a 10 per cent increase in premiums.<sup>113</sup> Ensuring balanced revenues and expenditures was important not

<sup>108</sup> Official Document no. 2 from 4 January 1944, p. 18: Decree of the Minister of the Economy and Labour on the obligation to report fatal, serious, and mass accidents.

<sup>109</sup> In 1913, the Workers' Accident Insurance Company for Bohemia in Prague registered a total of 26,000 accidents, in 1918 24,000, in 1921 35,273, and in 1925 53,506. *Stanovisko Úrazové pojišťovny dělnické pro Čechy v Praze*, table 1.

<sup>110</sup> An example is the Válcovny plechu a. s. plant in Lískovec near Frýdek (Northern Moravia), where there were 492,807 shifts in 1936, 677,884 in 1937, 587,703 in 1938, and 729,096 in 1939. *Úrazům nutno čelit* (Karlova huť 1940), 24.

<sup>111</sup> Jaromír Hlaváček, 'Zvýšení úrazových důchodů', *Práce a hospodářství* (1940), No. 2, 32.

<sup>112</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government Regulation no. 216/1940 Coll. on workers' accident insurance.

<sup>113</sup> 'Úrazová pojišťovna dělnická pro Čechy v roce 1940', *Práce a hospodářství* (1941), No. 1, 16.

only due to the growing number of accidents, but also due to the second intention announced by the NOŮZ, that is, the extension of the insurance obligation. We cannot assume that the Czech union played a more significant role in the further debate on the development of accident insurance, but at least under Antonín Zelenka's leadership it provided solid professional assistance to tackle questions related to the social insurance legislation.

A more comprehensive amendment was passed three years later. In the estimation of German experts, the government's decree on accident insurance, from 21 December 1943,<sup>114</sup> had the parameters of a complete reconstruction of a functioning system.<sup>115</sup> A leading figure in the occupation administration, Karl H. Frank, discussed it at a meeting with a representative of the NSDAP Liaison Office, a commissioner of the party office, the central office of the DAF, the Sudetenland and the Lower Austria Gauleiters and a representative of the Reich Protector's Office department, which took place on 13 and 14 December 1943 in Prague. Frank spoke vigorously about the legislation, saying that it would be 'fully politically unacceptable for one of the large groups of workers in the Protectorate to be denied retirement'.<sup>116</sup> There was thus a certain political interest at stake, but it was likely nothing more than a social offer made to the Czech workers. Although the new regulation was very much wanted, considerable controversy, as happened in interwar Czechoslovakia, was caused by the expected financial costs. The new regulation would increase spending by K 37 million due to the substantial change buried in the regulation that significantly expanded compulsory accident insurance.<sup>117</sup> It now applied to a much larger group of yet uninsured persons, and as a result there was a significant increase in benefits, the amount of which depended on the highest achievable earnings, which increased from the original K 18,000 to K 72,000.

There is clearly a comparison with Germany, where the new Reich standard set an upper limit of RM 7,200, that is, K 72,000.<sup>118</sup> Protectorate accident insurance was now suddenly extended to agricultural and forestry workers and the exclusion of accidents caused by a worker's handling of machinery no longer applied. Agricultural entrepreneurs and their families were now covered by accident

<sup>114</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government Regulation no. 1/1944 Coll. on accident insurance. Note: the provisions of Article 1 b. 13 § 7b came into effect on 1 July 1940.

<sup>115</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 971: Das neue Sozialversicherungswerk für die Landwirtschaft Böhmens und Mährens [1945].

<sup>116</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1016: Der deutsche Staatsminister für Böhmen und Mähren, Betr. Reigerungsverordnung über die Unfallversicherung, 18 December 1943.

<sup>117</sup> According to the information of the Workers' Accident Insurance Company for Bohemia in Prague, expenditures were to increase from the current K 7.6 million to K 45 million. NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1016: Arbeiter-Unfallversicherungsanstalt für Böhmen in Prag and as Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit – zu Handen des Herrn Oberregierungsrats Schneider, 7 December 1943.

<sup>118</sup> The currency conversion from Reichsmark to Protectorate crowns was pegged to the value 1:10.

insurance.<sup>119</sup> Although the publicly stated reason for improving protections in the event of workplace accidents was the safety and care of the nation, there were also specific systemic motives. Numerous agricultural workplace accidents weighed heavily on the health care insurance system since this was the source of the benefit payments. The German director of the Central Insurance Agency, Franz Koreis, complained about this situation, begging Government Councillor Josef Schneider to include agricultural labourers among those covered by compulsory accident insurance.<sup>120</sup> The extension of the coverage entailed by the Accident Act was supposed to relieve the burden of the health insurance companies, but it would of course be felt all the more by companies that had to pay the premiums.<sup>121</sup>

It is significant that the Protectorate regulation followed only a few months after the amendment in Germany in March 1942.<sup>122</sup> The surviving correspondence between the NSDAP Central Office in Prague and the Reich Protector's Office from the end of 1941 reveals that Reich officials were convinced of the necessity of coordinating legislative developments in the Protectorate with those in the Reich. However, they did not know in advance what the wording of the sixth amendment would be, which is also why the final amendment to the Protectorate Accident Act was postponed by several months and was not adopted earlier, when it would have reflected the rhetoric of the first years of the occupation.<sup>123</sup> Accident insurance in the Reich was not for individual employees but comprised collective insurance for all employees of certain companies, as had been the case in the Protectorate, and the new Reich regulation tried to fix this. The German experts focused on policyholders instead of factories and the scope of accident insurance expanded once more. There was also a terminological shift from 'trade accident insurance' (*Gewerbe-Unfallversicherung*) to 'general accident insurance' (*Allgemeine Unfallversicherung*). The current 'company insurance' system (*Betriebsversicherung*) replaced 'personal insurance' (*Personenversicherung*), and

<sup>119</sup> The scope of the insurance, that is, insurance of all employees in predetermined enterprises and factories, was stated in the nineteen points of § 1 (abbreviated): 1) factories, smelters, shipyards, 2) mines, 3) quarries and surface mines, 4) construction companies, 5) stonemason trades, 6) all railways operations, 7) mobile power machinery, 8) transport companies, 9) trade companies operating welding machinery, steam boilers, other propulsion machinery powered by natural forces or animals, 10) blacksmiths and butcher shops, 11) warehouses, 12) high-altitude and street work, 13) work with explosives, 14) theatres, 15) fire brigades, 16) military enterprises, 17) hospitals and other health institutions, 18) veterinary institutes, 19) agricultural and forestry enterprises.

<sup>120</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1016: Zentralversicherungsanstalt, Oberregierungsrat Dr. Franz Koreis, Direktor an Herrn Oberregierungsrat Josef Schneider im Amt des Reichsprotectors, 20 June 1941.

<sup>121</sup> Bernard Adolf, the President of the Central Confederation of Industry, complained very sharply about this fact to the Minister of Labour Walter Bertsch at the beginning of January 1944. NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1016: Der Präsident, Zentralverband der Industrie an den Minister für Wirtschaft und Arbeit Herrn Dr. Walter Bertsch, 10 January 1944.

<sup>122</sup> RGBl. I, 1942, p. 107: Sechste Gesetz über Änderungen in der Unfallversicherung.

<sup>123</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1016: NSDAP Parteiverbindungsstelle beim Reichsprotector and den Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren, Gruppe II 4, Betr. Arbeiterunfallversicherung, 25 November 1941.

‘company accident’ (*Betriebsunfall*) replaced the more general ‘work accident’ (*Arbeitsunfall*). According to Reich Minister of Labour Franz Seldte, the aim of these systemic changes was primarily to match labour at the home front with the mobilised army at the front for the benefit of the Third Reich. It was also supposed to have a significant psychological effect. A worker knew that, in the event of an accident or his death, his family would be taken care of, and this therefore removed the psychological burden from the insured person and allowed him to concentrate on his work.<sup>124</sup>

The adoption of the entire scope of the insurance obligation that copied the Reich regulation could, paradoxically, be considered a positive act by the occupation administration in the Protectorate, although German officials were evidently following utilitarian logic and political pragmatism. The adoption of the ‘progressive’ amendment of December 1943 greatly improved accident insurance policies, but the reality was not so simple. Although the regulation took effect, accident insurance for agricultural and forestry enterprises was required by a regulation issued by Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Adolf Hrubý. Though there was a relatively broad consensus among the administrative authorities on what direction accident insurance should take since these were ‘politically and socially extremely significant’ issues, as one of the officials of the Reich Protector’s Office noted, procedural complications prevented its complete implementation.<sup>125</sup> An interesting situation arose as a result, and they failed to reach an agreement on the necessary regulation that would enforce accident insurance in agriculture and forestry due to the reluctance of both sides, the Reich Protector’s Office Reich and Protectorate Minister Adolf Hrubý. Although the amendment to the Accident Act clearly defined who would be covered by this insurance and even made it possible to expand it further by special decree, one-fifth of the workers in the Protectorate were not insured against workplace accidents before 7 September 1945, when the post-war Czechoslovak regulation came into force.<sup>126</sup>

The German officer, joined by Hrubý, conditioned his consent on the adoption of another regulation, the implementation of a parallel amendment to the pension, disability and illness insurance for self-employed farmers. However, this did not correspond to social insurance legislation in other Reich territories. In the Reich Protector’s Office, it was whispered that the Minister of Agriculture had a ‘strong relationship with private insurance companies’ or close ties to the holders of commercial insurance policies who would be the most financially affected by the new

<sup>124</sup> Reidegeld, *Staatliche Sozialpolitik in Deutschland*, Volume 2, 502.

<sup>125</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1016: Der Abteilungsleiter V an SS-Obergruppenführer Staatsminister Frank, Betr. Inkraftsetzen der landwirtschaftlichen Unfallversicherung, 10 October 1944.

<sup>126</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak Republic, Decree of the Minister of Labour Protection and Social Care No. 64/1945 Coll. on accident insurance for agricultural and forestry companies.

regulation and whose interests Hrubý allegedly indirectly upheld.<sup>127</sup> In the dispute over social insurance in the agriculture sector, as the unfolding situation can be characterised, Hrubý played an important role almost up to the very demise of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia on 8 May 1945. According to the memoirs of former Minister Vladislav Klumpar, written during the war, Hrubý was pursuing his own personal interests when he pushed for the adoption of a government decree that would introduce illness, old-age and disability insurance that would take effect on 1 May 1945.<sup>128</sup> However, for obvious reasons – the liberation of the Bohemian lands came on 8 May – this law could not be implemented. Apart from improving his personal reputation through the passage of a last-minute law, we can only speculate what was at stake for Hrubý. In the last months of the occupation, Hrubý tried to compensate for several years of public engagement in prominent Protectorate functions by assisting in negotiating the transfer of power in the Protectorate into Czech hands.

### **From work to retirement and back: old-age and disability insurance**

Accident prevention or subsequent post-accident care that enabled the worker to return to work as quickly as possible were among the regime's expected priorities due to the growing demands of the arms industry. Whether Czech officials were interested in making changes to the complex pension system can be deduced from the value of the average miner's and worker's incomes, which in 1937 were respectively only 24 per cent and 33 per cent of the country's average salary.<sup>129</sup> Old-age pensions were insufficient, and there were efforts to find ways to raise them. The basic argument Czechs could rely on was the 'protection of the nation' and the publicly declared attention to the demands of Czech workers, which aimed to maintain social stability within the Protectorate.

In their work on these reforms, Czech politicians were not far behind the Germans, but the Reich project – albeit only on paper at that point – took on such ambitious dimensions that the Czechs could not keep up with it. It was laced with uncompromising National Socialist paternalistic egalitarianism. According to a

<sup>127</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 1016: Der Abteilungsleiter V an SS-Obergruppenführer Staatsminister Frank, Betr. Inkraftsetzen der landwirtschaftlichen Unfallversicherung, 10 October 1944.

<sup>128</sup> National Museum Archives in Prague (ANM), Vladislav Klumpar Coll., Archival Sign 5/6, Carton 1: Memoirs, p. 4; Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government Regulation no. 29/1945 Coll. on farmers' social insurance.

<sup>129</sup> Average wage values should be taken with a grain of salt, as the authors of the publication *Důchodové zabezpečení v ČSSR (1930–1956)* point out, but they nevertheless reveal much about reality, especially in comparison with private employees, whose average pension in 1937 was 65.6 per cent of the average salary. Jeřábková and Salemanová, *Vývoj důchodového zabezpečení*, 43.



memorandum dated March 1939, social insurance for old age and disability was to be replaced by a new project based on 'awareness and honour'. A programme called the 'German Protection of the Nation' called for a certain percentage of one's salary to be used for these social benefits and, later, for the entitlement to an old-age pension paid out in uniform annuities. The reform of the old-age pension system was one of the flagships of the DAF. According to its leader, Robert Ley, it would be a generous benefit for the entire German nation. Behind this public stance, however, as Marie-Luise Recker has noted, was increased German zeal and willingness to work.<sup>130</sup>

In the Protectorate, the combination of the principle of 'protection of the nation' and the 'performance-oriented community' is less contradictory than it may seem. The coincidence of the demands for labour mobilisation and the protection of the population was neither a surprise nor in conflict with the policy of Czech authorities on the one hand and Germans on the other. Therefore, returning to the issue I introduced above, we can identify three basic motives for the authorities to adjust pensions: firstly, compensating for low pensions to prevent instability; secondly, improving the standard of living of pensioners as an incentive for those still gainfully employed; and thirdly, motivating interest among old-age and disability pensioners as they were an increasingly important group of untapped labour.

Here is some data to consider: in Czechoslovakia in 1937 the average number of people receiving pensions was more than three million. Most of these people had workers' insurance, which registered about 2.1 million insured persons.<sup>131</sup> Out of the total number of paid-out benefits that same year, the number of old-age and disability pensions was as high as 69 per cent and only 12 per cent were widows' pensions. Moreover, when comparing pensions and workers' insurance payouts, from the General Pension Institute in the case of the former and the Central Insurance Institute in the case of the latter, their values were steadily increasing throughout the 1930s, reaching 71,000 pensions for the General Pension Institute and 271,000 for the Central Insurance Institute.<sup>132</sup> The roll-out of benefits was accelerated after Munich. There was a sharp increase in old-age and disability pensions as well as in average orphans' and widows' pensions. According to the nominal values recorded by the Central Insurance Institute, between 1937 and 1945 disability pensions increased by 292 per cent, old-age pensions by 338 per cent, widows' pensions by 338 per cent and orphans' pensions by 570 per cent.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>130</sup> Recker, *Nationalsozialistische Sozialpolitik*, 113.

<sup>131</sup> In that year, the average number of pensioners was 93,800 paid for by the state's insurance, 110,400 paid for by the mining insurance, 457,400 paid for by private insurance, 2,124,600 paid for by workers' insurance. Jeřábková and Salemanová, *Vývoj důchodového zabezpečení*, 29.

<sup>132</sup> Jeřábková and Salemanová, *Vývoj důchodového zabezpečení*, 32–3 and 36.

<sup>133</sup> *Dvacet let Ústřední sociální pojišťovny* (Prague 1946), 54.

The primary reasons for the adjustment of pension payouts were rising costs and inflation, which could have potentially disrupted the relatively stable conditions in the Protectorate.

These changes affected all sectors of the pension and disability disbursement system during the Nazi occupation. A divorced woman could now receive welfare benefits after the death of her ex-husband who worked as a state employee.<sup>134</sup> New regulations increased pensions for new pensioners starting from January 1944, without touching the pensions of those who had become eligible to receive them prior to that date (old pensioners). By abolishing the pension contribution, which had been in effect since the 1920s, state and public employees no longer had to pay for their pensions.<sup>135</sup>

In the early days of the occupation, pension insurance for private employees in clerical jobs unsurprisingly came with more favourable conditions than those offered to workers and miners.<sup>136</sup> This was due to the pre-First World War political tradition of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, whose social legislation continued to be applied in Czechoslovakia with certain modifications after 1918.<sup>137</sup> In practice, it involved around 400,000 insured persons, whose work was predominantly mental rather than physical,<sup>138</sup> which was five times less than workers' insurance.<sup>139</sup> Pension insurance was provided by the General Pension Institute together with twenty-eight smaller institutions, while in Germany it was administered by the Reich Insurance Institute for Salaried Employees alone. The basic precondition for granting someone's right to be insured was his or her employment, and the place of employment had to be within the Protectorate. Work that took place outside the Protectorate, but still within the German Reich, was classified as a temporary posting abroad at the instigation of the employer, which did not significantly affect one's insurance obligation.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>134</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government Regulation No. 243/1942 Coll. on welfare benefits after the death of wives married to Protectorate employees.

<sup>135</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Act No. 103/1926 Coll. and its amendment by government decrees No. 15-19/1944 Coll.

<sup>136</sup> In Czech: Pojištění soukromých zaměstnanců ve vyšších službách.

<sup>137</sup> Specifically, Act No. 1/1907 Coll. and the imperial order No. 138/1914 Coll.

<sup>138</sup> Officials, office workers in general, employees in the editorial offices, administrations and magazines, employees of various companies (theatre, entertainment, exhibition) and institutes (educational, medical, charitable), business assistants, business travellers and persons performing mainly supervision, professional decisions on the acceptance of goods, artistic and drawing work and all private employees were explicitly subject to this compulsory insurance.

<sup>139</sup> In 1937, the average number of persons in pension insurance was 457,400, while there were 2,124,600 insured persons in workers' insurance. In 1940, there were only 300,000 insured persons, while in Germany (including Austria and the Sudetenland) there were almost five million people insured in pension insurance. Jeřábková and Salemanová, *Vývoj důchodového zabezpečení*, 29; NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 971: F. Ježek, *Sociální pojištění a opatření v Říši a u nás*, p. 11.

<sup>140</sup> O. Melichar, *Pensijní pojištění soukromých zaměstnanců ve vyšších službách* (Prague 1943), 13f.

During the Nazi occupation, insurance premiums and pensions increased, and, in the meantime, extraordinary benefits were provided temporarily to help when pensions became insufficient due to rising prices. This was also the case for pension insurance and one-off benefits rolled out between 1939 and 1941, years during which annual pensions did not exceed the limit allowed by law.<sup>141</sup> Due to the continuous rise in prices, this was a temporary solution that significantly modified the amendment to the Pension Insurance Act prepared by the Ministry of Social and Health Administration in 1940. It aimed to adjust the financial basis of pension insurance and to valorise pensions paid.<sup>142</sup>

The amendment was passed by the Protectorate government in the following year. Coming into effect in June 1941, it changed benefits and reimbursement and at the same time attempted to financially rehabilitate the General Pension Institute.<sup>143</sup> In this difficult financial situation, it was intended to make it easier to eliminate the disparity between benefits and adjusted premiums, prevent speculative insurance, tighten the conditions for being put on the waiting list and becoming eligible for retirement, and remove benefits for women who retired at the age of fifty-five.<sup>144</sup> According to government councillor Josef Schneider, the previous pension insurance structure in Czechoslovakia was literally 'wrong', as he stated in his article for the journal *Die Wirtschaft* (Economy).<sup>145</sup> Comparing it with insurance in the Reich, he thought that it was overly generous, for example due to the entitlement to retirement (five years earlier than in Germany for men and ten years earlier for women). For more than 53 per cent of insured women, their pension exceeded the premiums they paid into the system by 500 per cent. As a result, the regulation in question burdened employees and employers alike with higher premiums but at the same time increased the savings of the General Pension Institute. Less benevolence in the assessment of whether someone was eligible for retirement or a disability pension meant that those who could prove they were incapable of continuing in their previous profession could no longer receive these benefits. Now, they had to prove that they could not pursue any other officially sanctioned profession.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Government Regulations No. 329/1939 Coll., 428/1940 Coll., 169/1941 Coll.

<sup>142</sup> NA, PMR Coll., Carton 4155, Folio 852: Explanatory Memorandum to the Government Decree on One-Time Extraordinary Pension Supplements.

<sup>143</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Government Regulation No. 316/1941 Coll., which again amended the Pension Insurance of Private Employees in Upper-Level Positions Act. Note: the provisions of Article III shall become effect as of 1 June 1941.

<sup>144</sup> NA, PMR Coll., Carton 4157, Folio 897: Outline of a government regulation that again amended the Pension Insurance of Private Employees in Upper-Level Positions Act.

<sup>145</sup> Translated into Czech and published as Vrchní vládní rada Schneider (Praha), 'Nové základy pensijního pojištění. Základna vypočítávání příspěvků a důchodů', *Sociální reforma* (20 September 1941), Nos 17–18, 137.

The government of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia offered a repeated annual subsidy of 90 million crowns to implement the pension insurance amendment. The situation was to be reassessed in 1945, when the supplement would be newly determined. Insufficient insurance coverage from the premiums already paid by insurance policyholders required a revaluation of social insurance holders due to this special contribution from public funds. Schneider aptly called this a 'greater social cohesion' of the Czech community.<sup>146</sup> His words allow us to imagine a working community which gradually replaced the *národní pospolitost* project in the middle of the war. One of the signs of this shift was a greater emphasis on solidarity within the nation. The government covered two-thirds of the costs of the improved pensions and the state increased its financial contribution to pension insurance.

Extraordinary contributions, as in the case of pension insurance, also included pensions for workers' disability and old-age insurance and miners' insurance. While in 1941 this pension insurance contribution amounted to K 600, in workers' and miners' insurance it was a one-time payment of a monthly pension. The difference was not negligible. In 1937, the average pension from pension insurance was K 787, from miners' insurance K 142 and from workers' insurance K 142.<sup>147</sup> The Ministry of Social and Health Administration was aware of the problem of low benefits for workers' and miners' insurance. The explanatory memorandum to the government decree on one-off contributions to workers' and miners' pensions shows that the rules that regulated benefits in Germany and especially in the Sudetenland served as the inspiration for Czech officials. In 1938, the average income in the Reich was RM 380 and pensions in the Sudetenland, after being increased in 1940, came to RM 290 per year. In contrast, the average disability and old-age pension from workers' insurance in the Protectorate was approximately K 2,500 per year, which was still K 400 less than in the seceded territory.<sup>148</sup> The main question that the Protectorate administration grappled with, however, was how to finance all these benefits. The Act on workers' disability and old-age insurance stipulated that the state cover one-quarter. To copy Germany, where the increase was paid in full by the state, was an impossible feat in the Protectorate.

The active approach of Czech officials encouraged by the reforms in Germany likely had a significant effect on the social security debate in the Protectorate. However, even here it was not in direct conflict with the Germans' interests. In addition to a more functional insurance system, matching insurance in the

<sup>146</sup> Vrchní vládní rada Schneider (Praha), 'Nové základy pensijního pojištění', p. 139.

<sup>147</sup> Jeřábková and Salemanová, *Vývoj důchodového zabezpečení*, 43.

<sup>148</sup> NA, PMR Coll., Carton 4155, Folio 857: Explanatory Memorandum to the Government Decree on One-Time Extraordinary Contributions to Disability and Old-Age Pensions for Workers' and Miners' Insurance (21 November 1940).

Protectorate to that in the Reich made it easier to control and coordinate. Officials approached adjustments to workers' and miners' insurance in the same way. Pension payouts, or rather the state contribution to them, had been increasing continually since 1940. The most obvious changes occurred after mid-January 1942, when a series of regulations governing pension security in the Protectorate came into force. These included, for example, the introduction of health insurance for pensioners insured through the Central Insurance Institute and their family members. Disability and old-age pensioners contributed 10 crowns per month, and so they were guaranteed free treatment from April 1942.<sup>149</sup> Authorities treated miners' insurance in a similar way.<sup>150</sup> At the same time, the financial composition of how pensions were financed was restructured. Instead of the current basic percentage combined with the Protectorate's contribution and the amount it increased by, as in the Reich it was reduced to its basic amount, valid for all classes at 1,560 crowns per year and financed exclusively from the Protectorate's coffers, and an increased sum and age surcharge (in total at least 720 crowns per year).<sup>151</sup> Savings would primarily be made for the other components of the pension insurance.<sup>152</sup>

Statistics paint a precise picture of what the changes meant to the Central Social Insurance Institute. However, both their availability and their credibility, especially as they were assembled during the Nazi occupation, is an issue for historians. I will therefore rely on a document used for the internal purposes of the Reich Protector's Office, which shows not only the growth of pensions, but also the dramatic increase in insurance costs as the agencies struggled to pay them. The number of benefits paid by the Central Social Insurance Institute rose from more than 150,000 in April 1939 to 212,000 in April 1943.<sup>153</sup> Disability pensions increased by 25 per cent, old-age pensions by 31 per cent, widows' pensions by 42 per cent and orphans' pensions by 25 per cent. Expenses in any given month went up even more – from not quite 19 million crowns in April 1939 to around 60 million crowns in April 1943.<sup>154</sup> This growth was continuous. Mining insurance costs rose

<sup>149</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government Regulation No. 99/1942 Coll. on illness insurance for pensioners of the Central Social Insurance Agency.

<sup>150</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government Regulation No. 100/1942 Coll. on the improvement of benefits from miners' insurance; here § 9.

<sup>151</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government Regulation No. 98/1942 Coll. on the establishment of pension insurance for workers. Note: article I item 1, 3, and 6 didn't take effect until 1 January 1943; here § 111.

<sup>152</sup> Václav Lenz, 'Nová zlepšení v dělnickém a hornickém pojištění', *Práce a hospodářství: Měsíčník pro hospodářství a sociální politiku* (1942), No. 2, 37.

<sup>153</sup> Compared with the interwar statistics, the number of insured persons who received pensions through social insurance decreased due to the seceded territories. The German population was now insured in the Reich.

<sup>154</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 980: Übersicht über die Leistungen des ZSVA im April 1939 und April 1943.

from K 19.6 million (March 1940) to K 31.2 million (September 1941) and from K 40.6 million (March 1942) to K 53 million (April 1942).<sup>155</sup>

The only provider of miners' insurance in Czechoslovakia, the Central Fraternal Credit Union, had found itself in dire financial straits since the Great Depression. In 1936, prudent fiscal measures and an updated pension waiting list led to a more stable situation.<sup>156</sup> Miners' insurance was then left alone until the occupation, when major changes awaited it between 1939 and 1944. Most of the regulations issued at the time concerned the increase in newly granted and already paid out miners' pensions.<sup>157</sup> The basic amount of the disability (old-age) benefit increased from K 300 (June 1936) to K 1,560 (April 1942).

The most significant regulation came into effect on 1 April 1943.<sup>158</sup> Miners' pension insurance was required by law and would now be automatic upon acquiring work or leaving a job. Except for the voluntary continuation of insurance, it was necessary to fill out an insurance application when one became employed. The benefits system also saw changes. The regulation was created in the year 1942 and its authors, German experts in the field, drafted it to match the laws in the Reich, which was then a template for the Protectorate amendment, especially in terms of organisation and the amount of benefits. The generosity of the Reich regulation reported by officials consisted of an increase in premiums, only a small part of which would be shouldered by the insured. Specifically, this was the contribution of 18.5 per cent calculated from wages; the employer covered 12 per cent and the insured person only 6.5 per cent.

In the Protectorate, the average contribution was 10.06 per cent of a miner's wage, while a simultaneous increase in premiums was expected to increase benefits. Although the refusal to increase benefits up to the level enjoyed by Reich nationals is not surprising, Schneider stressed the urgency and need to amend the Protectorate regulation on miners' insurance.

The current social benefit legal practice [in the Protectorate] is obsolete and unjust,<sup>159</sup> and it is therefore expedient to adopt the principles of the Reich's laws, but not as high as the level of the Reich's benefits. This would be possible if 15% came from wages and other contributions of the Protectorate, and, in this case, other social insurance holders amounting to 45 to 50 million crowns per year.<sup>160</sup>

<sup>155</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 980: Die Arbeiterinvalidenversicherung im Protektorat.

<sup>156</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Act No. 200/1936 Coll. on insurance through mining fraternal credit unions.

<sup>157</sup> For example, Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government Decree No. 167/1940, which amended the law on insurance through mining fraternal credit unions. Note: regulation § 82d parag. 3 came into effect on 25 May 1940, regulation § 82e parag. 1 came into effect on 1 November 1938; 100/1942 Coll. on the improvement of miners' insurance benefits.

<sup>158</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government Regulation. 70/1943 Coll. on insurance through mining fraternal credit unions.

<sup>159</sup> In German: 'veraltet und ungerecht'.

<sup>160</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 1019: Der Leiter der Sektion A IV (Josef Schneider) über den Herrn Generalreferenten, dem Herrn Minister, Betr. Besprechung über die Erhöhung der Löhne im Bergbau, hier: Ausbau der Rentenversicherung der Bergarbeiter, 13 October 1942.

The insured person could now contribute one-third of the premium payment, while the employer covered two-thirds. Schneider considered the contribution of the state (Protectorate) in the established amount to be bearable, or at least not as burdensome as the Reich's obligation to pay for mining insurance for Reich nationals. The result would increase pensions by 20–35 per cent in the case of 'old pensioners' and up to 80 per cent of wages for newly insured persons.<sup>161</sup>

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 show the structure of Schneider's new mining insurance. Table 4.1 shows the original miners' insurance compared with the miners' insurance in Germany, while Table 4.2 represents the newly determined shares of the insured and employer's participation in the paid-out benefits (the one-third paid by the insured person, two-thirds by employer).

		Insured person		Entrepreneur		Total
		Miners' insurance	Disability insurance	Miners' insurance	Disability insurance	
German Reich	Up to 30 June 1942	3	2.65	6	2.65	14.30
	from 1 July 1942	2	2.80	6	2.80	14.60
	from 1 October 1942	6.50		12		18.50
Protectorate		3.70		6.36		10.06

**Table 4.1** Make-up of premiums in mining pension insurance in the German Reich and in the Protectorate (% of wages)

Source: NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1019: Der Leiter der Sektion A IV (Josef Schneider) über den Herrn Generalreferenten, dem Herrn Minister, Betr. Besprechung über die Erhöhung der Löhne im Bergbau, hier: Ausbau der Rentenversicherung der Bergarbeiter, 13 October 1942.

	In the amount of (% of earnings)					
	12		14.3		15	
	Insured person	Entrepreneur	Insured person	Entrepreneur	Insured person	Entrepreneur
Share in %	4	8	4.77	9,53	5	10

**Table 4.2** The newly determined premium split

Source: NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1019: Der Leiter der Sektion A IV (Josef Schneider) über den Herrn Generalreferenten, dem Herrn Minister, Betr. Besprechung über die Erhöhung der Löhne im Bergbau, hier: Ausbau der Rentenversicherung der Bergarbeiter, 13 October 1942.

<sup>161</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1019: Der Leiter der Sektion A IV (Josef Schneider) über den Herrn Generalreferenten, dem Herrn Minister, Betr. Besprechung über die Erhöhung der Löhne im Bergbau, hier: Ausbau der Rentenversicherung der Bergarbeiter, 13 October 1942.

As a result of the reform, miners' insurance premiums came to 13.5 per cent of their salaries and later rose to 15 per cent.<sup>162</sup> Social insurance experts were united in their recommendation to amend miners' insurance by increasing the amount financed by the Protectorate. Their arguments were rational, emphasising the right step to take in the light of the agenda of the government's work drive. As stated in the government's explanatory memorandum on the establishment of workers' pension insurance:

The proposed measures are necessary and urgent, and so support for the Protectorate's workers and miners, whose hands are doing their part in the Protectorate's battle to save and recreate Europe, is adequate.<sup>163</sup>

In addition to the social stability of the Protectorate, there was also another, and likely a much more attractive, dimension of the agenda – returning pensioners to the workplace. As I stated previously, the labour market was already coming up short soon after the establishment of the Protectorate. The use of pensioners for essential public works or other jobs in sectors important for the war was first made possible by a regulation issued in June 1939. At this point, it had nothing to do with the total mobilisation of the labour force.<sup>164</sup> From 28 May 1940, labour offices were allowed to order pensioners to work in agriculture.<sup>165</sup> Although their earnings from this seasonal employment exceeded the legal limit, social insurance providers were not allowed to stop paying their public social insurance pensions.

It is significant that at the time the measure only covered agricultural work, while in other cases the existing restrictions continued to apply, and employment and salary inspections were carried out. In the following months and years, the measure would drastically expand its purview and allow pensioners to work while continuing to receive their pensions. This pragmatic approach, however populist it was in certain aspects, was not an anomaly in the Protectorate. In mid-January 1941, a new Reich Insurance Act came into effect. It stipulated that the re-employment of disability pension recipients would not affect the benefits they received.<sup>166</sup> If the goal was to strengthen the workforce in important industrial and agricultural sectors and to allow pensioners to enjoy both wages and their

<sup>162</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government Regulation No. 246/1944 Coll. on establishing insurance through fraternal credit unions. Note: regulation in article I, items 19–25, 42 and 43 came into effect on 1 April 1943, the regulation in article I, items 29, 30 and 39 on 4 April 1944, and the regulation in article I b. 13 letter b/ on 1 October 1944.

<sup>163</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 1019: Motivenbericht zur Regierungsverordnung über den Ausbau der Rentenversicherung der Arbeiter [30 March 1942].

<sup>164</sup> Regulation of the Central Social Insurance Institute no. 981: Employing pensioners in agricultural work, 27 June 1940.

<sup>165</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government Regulation No. 173/1940 Coll. on ordering the workforce to agricultural work.

<sup>166</sup> RGBl. I, 1941, p. 34: Gesetz über weitere Maßnahmen in der Reichsversicherung aus Anlaß des Krieges, here § 21.



pensions, the level of social security of this step did not generate much enthusiasm. After the Reich amendment, Schneider feared that a similar regulation would soon be passed in the Protectorate. He foresaw that, were this the case, the economic burden for Protectorate insurance companies would be enormous. In February 1942, he wrote to the High Government Councillor in charge of labour at the Reich Protector's Office:

The burden that would be imposed on social security providers in the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia by similar regulations is not insignificant and the financial situation of pensioners in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia is [already] very tense.<sup>167</sup>

If a similar regulation were to be issued in the Protectorate as well, Schneider explicitly recommended the omission of the problematic § 21, which contained the aforementioned Reich law providing relief for Reich pensioners.

The attitude of German officials was based on the argument that the process of recognising a person's inability to work was one of the forms of unemployment reduction in Czechoslovakia during the Great Depression. They believed there were many cases of false disability because authorities granted this status solely on the basis of the worker's limited ability to work and his current employment. It is difficult to imagine that the Czechoslovak state intentionally transferred its duty to care for the unemployed to insurance companies. In reality, the Germans distrusted disability pension recipients as a group, and their need to meet the demands of industry and agriculture was behind it. However, the number of pensioners increased in the 1930s. If we look at the development of pension payouts, in the case of retired private employees their numbers grew by 49 per cent between 1930 and 1937. The situation was even more pronounced in the case of workers, who had only been able to contribute to their pensions since 1926, when worker's insurance came into force.<sup>168</sup> The number of workers' pension payouts was more than sixteen times higher in the same period.<sup>169</sup>

German officials complained that, in contrast to the Protectorate, Germany followed stricter rules. While in the spring of 1941 old-age and disability pensioners were also forced to work again in Germany, in the Protectorate some still escaped the attention of the labour offices and disabled pensioners still were not called to work 'because of the war'. This conclusion was the second argument for pausing

<sup>167</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 971: Der Reichsprotector für Böhmen und Mähren, Josef Schneider an Referat II 4 a, z. H. Herrn Oberregierungsrat Dr. Rieber, Betr. Entziehung de Sozialversicherungsrenten während des Krieges, 22 February 1941.

<sup>168</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Act No. 221/1924 Coll. on illness, disability, and old-age insurance for employees came into effect on 1 July 1926, and only applied to workers whose insurance wasn't regulated by another law. Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Act No. 221/1924 Coll. therefore only applied to manual laborers.

<sup>169</sup> Own conversion, relying on Jeřábková and Salemanová, *Vývoj důchodového zabezpečení*, 32–3, tables 11, 13.

to consider how much § 21 should be applied in the Protectorate. Some voices on the German side emphasised the need to check the health and ability to work of all disability pension recipients in the Protectorate.<sup>170</sup>

Although we have no evidence that Schneider's warning against the high burden that would be borne by insurance companies – something that insurance providers in Germany already felt – became a starting point for the planned Protectorate amendment, but it cannot be ruled out. While the Reich regulation from mid-January 1941 concerned old-age insurance for manual workers, other employees and miners, in the Protectorate the permission to work without losing one's old-age and disability pensions rights affected only employees and miners' insurance.<sup>171</sup> The regulation was made effective retroactively from 1 July.<sup>172</sup> It did not concern workers, which, in terms of the cost of pension benefits, saved the state money, but only partially. Despite the significant predominance of insured persons in workers' insurance policies and the number of paid-out pensions, pension insurance for private employees was more expensive, primarily due to low workers' benefits.<sup>173</sup> The main principles of this new regulation, which was drafted by Schneider, justified the 'special conditions' of work 'for the duration of the war'. Several months later, they were reflected in the aforementioned government regulation. The discussions between Reich officials in the Protectorate about the need to approximate the legal basis and definitions of terms, such as disability, in Reich and Protectorate law lasted until the very end of the Second World War.<sup>174</sup>

Amendments to old-age and disability insurance were incorporated into the complex reform of social insurance, something I will address in the following chapters. Increasing the incomes of Czech pensioners was not in conflict with the occupation policy practised in the Protectorate and continued the relevant reform in the Reich.<sup>175</sup> The maintenance of the social stability of the territory and the efforts to meet the demands of the war created suitable conditions for individual adjustments and improvements. The reconstruction project – later replaced by an appeal for Czechs' labour and solidarity community – was the ideological framework to achieve this goal.

<sup>170</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 971: Der Reichsprotector für Böhmen und Mähren, Dr. Reinecke, Vermerk, 18 March 1941.

<sup>171</sup> RGBl. I, 1941, p. 34: Gesetz über weitere Maßnahmen in der Reichsversicherung aus Anlaß des Krieges, Abschnitt III. Collection of laws and regulations, Government Regulation No. 420/1941 Coll. on certain public social insurance transitional measures due to the war.

<sup>172</sup> Introduction to the government regulation in 'Zaměstnávání důchodců po dobu války', *Práce a hospodářství* (1942), No. 1, 28.

<sup>173</sup> If we look at the relative distribution of pension indicators among individual sectors, then in 1937 the costs of public social security were 67.5 per cent, miners' insurance 4.8 per cent, pension insurance for high-level private employees 18.7 per cent and workers' insurance 8.9 per cent of the total funds spent on pension benefits. Jeřábková and Salemanová, *Vývoj důchodového zabezpečení*, 48.

<sup>174</sup> Klimo, *Im Dienste des Arbeitseinsatzes*, 279.

<sup>175</sup> For a detailed comparison between Reich and Protectorate regulations see Klimo, *Im Dienste des Arbeitseinsatzes*, 271.

## Experts and institutionalised labour science

The extraordinary importance of work and job performance, to which all wage, premium and social insurance issues were connected, was reflected in the interests of experts. ‘The 20th century is a century of organised labour’, stated Jaroslav Šíma, a leading representative of the Czech Sociological Society during the Nazi occupation, in 1944.<sup>176</sup> He undoubtedly was reminded of the demands that the regime now placed on the Protectorate population in connection with the Nazis’ total mobilisation of the workforce. As the central aspect of ‘organised modernity’, referring to Peter Wagner’s concept, rationalisation was a phenomenon that permeated the work of experts in the Bohemia and Moravia of the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>177</sup> Rationalisation, in the more general sense, meant the ordering and adjustment of activities that we perform based on our own individual reasoning. The inspiration for European research into various phenomena and movements, especially in the technical fields, included, among other things, Taylorism and Fordism mixed with research on the sociology of management, which was popular in the United States from the 1880s onwards.

At this point in the book, I would like to outline the expert discourse on the rationalisation of labour when it came to choosing a profession. This was an issue that Czech experts working in various official institutions in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia had considerable experience in dating back to the interwar liberal democratic Czechoslovakia.<sup>178</sup> There was some personnel continuity between the interwar period and the Protectorate, less so institutionally. Successful interwar platforms, such as the Social Institute of the Czechoslovak Republic, the Institute of Psychotechnics and the Masaryk Academy of Labour, were the vanguard of technocratic thinking and promoted rationalisation. The activities of the Social Institute were suppressed in late 1938 and three years later the institute ceased to exist completely. In contrast, the successor of the Institute of Psychotechnics was the Institute of Human Labour, and the Academy of Labour continued to exist within the Czech Academy of Technology throughout the Nazi occupation.<sup>179</sup>

As in the case of social insurance, interest in rationalising labour was heightened due to the war. The connection between expert knowledge and social practice, or the application of theoretical know-how of specific procedures, created unexpected opportunities rooted in the public’s admiration for the worker and his job, which, as we have seen, contained the Protectorate appeal for the unity and protection of the

<sup>176</sup> Šíma, *Práce, společnost a kultura*, 8.

<sup>177</sup> Peter Wagner, *A Sociology of Modernity: Liberty and Discipline* (London 1994).

<sup>178</sup> Further elaborated in Šustrová, ‘Labour that Serves the Good of All’.

<sup>179</sup> After the Second World War, the Institute of Human Labour was smoothly transformed into the Czechoslovak Institute of Labour (Československý ústav práce), which existed until 1952.



**Figure 4.2** Reich Protector Konstantin von Neurath (centre) and State Secretary Karl Hermann Frank on 6 November 1939 in Brno. This was an agitated time – a few days after the demonstrations on 28 October and before the final closure of the Czech universities on 17 November. Source: National Archives, Prague, Karl Hermann Frank Photo Collection, no. 119.

‘Czech nation’. A protective argument was also contained in German rhetoric. The engineer, Luftwaffe officer and Reich Minister for Armaments and Ammunition Fritz Todt put it in idealistic terms: ‘He who tries to solve material questions only from a material point of view succumbs to the matter.’<sup>180</sup> The reproduction of the image of man as a machine or a mere engine, who works thoughtlessly without having any special abilities, was to be supplemented by an essential human dimension. Although this perspective was relative at the workplace, we can observe it in the need to reform and improve Protectorate social insurance. However, traces of it are also evident in the specific procedures of the social scientists involved in the organisation of labour. The demands produced by the duty to work were not just reflected in the recruitment of workers to be sent to work in Germany. They also influenced practically the whole process of choosing a profession – from education to starting a job – which was projected in the preferences for trade schools and worker professions in general. The situation after 17 November 1939, when Czech universities remained closed after the suppression of a student demonstration, only underlined this tendency.

<sup>180</sup> Hans Dieter Schäfer, ‘Amerikanismus im Dritten Reich’, in *Nationalsozialismus und Modernisierung*, ed. Michael Prinz and Rainer Zitelmann (Darmstadt 1991), 201.

The choice of profession was the agenda of counselling services and training, which from the autumn of 1939 were the duties of the Czech staff of the Institute of Human Labour.<sup>181</sup> The institute originated after the restructuring of the Central Institute of Psychotechnics, which in 1932 emerged from the Institute of Psychotechnics under the Masaryk Academy of Labour. The Institute of Human Labour was built as a modern institution with research departments devoted to the organisation of labour, career selection, courses and vocational training, and research departments working on the physiology, psychology and sociology of labour.<sup>182</sup> The scientific field that the Institute of Human Labour was involved in was psychotechnics, or the psychology of labour, applying psychological principles in a practical way to various disciplines. However, with its wide range of experts, we can attribute to it additional work in the broader field of labour science, which was a compendium of knowledge from various disciplines from psychology to physiology, sociology, economics and technology. This allowed the experts to study the assumptions, processes, effects and consequences of human labour in order to optimise it – that is, to increase performance and minimise injuries and accidents.<sup>183</sup> This is roughly how the director of the Central Institute of Psychotechnics and later director of the Institute of Human Labour, the renowned psychologist and later university professor Jan Doležal, perceived its purpose.<sup>184</sup> Specifically, psychotechnics was a relatively new scientific discipline that dealt with the human in the work process. It relied on a scientific underpinning to determine individual work abilities and skills, and the appropriate choice of job or placement. As can easily be deduced from the previously cited words of Fritz Todt, psychotechnics was very popular in Germany, where it had a home in the Institute for Labour Research at the DAF. It is impossible to prove that their employees collaborated together, but the similar German and Czech institutes did not have only a general interest in the science of work. They were united in the similar scope of their activities and in their name, since the Protectorate institute was officially translated into German as Institut für Arbeitswissenschaft.<sup>185</sup>

<sup>181</sup> B. Mansfeld, 'Ústav lidské práce', *Nová práce* (November 1939), No. 11, 153–4.

<sup>182</sup> Helena Janderová, 'Psychotechnický ústav', in *Technokracie v českých zemích (1900–1950)*, ed. Jan Janko and Emilie Těšínská (Prague 1999), 142.

<sup>183</sup> Jan Doležal, *Věda o práci: Podle zápisů z přednášek* (Prague 1947), 11.

<sup>184</sup> Jan Doležal (1902–1965) focused on the psychology of work (especially performance), applied psychology and experimental research methods. The authors of *Dějiny české a slovenské psychologie* (History of Czech and Slovak Psychology) characterised him as a bright, discerning person with an analytical mind. He excelled as an organiser and methodologist but was also mathematically gifted. He studied in Prague and Leipzig and became an associate professor of psychology at the Faculty of Art of the Charles University in Prague. He worked in Germany until 1932. In 1947, he finally became a university professor. Simona Hoskovcová, Jiří Hoskovec and Daniel Heller, *Dějiny české a slovenské psychologie* (Prague 2016), 114.

<sup>185</sup> For more details about AWI/DAF see Hachtmann, *Das Wirtschaftsimperium der Deutschen Arbeitsfront*.

The Institute of Human Labour developed its activities throughout the occupation. It managed itself independently but was formally affiliated to the Czech Technical Academy.<sup>186</sup> Representatives of the NOÚZ and social insurance companies served on the board of trustees in one of the administrative bodies of the institute, which made it possible to link the activities of the individual institutions on preventive health care and post-accident care. The Institute of Human Labour took over the staff of the former Central Institute of Psychotechnics, thus establishing and, through the experience of its employees, contributing to the reconstruction of state and society. In 1939, it had fifty employees, and many Czech psychologists later came from the Institute of Human Labour.<sup>187</sup> It was a creative environment, giving time and space for concentrated work. As we know from a report drawn up in June 1945, until 1941 ‘it [the Institute of Human Labour] was sheltered from the conditions of the war’, which led to doubts about its dealings during the occupation.<sup>188</sup>

After the establishment of the Protectorate in March 1939, the Institute of Human Labour enjoyed relatively broad support. For instance, the Committee of National Partnership explained its endorsement with the following words:

Man should be at the centre of all economic endeavour. It is now a matter of erecting a scientific institution that would turn its attention to human labour. We need to improve and perfect the cooperation of all members and components of the nation, our goal must be happier and better work for all.<sup>189</sup>

The Institute of Human Labour was subordinate to the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment and focused on determining who would attend secondary schools, testing students and graduates and providing advice to junior businesses. The staff of the institute defined the scope of their work as the fulfilment of ‘socio-economic tasks’, which ‘were to reduce the damage caused by 1938 (the crisis, unemployment)’.<sup>190</sup> The employees played an especially important role in labour redistribution.

After the establishment of the labour offices in July 1939, the agenda of the Institute of Human Labour did not change much. The labour offices took over the

<sup>186</sup> NA, Institute of Human Labour Collection (ÚLP Coll.), Carton 1: Alfred Dratva’s speech given on ‘O přeměně ‘Ústředního ústavu psychotechnického’ na “Ústav lidské práce”’, at the meeting of the VIth Department of the Czech Technical Academy on 24 January 1940

<sup>187</sup> NA, ÚLP Coll., Carton 2: Annual Report of the Institute of Human Labour for 1939. Hoskocková, Hoskovec and Heller, *Dějiny české a slovenské psychologie*, 114.

<sup>188</sup> NA, ÚLP Coll., Carton 1: Minutes of the first working meeting of the Institute’s staff, chaired by doc. Doležal on 11 June 1945.

<sup>189</sup> NA, ÚLP Coll., Carton 1: Explanatory report on the proposal of the National Co-operative Committee for the establishment of the Institute for Human Labour (1939).

<sup>190</sup> NA, ÚLP Coll., Carton 1: Minutes of the first working meeting of the Institute’s staff, chaired by doc. Doležal on 11 June 1945.

career guidance services, particularly the task of finding jobs for adolescents.<sup>191</sup> From 1 January 1942, everyone who had completed elementary school or high school had to register at a labour office within fourteen days and either immediately begin working or attend vocational training. The requirements of employers for selected jobs and the results of the youth survey were supposed to be compiled by the labour offices. Coordination with the labour offices can be considered the basic task of the Institute of Human Labour. The content of its activities was only specified in September 1942, when it was summarised in nine points by the Protectorate government. It was charged with making human labour more economic; research, documentation and vocational training; methodical guidance of adolescents in training; cooperation with public and private institutions and companies in planning and taking care of the retraining of workers and employees; monitoring the development of individual occupations in relation to adolescents; cooperation with school authorities on the selection of students; cooperation on issues of general vocational and occupational education; the social law agenda; and cooperation with the public administration on the selection of its employees.<sup>192</sup>

The words about a 'scientific institute with an emphasis on practice', which the Institute of Human Labour called itself after the war, was not far from reality. In terms of statistics on exams, during 1939 its staff tested 12,000 students, either in the institute's testing laboratories, in factories or at secondary schools, to measure the intelligence of incoming students. A year later, up to 17,500 tests were administered to children and adults, 44 per cent of which were examinations of apprentices.<sup>193</sup> Practice tests were commissioned by a decree of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment from 28 March 1939, which introduced a psychotechnical examination of pupils enrolled in the first grades of secondary school in Prague.<sup>194</sup> The tests, for which parents registered more than 3,000 students, were intended to provide information about the students' 'verbal intelligence' and 'critical thinking' abilities and at the same time measure their 'mental speed'. The results would later be compared with the results of the entrance exams performed by the same pupils and their achievements in the first semester. This comparison was subsequently supposed to confirm the previous conclusions, and allegedly showed that the tests of the Institute of Human Labour were conclusive: 14.5 per cent of students showed that they were very well qualified, 20.2 per cent were well qualified, 49.9 per cent were qualified, 9.7 per cent were less

<sup>191</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government Regulation no. 433/1941 Coll. on career counselling and integration of adolescents into work.

<sup>192</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, No. 333/1942 Sb. on Institute of Human Labour (Institut für Arbeitswissenschaft).

<sup>193</sup> NA, ÚLP Coll., Carton 2: Institute of Human Labour in 194: Report on activities.

<sup>194</sup> Decree of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment No. 20.548/39 - I of 28 March 1939.

qualified and 5.7 per cent were unqualified.<sup>195</sup> In the next phase, the achievement of the tested pupils would be monitored for another four years. In fact, the testing of adolescents relied on previous years of testing. The main mission was to connect an individual's skills and interests with the current situation on the labour market. Due to the command economy, it was more about the attractiveness of the job for industrial companies, or the job prospects of various professions. The result was a clear preference for workers' professions.

The activities of the Institute of Human Labour in the field of occupational psychological diagnostics were wide-ranging and concerned pupils and students at secondary schools. The institute also cooperated with other organisations, such as the Provincial Centre for Youth, the Centre for the Care of Adolescents and the Headquarters of Advisory Centres for Vocational Choices, and built a network of public job counselling centres that was expected to be completed by 1942.<sup>196</sup> In particular, close cooperation with the latter entity formed the basis of a systematic study of the job prospects of Czech adolescents in individual professions. Of course, the employees of the institute also worked on this task together with the labour offices. They were thus integrated into an organisational network that would rationalise the ratio between labour supply and demand as much as possible. This meant, above all, adapting to the requirements of companies that manufactured materiel for the German war industry. It was not simply the ethos of state reconstruction that, to protect and unify the nation, turned active cooperation with the German authorities into a share in the efficient distribution of the labour force and an effort to minimise the effects of the war. The demands of science and scientific knowledge for the employees of the Institute of Human Labour were undoubtedly a positive frame of reference, the possibilities of which can be seen primarily when compared with the organisation of labour during the interwar and post-war periods. With its tightly controlled economy and strictly organised labour market, the occupation created favourable conditions for the study of the human constitution, psychotechnics and the economy of labour.

<sup>195</sup> NA, ÚLP Coll., Carton 2: Annual Report of the Institute of Human Labour for 1939.

<sup>196</sup> In Czech: Zemské ústředí péče o mládež, Ústředí péče o pracující dorost, Ústředí poraden pro volbu povolání.



## Health Care in Warfare

One of the main objectives of modern states has been to maintain a healthy population. For the National Socialists, it also represented an argument for Nazi rule and an expansion of their domain. The abuse of medical science in concentration camps, health institutions and laboratories was a daily practice under National Socialism. However, the Second World War brought not only the abuse of science and restrictions but also medical progress and modernisation. In 1941, chemists therapeutically tested penicillin, the antibiotic drug discovered by Alexander Fleming nearly a decade earlier in Oxford, for the first time. The industrial production of penicillin in the United States began in earnest during the war. Although there was not yet commercial and mass production of penicillin, it was a significant moment in the development and production of antibiotics worldwide.<sup>1</sup> Knowledge of penicillin's effects reached occupied Europe. It was even developed in a pharmaceutical plant in Prague-Měcholupy during the Protectorate period.<sup>2</sup> Modern medical methods and technologies were applied not only in employment and work rationalisation, as was the case of labour policy, but also in other areas. However, the contrast between these innovations and the extermination camps could not be more glaring.

Radical contradictions in health care are also evident in the Bohemian lands. The establishment and operation of health care facilities and rehabilitation and spa centres, the training of health professionals and the distribution of pharmaceuticals served to prevent and treat health problems. In the Nazi Protectorate, their common purpose was to promote national welfare and take care of the members of the national community. By health policy, I mean creating and maintaining the nation's health. This health care, however, was restricted to the group of people who were not stripped of their social rights, that is, the

<sup>1</sup> See John Patrick Swann, 'The Search for Synthetic Penicillin During World War II', *The British Journal for the History of Science* 16 (1983), No. 2, 154–90; Josef Charvát, *Vývoj lékařství v poslední válce* (Prague 1947).

<sup>2</sup> Petr Svobodný and Ludmila Hlaváčková, *Dějiny lékařství v českých zemích* (Prague 2004), 195.

non-Jewish and non-Roma Czech and German population. Health policy in this form existed alongside destructive Nazi practices, and most of the public health facilities in the Protectorate remained in operation.

Although health experts in communist Czechoslovakia later concluded that the population came out of the war neglected and having languished, the Protectorate never faced a collapsing system.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, many practices demonstrated efforts to improve the social and health situation of the local population. These reconstructionist and future-oriented ambitions of Czech politicians and experts are clearly manifested in the field of health and social health care. The terms ‘care dictatorship’ (*Wohlfahrtsdiktatur*) and Götz Aly’s term ‘social welfare dictatorship’ (*Wohlfühl-Diktatur*) are therefore particularly relevant to the Czech situation.<sup>4</sup>

In this chapter, two motives are at work: keeping workers working and improving the health of the *národní pospolitost*. I will examine the forms and the extent of health care assistance claimed on the basis of social insurance. Within this context, I will discuss the availability and effectiveness of health care in the Protectorate, which was characterised by an emphasis on solidarity among people, individual responsibility for one’s health and patient discipline aimed at securing the necessary human resources for the war industry.

## Concepts and practices

The perception of health has historically developed in direct relation to the concept of illness, even though they do not stand in direct opposition. Today, as the World Health Organization states, ‘health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.’<sup>5</sup> In contrast to health, illness is always concrete. The understanding of health and disease deepened fundamentally with the development of medicine, specifically hygiene and bacteriology, in the 19th century. For instance, in his study on tuberculosis, German biologist Robert Koch aimed to ‘detect any parasitic formations foreign to the body, which could possibly be interpreted as the cause of the disease.’<sup>6</sup> The study of specific bacteria and their interventions in the human body brought a medical visualisation of body-threatening diseases and, at the same time, refined the idea of the body’s health. From the point of view of philosophy, although both Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Nietzsche commented on it, the definition of health

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Zdeněk Štich (ed.), *15 let nového československého zdravotnictví 1945–1960* (Prague 1960).

<sup>4</sup> Götz Aly, ‘Die Wohlfühl-Diktatur’, *Der Spiegel* (2005), No. 10, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-39613406.html> (20 July 2017).

<sup>5</sup> Available at <https://www.who.int/about/governance/constitution> (27 September 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Robert Koch, ‘Die Ätiologie der Tuberkulose’, *Berliner klinische Wochenschrift* (1882), No. 15, 429.

has remained obscure.<sup>7</sup> Health is more complex and therefore cannot be linearly associated with disease defined by different abstract procedures. What is more, as Christoph Asmuth has observed, the ‘absence of disease is therefore not health, but is a state “without findings”’.<sup>8</sup>

While health is the individual’s responsibility, illness makes one the object of science, which diagnoses and treats the condition.<sup>9</sup> This is best seen with the development of the concept of public health and the public institutions that are supposed to supervise it. However, the cultural context and the language of ideology play an essential role in making a diagnosis. It may bring stigmatising judgements not only for the individual but also for the whole family. Susan Sontag, who analysed the metaphorical meanings of illness, found that the metaphors used to describe diseases have a more significant impact than simply confirming a medical opinion.<sup>10</sup> How illness or the duty to be healthy is portrayed shows what obligations the individual and institutions have.

Health has been treated as a political issue. In Bohemia and Moravia, public health was the responsibility of the health police. This institution, which was established in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, had a broad remit, ranging from the supervision of public spaces and industrial enterprises to emergency assistance in the event of illness or injury, smallpox vaccination and the supervision of physical education. The state control of population and health conditions using the health police was described in detail by the German physician Johann Peter Frank in the late 1770s. According to Frank, the aim was to create a comprehensive system of observation of the causes of morbidity and mortality and to standardise medical knowledge, the medical profession, medical practice and administrative support.<sup>11</sup> For a long time, health care had been understood as a public matter, as can be easily documented by the Public Health Service Act of 30 April 1870, which was modern health legislation in contemporary terms. It provided a central state structure for the public health service for the kingdoms and states represented in the Reichsrat (Imperial Council).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Christoph Asmuth, ‘Das Konzept “Gesundheit” und seine Probleme aus philosophischer Sicht’, in *Gesundheitsförderung zwischen individuellem Anspruch und gesellschaftlicher Verantwortung. Beiträge zur Gesundheitsförderung in ausgewählten Feldern*, ed. Kerstin Ketelhut, Katarina Prchal and Antje Stache (Hamburg 2012), 167.

<sup>8</sup> Asmuth, ‘Das Konzept “Gesundheit”’, 171.

<sup>9</sup> On health in various contexts see Philip Eijk, Detlev Ganten and Roman Marek, *Was ist Gesundheit?* (Berlin 2021).

<sup>10</sup> Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors* (New York 1990), 99f (quoted from Martin W. Schnell, ‘Die Unfasslichkeit der Gesundheit’, *Pflege & Gesellschaft* 11 (2006), No. 4, 347.

<sup>11</sup> Daniela Tinková, *Zákeřná mepifitis. Zdravotní policie, osvěta a veřejná hygiena v pozdně osvěcenských Čechách* (Prague 2012), 42f.

<sup>12</sup> Imperial Law Gazette for the Kingdoms and Lands represented in the Imperial Council, No. 68/1870, p. 125, Act of 30 April 1870, concerning the organisation of the public medical service. See Heinz Flamm, ‘The Development of the Austrian Medical System: 250 Years Ago the “Sanitäts-Hauptnormativ”, 150 Years Ago the “Reichs-Sanitätsgesetz”’, *Wiener Klinische Wochenschrift* 132 (2020), 115–52.

After 1918, as shown in **Chapter One**, public health was central to the political debate, emphasising its modern and public character. It oscillated between two traditions: the Central European (German and Austrian) tradition, which focused on a medical (curative) approach to patients in surgeries, hospitals and outpatient clinics funded by health insurance companies, and the American tradition, which emphasised preventive approaches through counselling centres operated by voluntary organisations providing only advice and information.<sup>13</sup>

The goal of the Czechoslovak health system was to look at patients in their complexity, not only as individuals with a particular health problem but as part of a specific environment. It was meant to encompass preventive and curative approaches and incorporate them organically into public institutions. However, this aim was never fulfilled in interwar Czechoslovakia. At that time, the health police, responsible for public health, was a weak and ineffective institution. Some experts and politicians held the view that individual preventive care should become part of any duly established health insurance system. However, instead of preventive care for insured persons, insurance companies spent more money on the treatment of the insured and their family members.<sup>14</sup> At the time Czechoslovakia was facing both of the aforementioned negative trends – demographic decline and morbidity – which could have been averted by a pro-population policy and health care measures. Health policy aimed to protect the widest possible segment of the population through a combination of services covered by public social insurance and the cooperation of the state and voluntary organisations. It was not a universal social policy, which only emerged two decades later.

Distinguishing between two basic approaches, that is, taking measures to prevent disease (*Vorsorge*) and dealing with the problems that arose (*Fürsorge*), did not represent a fundamental change in Czechoslovak public health care. Politicians and experts regularly discussed preventive care as an approach to the patient in the first half of the 20th century, but it was only rarely codified in Czechoslovak law.<sup>15</sup> Routine preventive care required more complex changes in the system. It might bring not only individualisation and liberalisation but also restrictions and regulations.<sup>16</sup> In the Bohemian lands, there were still gaps in the field of

<sup>13</sup> Hana Mášová, 'Dva pilíře představby československého zdravotnictví. Nedvěděv a Albertův plán', in *České zdravotnictví. Víze a skutečnost, složité peripetie od plánů k realizaci*, ed. Hana Mášová, Eva Křížová and Petr Svobodný (Prague 2005), 71.

<sup>14</sup> See conclusions from evening debates organised by young doctors. Evening debate on 15 December 1933: 'Základní zásady pro reformu léčebné péče v nemocenském pojištění', in *Nemocenské pojištění jinde a u nás. Cyklus debatních večerů, pořádaný sociálně-lékařským sborem mladé generace lékařů při Ú. J. Čsl.* (Prague 1934), 81.

<sup>15</sup> For example, the compulsory smallpox vaccination introduced by law in 1919. See Act No. 412/1919 Coll., on compulsory smallpox vaccination.

<sup>16</sup> Malte Thießen, *Gesundheit erhalten, Gesellschaft gestalten: Konzepte und Praktiken der Vorsorge im 20. Jahrhundert: Eine Einführung*, *Zeitgeschichte online – Fachportal für Zeitgeschichte* (2013), 3, <http://www.zeithistorische-forschungen.de/site/40209395/default.aspx> (3 October 2022).

preventive health care not covered by social insurance, and the health system led towards therapeutic care. According to Czech medical professionals, the situation was not ideal compared with that in Germany.<sup>17</sup> Czech doctors considered prevention, newly established in Germany, modern and successful and expected a corresponding improvement in Bohemia and Moravia. Later, the new order in the Nazi Protectorate was not to prevent this; on the contrary, it was supposed to facilitate it. Even German officials were surprised by the limits of Czech health care. For instance, in the summer of 1942, the Reich Protector's Office proposed that Protectorate insurance companies should cover a certain proportion of the cost of preventive dental care for German schoolchildren. However, officials remained reluctant since, unlike in Germany, the insurance industry in the Bohemian lands did not provide for this type of care.<sup>18</sup>

The German success was offset by cutting back on individual clinical care, with an ideological emphasis on preventive care favouring the national-racial community.<sup>19</sup> This depended on a sufficient personal interest and effort to take care of one's own health and the health of the whole family. According to German physician Kurt Blome, as defined for a monthly magazine issued by the NSDAP Main Office for National Health, the concept of 'health leadership' (*Gesundheitsführung*) was associated with the national existence itself and with awareness-raising activities among German children and youth. As Blome stated, 'health leadership' denoted

activity that is never failing, constantly striving, devotedly serving the nation to achieve the highest possible condition of physical, mental and intellectual health of the individual as well as of society.<sup>20</sup>

'Health leadership' aimed at the 'cultivation' of the individual in the interest of the whole nation. It included preventive medicine, medical treatment and health education, taking into account the improvement of hereditary health and 'racial' dispositions. In Germany, these tasks were carried out by 1,100 town and district health offices together with 2,600 commissioned doctors.<sup>21</sup>

Nazi health policy was characterised by the belief that the individualistic approach to health was obsolete and that the nation's interest was paramount. One's own interest in one's health was, in the end, an expression of interest in the community. It was possible to use its potential on the war front and in the factory, each time with devotion and commitment to the nation. This cornerstone was

<sup>17</sup> 'V nových poměrech', *Sociální reforma* (5 April 1939), Nos 6–7, 81.

<sup>18</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1008: Franz Ritter an Herrn Oberregierungsrat Josef Schneider, Betr.II 4 c 840/42 – Ausbau der Zahnbehandlung, 30 July 1942.

<sup>19</sup> Warren T. Reich, 'The Care-Based of Ethic of Nazi Medicine and the Moral Importance of What We Care About', *The American Journal of Bioethics* 1 (2001), No. 1, 65.

<sup>20</sup> Kurt Blome, 'Gesundheitsführung und die Politik', *Gesundheitsführung. Ziel und Weg* (1939), No. 2, 37.

<sup>21</sup> Bargel, *Neue deutsche Sozialpolitik*, 73.

based on the knowledge of the genetic complexity of disease at the time and the idea of prioritising care for the race over care for health.<sup>22</sup> Preventive and curative health care was thus practised exclusively in the interest of the Volksgemeinschaft.

Enforcing discipline through the health police to ensure the fitness of the population constituted an integral part of Nazi health policy. From the early modern concept that promoted the surveillance of society and public hygiene improvements by administrative means, the situation had moved forward by the 1940s. However, Nazi Germany, with its surveillance methods experienced by both patients and doctors, deliberately reverted to repressive methods in the field of health policy, which was one of the primary interests of the Nazi state. This collectivist perspective, not too far from the approach of early modern absolutism, was combined with racial prejudice and an exclusive conception of national identity. The joining of these perspectives was made possible by depopulation as a phenomenon threatening the existence of nation-states since the end of the 19th century (further discussed in [Chapter Six](#)) and by the general deterioration of the population's health, linked to epidemiological threats and the economic crisis.

The implementation of 'health leadership' in contemporary practice relied on three organisational cornerstones. The first consisted of the health offices with their anti-epidemic programmes; the second consisted of party bodies such as the Hitler Youth, the NSV and the DAF; and the third consisted of factory doctors and sickness insurance institutions.<sup>23</sup> The assertion of 'health leadership' as an instrument of 'public health care' soon appeared in the Protectorate, too.

Within 'care for the health and development of the nation', the authorities aimed at conscious participation by the population.<sup>24</sup> This educational component was used in convalescent stays and health examinations among non-Jewish and non-Roma Czechs.<sup>25</sup> A restrictive approach to health brought the symbolic removal of 'health' from the personal sphere of each individual and its near 'nationalisation', as aptly expressed in a contemporary quote: 'Your health does not belong to you!'<sup>26</sup> The statement of the Czech mathematician and social insurance expert Vilém Havlík, who in 1940 stated that the saying 'time is money' had

<sup>22</sup> Michal Šimůnek, 'Skupina zdravotnictví Úřadu říšského protektora v Čechách a na Moravě 1939–1942', Part 1: 'Východiska, zřízení, členění', *Dějiny věd a techniky* 39 (2006), No. 4, 237.

<sup>23</sup> Šimůnek, 'Skupina zdravotnictví Úřadu říšského protektora', Part 1, 79.

<sup>24</sup> The department named 'Care for the Health and Development of the Nation' at the Ministry of Social and Health Administration summarised its activities in areas ranging from social and health care for the young, eugenic and population health care, prenatal counselling centres and counselling centres for mothers with children, care for physically and mentally ill children, convalescent and holiday care, care for refugees, combating social diseases, urban hygiene and so forth.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Antonín Bartoš, *Než bude pozdě: Co s dětmi po obrně* (Prague 1939); Václav Hrachovina, *Kurs první pomoci* (Brno 1940); Arnošt Mládek, *Srdce ve zdraví a nemoci. Přehled nauky o srdci pro laiky* (Prague 1940); Jan Včelák, *Něco málo o tuberkulóze* (Prague 1940); Antonín Ostrčil, *Zdravověda a životospráva ženy* (Prague 1940).

<sup>26</sup> Norbert Frei, 'Einleitung', in *Medizin und Gesundheitspolitik in der NS-Zeit* (Munich 1991), 11.

turned into 'health is money' in the 20th century, can be understood in a similar sense. More than ever, it was true because the loss of working time might cost a person only a penny, but society lost a million.<sup>27</sup> During wartime, not only money counted but also healthy individuals.

Interestingly, following the tradition of the Habsburg Empire and interwar Czechoslovakia, the term 'public health care' was still in use even though it was misleading.<sup>28</sup> In the Nazi Protectorate, despite its adoption of racial measures and creation of a Czech *národní pospolitost*, health care paradoxically remained *public* in name. In this book, the term 'public' has not yet been used to denote a group of social welfare clients, as it can only be described as a very vague equivalent of the social constellation of that time in the context of exclusion and inclusion processes. The 'public' implies an autonomous community based on the principles of liberal society, and it fails to reflect the ongoing transformation of contemporary society's composition into the *národní pospolitost*. In a different context, Ian Kershaw has attempted to deal with a similar ambiguity of content by replacing the generalising term 'public opinion' with 'national' or 'popular' opinion to avoid the terminology usually associated with a democratic society.<sup>29</sup> Here, a more appropriate term for it would be 'national health service' as it served the needs of the Czech national community. In practice, it illustrated the origin of the Protectorate measure on public health issued in July 1942, which I will further elaborate on in the next section.

## The rebuilding of public health care

The Autumn Revolution provoked the concentration of 'national forces', leading to more effective health care for the 'Czech nation'. Merging the responsibilities of the interwar Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Social Welfare in November 1938 contributed to their institutional unification and increased the efficiency of health care. Integrated administration within the Ministry of Social and Health Administration was designed to allow easier coordination and control of financial and personnel resources. Interestingly, Robert Ley, the leader of the DAF, thought similarly. He figured out his plans for the Reich state apparatus in 1941, including the incorporation of health care, old-age provisions and the

<sup>27</sup> Vilém Havlík, 'Zdraví jsou peníze', *Práce a hospodářství* (1940), Nos 3–4, 59.

<sup>28</sup> A brief historical context is provided by Eva Pýchová and Karel Dohnal, 'Koncepce veřejného zdravotnictví v České republice v historických souvislostech – odkud vychází a kam směřuje tento obor?', in *České zdravotnictví: Vize a skutečnost složité peripetie od plánů k realizaci*, ed. Hana Mášová, Eva Křížová and Petr Svobodný (Prague 2005), 133–43.

<sup>29</sup> Ian Kershaw, 'Alltägliches und Außeralltägliches: Ihre Bedeutung für die Volksmeinung 1933–1945', in *Die Reihen fast geschlossen. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alltags unterm Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Detlev Peukert and Jürgen Reulecke (Wuppertal 1988), 274.

responsibilities of the Ministry of Labour into the Reich's social project. However, power struggles over who should head this influential department led to the quick rejection of the plan. Ley's ideas were widespread neither in the Protectorate nor in the Reich itself.<sup>30</sup>

The search for a straightforward way out of the complex interwar system was one of the main themes of the Autumn Revolution. In June 1939, the editorial board of the magazine *Sociální reforma* (Social reform) commented:

The life and health of the [Czech] nation, the state of the hospitals and the progress of medical science call for quick action. Therefore, in spite of the difficult times, it is necessary to act courageously, decisively, and quickly in the shortest possible time.<sup>31</sup>

Simplified approval processes could help fulfil this wish, but only if Czech reformers were able to get support from the Germans. Although the health services in the Protectorate and in the Reich differed institutionally, they were ideologically similar. The interaction of expert and political figures from the Reich and the Protectorate contributed to one of the few optimistic interpretations of March 1939 that were heard from critics of interwar health care: they argued that the will of the Czech representatives to rebuild the country to improve the 'Czech nation' economically and socially could be consolidated by the supervision of a stronger and more economically successful neighbour. Germany had been known for several years as an anti-Semitic state that radically restricted human rights and freedoms, especially those of ethnic minorities and political opponents. Still, it had a reputation as a country that could find a recipe for dealing with the effects of the Great Depression. Employment and population policies, in particular, were the flagship of Nazi social and political success, resonating in the Bohemian lands, and were especially topical during the transformation.

There was a need for quick action due to social circumstances and the population's health, which even Czechoslovak politicians had long criticised.<sup>32</sup> The criticism had been heard since the founding of Czechoslovakia in 1918 and had become even stronger since the 1930s.<sup>33</sup> Although the state formally took over the 'health police supervision duties', the responsibility for care remained with the municipalities.<sup>34</sup> Limits in the organisation, poor funding and underpaid doctors all contributed to the challenging situation. Health care reform was, therefore, one of the most critical points on the government agenda and one of the goals

<sup>30</sup> Recker, *Nationalsozialistische Sozialpolitik*, 126.

<sup>31</sup> 'Výstavba v. v. nemocnic v Čechách,' *Sociální reforma* (5 June 1939), No. 11, 152.

<sup>32</sup> Czech, *Public Health*.

<sup>33</sup> See the proposal for public health care reform by the physician Hynek Pelc of the State Institute of Health in 1934; Jaroslav Kříž, 'Zapomenutá historie zdravotní policie,' *Hygiena* (2009), No. 4, 136–7.

<sup>34</sup> Collection of Laws and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Act No. 332 of 12 May 1920, by which the State assumes health policing responsibilities.



of the Autumn Revolution. However, it took concrete shape only in 1941. In its first version, drafted by Czech ministerial officers, it regulated the organisation of the Protectorate's public social and health services.<sup>35</sup> Although the draft was well written, the regulation was never put into practice, and public health care in the Protectorate had to wait for a new regulation in July 1942. One of the reasons for the draft's failure was the structural changes in bodies and authorities when the Deputy Reich Protector Reinhard Heydrich initiated a major reorganisation of the Protectorate government in January 1942, turning it into an openly collaborating administration with the Nazis. Consequently, the Ministry of the Interior took over all public health sector responsibilities. Priorities also changed, with labour mobilisation and labour productivity taking precedence.

The draft never came into force in the original version, but it should not escape our attention. Its creators intended to regulate a wide range of health sectors for the first time. Within public health care, the officers took over a full range of responsibilities, including the medical aspects of marriage, marriage counselling, eugenics and population matters. By the end of the war, the former minister Vladislav Klumpar explained in his secretly written memoirs that it had failed because German officials demanded the independence of the health service at various instances of public administration according to the German model. At the same place, he briefly noted that 'its independence ... and expansion could in principle be welcomed [by the Czechs]'.<sup>36</sup> Czech and German officials could find common ground, but in the end, they did not obtain the Reich Protector's approval. To correct Klumpar's statement, we must recall that Heydrich, who arrived in the Protectorate in late September 1941, personally detested making Protectorate institutions similar to those exclusive to the Reich. If the Czechs themselves were in the mood for such a reform, he probably rejected it all the more. This was the case in terms of ideas and, ultimately, systemic practice.

The reform of public health was a sensitive matter. The administration managed and supervised the entire public health sector and thus influenced the distribution of health and social aid. In the wording of the emerging legislation, social health administration encompassed everything that 'must be done in the public interest in order to consolidate, improve, protect and regain human health'.<sup>37</sup> Many of the formulations in the draft did not fundamentally abandon the liberal ethos of public health and the interwar efforts to introduce extended powers and duties of general practitioners.

To the extent of the original proposal, the Protectorate's reformers increased state medical supervision and its control over the medical and therapeutic practice

<sup>35</sup> The last surviving version is dated 21 October 1941.

<sup>36</sup> ANM, Vladislav Klumpar Coll., ev. no. 5/5, Carton 1: Memoirs, p. 25.

<sup>37</sup> NA, MSZS Coll., Carton 125: Ministry of Social and Health Administration, Draft Government Regulation on the Organisation of the Public Health Administration, 3 September 1941, Section 2.

in the Bohemian lands. In other words, as the explanatory memorandum to the legislative proposal of September 1941 stated,

[this] draft is based on the notion that public health administration should be regarded as an agent ... intervening wherever it is necessary in the public interest, i.e. where the health of citizens could be endangered by the carelessness or negligence of third parties, or where health measures by their very nature lie beyond the influence of individuals.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, the draft foresaw the establishment of new institutions. Health offices or departments were created at all three levels of the social and health administration, that is, at the level of districts, provinces (Bohemia and Moravia) and the central administration (under the Ministry of Social and Health Administration). The health offices wielded broad powers, which included population health monitoring, health education, care for those with social diseases, youth care, health personnel qualifications (doctors, pharmacists, midwives, nursing and spa staff, etc.), therapy in the field of social diseases (namely tuberculosis, venereal diseases, alcoholism, cancer, diabetes and occupational diseases), family health care, especially concerning mothers and children, organisation of treatment and care for the sick, pharmaceutical and hygiene matters, and social health care for the disabled. The health offices, however, were to have executive powers only in the case of combating contagious diseases.

The legislative regulation was negotiated for a long time and came into force with considerable delay in July 1942.<sup>39</sup> Now, public health was entirely within the competence of the Protectorate Ministry of the Interior, which had taken care of the 'health needs of the people'.<sup>40</sup> Although in a truncated form compared with the original draft, the adopted reform gave the health departments even broader powers: they could issue general regulations and prohibitions in the interests of 'public health' from 1944 onwards, even without regard to the applicable regulations.<sup>41</sup>

The attempt to organise social and health care in the Protectorate according to the German model is apparent. This was particularly obvious in the efforts to establish health offices, a central element of the German public health legislation effective from 1 April 1935. Protectorate officials also openly admitted to this inspiration.<sup>42</sup> Their motivation, however, was not so much ideological but rather

<sup>38</sup> NA, MSZS Coll., Carton 125: Ministry of Social and Health Administration, Draft Government Regulation on the Organisation of the Public Health Administration, 3 September 1941, Section 2.

<sup>39</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 279/1942 Coll., on public health care.

<sup>40</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 279/1942 Coll., on public health care, § 2.

<sup>41</sup> Collections of Law and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Amendment to Section 6 of Government regulation No. 188 of 18 August 1944, amending Government regulation No. 279 of 30 July 1942 Coll., on public health.

<sup>42</sup> RGBl. I, 1934, p. 531: Gesetz über die Vereinheitlichung des Gesundheitswesens.

practical. German health offices had a proven track record in improving public health care in some areas and were also successful in combating venereal disease and tuberculosis.<sup>43</sup> Nazi Germany established health offices with extensive powers at the town and regional levels. Their remit included the health police and the area of hereditary and racial science, ranging from marriage counselling, public health education, school medicine, counselling for the mother and child, to the treatment of tuberculosis and venereal diseases, and taking care of the disabled, chronically ill patients and addicts. The health offices were also responsible for supervising medical and nursing institutes, spas and other facilities. Similarly, in the territory of former Austria annexed by Germany, a law concerning the unified 'public health' was adopted on 29 November 1938, implementing the Reich's legal framework.<sup>44</sup>

The Reich Act on the Unification of Public Health of 3 July 1934 became the model for reform in the Protectorate.<sup>45</sup> The legislative changes in Germany and Austria were to be openly reflected in the Protectorate's regulations because – as the Czech officials stated – 'they [the changes in Bohemia and Moravia] correspond in essence to the definition of the tasks of the health office in the Reich.'<sup>46</sup> This was fully consistent with the fact that the Protectorate's public health service was to supervise 'the implementation of hereditary and racial hygiene and social medical care.'<sup>47</sup>

The main difference between the Protectorate and the Reich was the position of physicians. Interacting with patients on a daily basis, they received new and more extensive powers. Whereas in the Bohemian lands, a district doctor worked for the district authority, in the Reich there was a separate health office at this level.<sup>48</sup> Municipal and district doctors were to become officials of the health office, essentially civil servants, and were allowed to engage in private practice only on a limited basis. Previously doctors had worked at most as contractors hired by the district authority, with an annual remuneration between K 6,000 and K 15,000, and earned their living mainly by their private practice.<sup>49</sup> According to observers, these doctors did not have sufficient professional and human resources to devote to public health care. Strengthening the role of the state in the structure of health

<sup>43</sup> See Frei, 'Einleitung', 9.

<sup>44</sup> Gesetzblatt für das Land Oest., p. 3305: 686. Kundmachung des Reichsstatthalters in Österreich, wodurch die Verordnung über die Einführung des Gesetzes über die Vereinheitlichung des Gesundheitswesens im Lande Österreich vom 29. November 1938 bekanntgemacht wird.

<sup>45</sup> RGBl. I, 1934, p. 531: Gesetz über die Vereinheitlichung des Gesundheitswesens; RGBl. I, 1935, pp. 177 and 215, Reichsmistrialblatt, p. 327.

<sup>46</sup> NA, MSZS Coll., Carton 125: Explanatory memorandum, general provisions, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> NA, MSZS Coll., Carton 125: Explanatory memorandum, general provisions, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. V. Megová, 'Organisace veřejné zdravotní služby v Říši a u nás', *Nová práce. Rozhledy technicko-hospodářské, pro správu a techniku, vědeckou organizaci, technickou a sociální politiku, techniku domácnosti, techniku hygieny* (1940), No. 11, 174–5.

<sup>49</sup> Jaroslav Klíma, *Naše veřejné zdravotnictví* (Prague 1941), 20.

authorities and the supervision of the population, according to the draft proposal, meant an unprecedented expansion of state control over society's health and its living conditions.

The aim of the broadly conceived concept of public health in the Nazi Protectorate towards the Czech gentile population may surprise us if we consider the situation from the perspective of building an occupation regime in a territory whose population would not be integrated into the *Volksgemeinschaft*. It became

maintaining and improving the health of the people, especially combating contagious diseases, improving general hygiene, and building comprehensive protective and social health care.<sup>50</sup>

The state was expected to ensure proper pharmacies and the supply of medicines, and to provide comprehensive nursing care in hospitals, sanatoriums, convalescent facilities, other places of healing and spas. The authorities appear to have been interested in developing an institutional and programme regulation that would give rise to modern preventive care. However, the main intention formulated in July 1942 was somewhat different. The consolidation of public health care in the Protectorate, which the highest occupation authorities regarded with 'extreme importance', as noted by German officials in December 1942, became a priority that required unified and planned management and control of the local population's health.<sup>51</sup>

### **Health insurance and health care**

Health care in the Protectorate primarily faced the economic and organisational consequences of the Nazi occupation and the ongoing war rather than the Germans' attempts to drastically reduce health care provision for the Czechs. On the contrary, those most affected by the limits of health care were those excluded for racial and political reasons. Several factors influenced the distribution of care among the population, including the development of wages and prices, the priority given to the needs of the German army and other paramilitary organisations operating in the Bohemian lands, the demands on factory workers and the limitations on the autonomy of insurance companies. Moreover, more than in any other area of social welfare, it was here that the overlap between health care and racial-biological surveys of the population became apparent. In this section, I will

<sup>50</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 279/1942 Coll., on public health care, here § 1.

<sup>51</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Sign. I-1d6463, Carton 314: Der Reichsprotector in B. u. M. – I1d-6462, Betr. Zusammenfassung des öffentlichen Gesundheitswesens des Protektorats Böhmen und Mähren, 7 December 1942.

focus on the development of social insurance and the conditions of health care concerning the sick, that is, those unfit for work, and the insurance companies as the institutions that bore the financial burden of providing for health care.

Czech efforts to rebuild health care included constructing and revitalising Protectorate hospitals for Czech patients. On the table were a number of plans drawn up in the interwar period, but they never came to fruition. However, the renewal of the hospital network, which many people called for, did not provide universal accessibility to these public health facilities because the hospitals were still limited to internal medicine, surgery and infectious diseases wards in many places. In Moravia, in the eastern part of the country, there were only seven general public hospitals; other hospitals usually only had one department.<sup>52</sup> According to Eduard Kleinschnitz, a long-standing employee and ministerial councillor of the interwar Ministry of Public Health, the situation demonstrated the apparent inability of some institutions to treat cases for which the hospital in question was not qualified. Kleinschnitz maintained that the situation was unsatisfactory.<sup>53</sup>

In 1939, the Ministry of Social and Health Administration drew up a list of current needs. It envisaged the establishment of unified district hospitals for the treatment of all kinds of conditions in larger towns throughout the country, namely in Pilsen, České Budějovice, Tábor, Benešov, Pardubice, Hradec Králové, Jičín and Mladá Boleslav, and the establishment of five more by merging selected facilities.<sup>54</sup> The costs of the construction programme in Bohemia alone amounted to approximately K 260–280 million.<sup>55</sup> Procedural complications hampered the implementation of the Czechs' plans, but some projects were still carried out. One of them was the construction of a new district general public hospital in Tábor, South Bohemia, which started in 1936. However, the hospital only opened four years later.<sup>56</sup> Although all civilian development projects were restricted from 7 May 1941, and some buildings were handed over to the German administration, the efforts to stabilise the hospital network were partially successful, even under these constraints.<sup>57</sup> The Ministry of Social and Health Administration came up with several investment projects, which, in addition to being designed, were also envisaged to be implemented in the coming months and years. In the end, however, only one project was completed: the hospital in Prague-Motol. Now the largest medical facility in the Czech Republic and one of the largest in Europe, it was founded during the Second World War. Its construction started in 1940, and since all civilian development projects were prohibited, the building continued as

<sup>52</sup> 'Budování nemocnic na Moravě', *Sociální reforma* (20 June 1939), No. 10, 172.

<sup>53</sup> Eduard Kleinschnitz, 'Malá nemocniční novela', *Česká nemocnice* (29 March 1940), No. 3, 1–2.

<sup>54</sup> 'Výstavba v. v. nemocnic v Čechách', *Sociální reforma* (20 May 1939), No. 10, 133.

<sup>55</sup> 'Výstavba v. v. nemocnic v Čechách II', *Sociální reforma* (9 June 1939), No. 11, 152.

<sup>56</sup> 'Léčebné ústavy', *Sociální reforma* (20 December 1939), No. 24, 341.

<sup>57</sup> Collection of Law and Regulation of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 166/1941 Coll., on the prohibition of new buildings.

a military hospital project from the summer of 1941. Commenting on it, Vladislav Klumpar, former Minister of Social and Health Administration, recalled at the end of the war:

When later, in early 1943, I was invited in a private capacity by Dr Kleinschnitz to visit the recently opened Motol hospital, I was delighted that the work had been successful.<sup>58</sup>

The capacity was about 530 beds, and it had central heating and full hospital equipment. Ground-floor pavilions betrayed the building's makeshift nature, and the material used was mainly wood. Even though the Motol hospital was designed as a temporary facility for only ten to fifteen years of operation, the quality of the conditions and services provided was excellent from the outset.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, the Motol hospital was established exclusively for Czech patients. It seems Klumpar's enthusiasm was appropriate.

The budget for the modernisation of medical institutions and state medical schools allocated a similar amount in 1939 as in the previous years.<sup>60</sup> To build up the Motol hospital, the Protectorate Ministry of Finance funded around K 30 million, approximately three times the annual budget.<sup>61</sup> Of course, we cannot draw far-reaching conclusions about the quality of hospital care from these figures. Nevertheless, they indicate an ongoing effort to invest in revitalising health facilities in the Nazi Protectorate. The enormous budgetary burden was to stabilise health care for members of the Czech *národní pospolitost*, who continued to enjoy the right to protection in the event of illness, disability and old age.

The improvement of the material facilities of hospitals happened at the same time as the number of insured persons grew. In 1944, the number of persons insured by the ÚSP rose by 18 per cent compared with 1939, and at the end of the Second World War, the number still exceeded the pre-war figures.<sup>62</sup> Social rights largely derived from sickness insurance, to which employees contributed through compulsory contributions deducted from their wages. Unpopular increases in insurance contributions took place during the occupation, but mainly due to inflation and increases in nominal wages. The Protectorate authorities took a more conciliatory approach in 1941 by removing an unpopular regulation designed to reduce the economic impacts of the Great Depression. Initially, the Czechoslovak government adopted these measures in 1934 and reduced sickness benefits for the first fourteen days of illness. In the case of some insurance companies, they even

<sup>58</sup> ANM, Vladislav Klumpar Coll., No. 5/5, Carton 1: Memoirs, Volume III, p. 10.

<sup>59</sup> Petr Svobodný and Ludmila Hlaváčková, *Pražské špitály a nemocnice* (Prague 1999), 137

<sup>60</sup> Jiří Říha (ed.), *Zdravotnická ročenka Československa 1938* (Prague 1938), 36–7; *Zdravotnická ročenka Protektorátu Čechy a Morava 1939–1940* (Prague 1940), 42.

<sup>61</sup> ANM, Vladislav Klumpar Coll., No. 5/5, Carton 1: Memoirs, Volume III, p. 10.

<sup>62</sup> *20 let Ústřední sociální pojišťovny* (Prague 1946), 48.

reduced maternity benefits.<sup>63</sup> However, the Protectorate took a much more comprehensive approach to providing care for two specific groups – the unemployed and farmers.

Unemployment policy had changed fundamentally. As the authors put it, the core of the reform was that ‘the unemployed and their families should enjoy social security until they return to work.’<sup>64</sup> The hard times of the economic crisis, when the unemployed lost their entitlement to welfare distributed through the trade unions and were driven into deep poverty along with their families, were to be forgotten. During the economic crisis of the 1930s, the unemployed relied on the voluntary treatment provided by doctors to whom the unemployed came with a voucher for free treatment issued by district authorities.<sup>65</sup> After the Munich crisis and during the Nazi occupation, even though the number of unemployed fell to a minimum, support for the unemployed still played an important role, especially from a psychological point of view. In January 1941, the Reich Protector supported the introduction of social insurance for the unemployed under the original provisions of the interwar Act on the insurance of employees against sickness, disability and old age.<sup>66</sup> The authorities put unemployment benefits on an equal footing with employment, which gave rise to obligatory insurance. It is symptomatic that this was done when high expenditure on unemployment protection was unlikely, and unemployment was starting to disappear completely.<sup>67</sup>

Insurance companies paid sickness benefits at a level that could not exceed unemployment benefits. Thus, sickness could not serve as means of escape from the employment policy system. The costs of the insurance companies were partly covered by a contribution from the state budget and partly by the new contributions of 1 per cent of the average daily wage provided by employees and employers.<sup>68</sup> The workers contributed to this insurance, but many did not use it during the Nazi era. It mainly had symbolic meaning to strengthening national solidarity. The economic aspect of this measure was essential. The costs of any modification of the

<sup>63</sup> Government regulation No. 112/1934 Coll., on the insurance of employees in case of sickness, disability and old age; Government regulation No. 143/1934 Coll., amending Government regulation No. 112 Coll. of 15 June 1934, on the insurance of employees in case of sickness, disability and old age; Government regulation No. 315/1941 Coll., on the insurance of employees in case of sickness, disability and old age.

<sup>64</sup> NA, PMR Coll., Carton 4156: Explanatory memorandum to the Government proposal on sickness benefits for the unemployed.

<sup>65</sup> Klíma, *Naše veřejné zdravotnictví*, 23.

<sup>66</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 101/1940 Coll., on unemployment benefits; Government regulation No. 47/1941 Coll., on sickness benefits for the unemployed.

<sup>67</sup> Between March and June 1939, unemployment fell by 80 per cent, from 90,975 to 16,912 unemployed persons.

<sup>68</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 101/1940 Coll., on unemployment benefits, Section 12.

Ghent system had been feared by Czechoslovak politicians throughout the 1930s and incited a superstitious fear even among Protectorate officials.<sup>69</sup>

From the workers' point of view, however, the family's economic situation remained crucial. In the Protectorate, several unpopular measures that increased the risk of being left without income were eliminated. These included automatic registration for sickness insurance, effective immediately on the date employment commenced rather than applying to the insurance company. The administrative burden associated with the exercise of social rights by the workers then passed from employees entirely to employers. The insured person was entitled to sickness benefits from the fourth day of unfitness for work and could get support for a maximum of 365 days. The employer and the employee continued to share equally in the payment of insurance contributions, usually at the rate of 5.2–6.0 per cent of the average daily earnings.<sup>70</sup>

There was no indication that the Nazis aimed at destroying social security in the Bohemian lands. The main reason for this was the extensive involvement of Czechs, who had reputation as skilled workers – famously put in the metaphor 'golden Czech hands' – in the Nazi economy. The Protectorate authorities urged the Czechs to work hard, but these appeals functioned only as propaganda. However, towards the end of its existence, the Protectorate government came up with an innovation in social insurance. It decided to introduce sickness, old-age and disability insurance for farmer entrepreneurs, effective from 1 May 1945.<sup>71</sup> This is remarkable timing, given that the Bohemian lands were officially liberated by the Allies precisely seven days later. It means it could not have served as anything else than a reputational boost for members of the Czech government who were already widely regarded as collaborators.

The insurance of farmers was boasted about in official propaganda in the same way as recreation for industrial workers had been.<sup>72</sup> It exploited farmers' long-term needs and wishes that the social insurance companies had been unwilling to meet since the interwar era due to the unprecedented financial burden. In the uncertain times of spring 1945, farmers' insurance was an initiative and perhaps a tactical move by the Minister of Agriculture, Adolf Hrubý, serving to improve his reputation.<sup>73</sup> The implementation of this decree was eventually halted by the end of the war. Had this not happened, it would have been a further administrative

<sup>69</sup> Rákosník, *Odvracená tvář meziválečné prosperity*, 270f.

<sup>70</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 2/1944 Coll. on certain changes in the insurance of employees against sickness, disability and old age.

<sup>71</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 29/1945 Coll., on farmers' social insurance.

<sup>72</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 971: Das neue Sozialversicherungswerk für die Landwirtschaftlich Böhmens und Mährens. Undated.

<sup>73</sup> ANM, Vladislav Klumpar Coll., No. 5/6, Carton 1: Memoirs, p. 4.



and economic burden on the Protectorate insurance companies. Hrubý foresaw the creation of a separate institution, where the ÚSP was to serve as a temporary insurance provider until a new institution was established. Due to the imminent liberation of the Protectorate, this last hurrah of its social policy did not come to fruition.

The ambitious proposal to insure farmers went hand in hand with increasing economic and administrative pressure on the insurance companies in the Protectorate. Expenditures on sickness benefits were rising rapidly, as the director of the Central Union of Sickness Insurance Companies, Jiří Pleskot, pointed out at a professional conference held in Prague on 29 and 30 January 1940. While insurance premiums were rising in proportion to the increase in wages,<sup>74</sup> Pleskot was very uncertain regarding future expenses for medical services, the cost of medicines, the cost of hospital and institutional treatment, and administrative expenses, which he thought 'could not be covered under normal funding'.<sup>75</sup> He expected an increase of between 20 and 40 per cent.

Shifting further financial burdens to the insurance companies was part of a more comprehensive Nazi strategy in the Bohemian lands. The insurance companies remained the leading players in social health care in the following years, keeping their almost unassailable position. The Nazis' goal was not to destroy the insurance companies but to make the most of their services. This was reflected in the changes that primarily affected the prices of medicines. Interfering with the system of fees meant modifying the relations between doctors, pharmacies and insurance companies. The Protectorate government took the necessary steps to do so in December 1940 when it introduced a new pharmacopoeia – the basic pharmaceutical document setting standards and containing information on safe, effective and quality medicines. The new version, taken over from Germany, replaced the eighth edition of the *Pharmacopoeia Austriaca* released in 1906.<sup>76</sup> The Czechoslovak pharmacopoeia was never completed during the interwar era. The original Austrian document remained in force alongside the new version until 1 July 1941, when it was fully replaced by the sixth edition of the German pharmacopoeia. The main novelty was the increased pharmacy rates, which, according to F. Pröglér, the expert officer of the German Medical Chamber in Bohemia and Moravia, were the lowest in Europe and put pharmacists at a considerable

<sup>74</sup> One of the significant measures was the increase in the insurance contribution rates of all sickness insurance companies by one-fifth of one per cent of average daily earnings, which was brought about by Government regulation No. 2/1944 of 21 December 1943, on certain changes in insurance of employees against sickness, disability and old age.

<sup>75</sup> 'Konference vedoucích úředníků', *Sociální reforma* (5 February 1940), No. 3, 37.

<sup>76</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 162/1941 Coll., on the pharmacists' tariff and on the conditions of sale and reimbursement of medicaments and drugs.

disadvantage vis-à-vis insurance companies. Prögler described this situation as a ‘politically influenced diktat’, which suited the liberal democratic regime.<sup>77</sup>

The new pharmacopoeia had three essential functions: to adjust doctors’ fees, to partially equalise the medicament sale and purchase conditions, and to reconcile the local and Reich circumstances regarding drug distribution. The Czech pharmacy workers’ professional organisations in the Protectorate strongly supported it, seeing the introduction of the Reich pharmacy rates as an important reform, and even advocated a radical increase of up to 50 per cent.<sup>78</sup> Prögler openly criticised the Protectorate insurance companies and took a stand in defence of the rights of pharmacists and patients. In his analysis, he concluded that

the hegemony of the sickness insurance companies worked to the disadvantage of pharmacists, but even more to the detriment of sick people, because the sick almost without exception did not receive what they needed.<sup>79</sup>

Insurance companies were banned from setting up and operating their own pharmacies, another blow against their monopoly position.<sup>80</sup> Prögler attributed extreme importance to introducing the new pharmacopoeia, and it is clear that a large part of the occupation authorities and the Protectorate administration shared this sense of urgency. The main consequence was increased expenditures by sickness insurance companies, as shown in [Table 5.1](#).

While the number of prescriptions issued and the average number of insured persons increased by 5 per cent and 4 per cent respectively, there was a 45 per cent increase in the amount spent on reimbursements for medicaments. It is impossible

	Number of prescriptions issued	Total amount spent on medicaments	Average number of insured people
Q3 1940	1,097,238	7,740,905.90	497,827
Q3 1941	1,154,543	13,896,832.62	516,343

**Table 5.1** Number of prescriptions issued and total expenses for medicaments in the Protectorate in 1940 and 1941

Source: NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 976: Fr. Koreis, Direktor des Zentralsozialversicherungsanstalts an Josef Schneider, Amt des Reichsprotectors, 22 January 1942. Letter attachment.

<sup>77</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 976: Vermerk: Deutsche Arzneitaxe 1936. Einführung im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, Dr. Jur. Ph. Mr. Fr. Prögler, 24 January 1941, p. 1.

<sup>78</sup> Barbora Vašatová, *Farmacie v Českých zemích 1938/39–1945*, Master’s thesis, University of Hradec Králové (Hradec Králové 2014), 61; ‘Léky, lékárny, retaxace’, *Sociální reforma* (5 January 1940), No. 1, 9.

<sup>79</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 976: Vermerk: Deutsche Arzneitaxe 1936. Einführung im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, Dr. Jur. Ph. Mr. Fr. Prögler, 24 January 1941, p. 11.

<sup>80</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 263/1942 Coll., on certain measures in the field of pharmacy.

to determine the state of health of the Protectorate population from these figures. In a 1943 summary report on the state of sickness insurance in the Protectorate drawn up for the Reich Protector's Office, it was stated that the costs of sickness insurance were rising due to the 'poor health of all insured persons'. The daily percentage of those who were sick and unfit for work in 1942 was 3.96 per cent, but in 1943 it was already 4.14 per cent, and the authorities expected an increase to 4.6 per cent. This trend was matched by expenditures: in the year following 1942 alone, expenditures for sickness benefits rose by 18.4 per cent, namely by more than K 81 million, and that of medical care by 7.6 per cent, or around K 30 million. The officials were not expecting any improvement.<sup>81</sup>

Sickness followed more or less standard seasonal cycles. This was illustrated, for example, by the situation in the Mydlovary mines located in southern Bohemia, where lignite, brown coal, was mined. According to data collected in July 1943, sickness in Mydlovary seemed high to the insurance company officers. They explained this trend mainly by the miners' susceptibility to colds and respiratory problems in the winter months. In the autumn and spring, influenza and tonsillitis were the most common complaints, and the damp weather in autumn also caused frequent rheumatic bouts. These findings led to the conclusion that the miners' immunity needed to be boosted by an increased dosage of vitamin C and provisions of warm clothing and rain boots.<sup>82</sup> At that time, this was not an unusual approach to preventive care. For instance, the Protectorate authorities organised the 'Vitamin-C Campaign' to improve the health of children with Reich citizenship placed in facilities in the Protectorate under the auspices of the Hitler Youth.<sup>83</sup>

Even the Protectorate could not entirely eliminate the effects of the war. Reducing the number of doctors, prioritising military medical aid over civilian care, limiting the functionality of some institutions and increased difficulty in accessing pharmaceuticals were often unintended and undesirable consequences. Of course, Czech physicians were not sent to the front, but many of them, those of Jewish origin, lost their practices during the Second Republic, greatly reducing the number of doctors able to practise in the Protectorate. Although German interests were opportunistic, the health care system in the Protectorate was efficient. For the Czech authorities, securing social rights was a consistent part of strengthening Czech 'national unity'. The Nazis found the good health of the Czechs useful in that it significantly improved their work performance.

<sup>81</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Sign. 8141, Carton 1085: Bericht über den Stand der Krankenversicherung, 19 April 1944, p. 4.

<sup>82</sup> NA, MSP Coll., Carton 3330: Zentralbrüderlade in Prag an das Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit, Betr. Lignitgrube Mydlovary Krankenstand, 15 July 1943.

<sup>83</sup> Šustrová, *Pod ochranou protektorátu*, 172.

## War measures and civil solidarity

The Bohemian lands were not immediately affected by military operations at the front. However, the ongoing state of war structured the priorities of the regime and the needs of society in a new way. In Bohemia and Moravia, the confiscation of hospital buildings for the treatment of wounded German soldiers and the establishment of infirmaries in former sanatoriums, hospitals, high schools and other public institutions was widespread.<sup>84</sup> The first explicit action against clinics associated with the medical faculty of Charles University occurred after the student demonstrations on 28 October 1939 as a response to the public commemorating the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia in 1918. Subsequently, all Czech universities and associated medical institutions were closed on 17 November 1939. While the universities remained permanently closed until the end of the war, a month later, in December 1939, the department heads and professors had already applied for the resumption of medical facilities operations, and all were eventually granted permission.<sup>85</sup>

The Protectorate did not lie on the front line, but the Wehrmacht found a good base there. By August 1939, soon after the country's occupation, the Wehrmacht took over the required number of beds in medical facilities for its exclusive use. As early as September 1939, 300 wounded soldiers from the South Army arrived at the Reserve military hospital in Olomouc, 250 of whom, seriously wounded, later found a place in similar facilities in Prague and Theresienstadt.<sup>86</sup> The military continued to take over suitable facilities for their own use, and these demands of the Wehrmacht made it challenging to provide standard medical care.<sup>87</sup> By that year alone, the authorities had identified more than sixty-one suitable facilities for the Wehrmacht in the Protectorate, twenty-six of which were located in and around Prague. The Protectorate insurance companies also helped, as they had to provide the military authorities with up to 73 per cent of the capacity of their treatment facilities.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>84</sup> A list of all buildings that were made available to the Wehrmacht in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia for setting up an infirmary would be quite long. Therefore, I refer to an inventory, probably made in the spring of 1943, broken down by town, which is stored in NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 975: Zur Einrichtung von Wehrmachts-Lazaretten in Frage kommende Gebäude (Zahl der unterzubringenden Betten in Klammern).

<sup>85</sup> Svobodný and Hlaváčková, *Pražské špitály a nemocnice*, 134.

<sup>86</sup> Dr. Muntsch, 'Kriegsverwundete im Protektorat', *Unsere Wehrmacht im Protektorat* (28 November 1939), No. 1, 6.

<sup>87</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1001: Sachgebiet Sozialversicherung V 2 c 250/43 an den Herrn Abteilungsleiter V2, Betr. Verwaltungsbericht für das 3. Vierteljahr 1943, 21 September 1943.

<sup>88</sup> The Wehrmacht had 2,590 beds available out of a total of 3,530. NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 975: Nach den Akten des Ref. IW sind der Wehrmacht von hier seither zum Zwecke der Errichtung von Lazaretten folgende Hausgrundstücke zur Verfügung gestellt worden [1943].

The war impacted all relations. It brought changes of individual and collective strategies and the introduction of new forms of control to guarantee the labour and economic solidarity of the people in the New Europe. Alongside the 'principle of solidarity of the insured' that the designers of the social security system called for, it was the cohesion of the nation that provided further protection in the event of social hardship and poverty. The conditions in the Protectorate never came close to such an emergency, but the hunger and misery experienced during the First World War were still in living memory and consistently fuelled anxieties about daily subsistence. This section focuses on two significant issues: how to supervise the patient to get him back to work as soon as possible, and the struggle against communicable diseases as an inscrutable threat to the community.

### Patient discipline

As the war progressed, repressive measures directed primarily against the sick and the incapacitated increased. The main reason for this was the suspicion of idleness, which defied the idea of solidarity among community members within the sphere of influence of the Third Reich. The measures taken by the Protectorate authorities against suspected idlers were twofold: firstly, there was a system of preventive care, which, especially in the case of adolescent workers, was designed to detect symptoms early and improve their state of health; and secondly, there was a system of rigorous controls of patients and doctors.

The number of patients first attracted heightened attention in the summer of 1942.<sup>89</sup> The first to intervene were the Protectorate officials and reviewing doctors (medical assessors), who monitored individual cases daily and asked insured persons to come for review examinations. After two months of unfitness for work, the sick person also had to undergo a check-up by a specialist.<sup>90</sup> The controllers ('inspectors') examined the sick and visited patients, but their own work was also subject to scrutiny by other bodies from time to time.<sup>91</sup> This circular system of check-ups and reviews, which eventually involved the major industrial plants, was intended to ensure that only those whose health did not allow them to perform their occupation were considered sick.<sup>92</sup> However, as the review reports showed, a

<sup>89</sup> *Věstník ÚSP*, Memorandum No. 1412 of 25 September 1942: Control of the sick.

<sup>90</sup> *Věstník ÚSP*, Memorandum No. 1506 of 12 February 1943: Examination of persons unfit for work by specialist doctors.

<sup>91</sup> In November 1943, for example, the employment offices in Moravská Ostrava and Pilsen noted an increase in the number of sick people and therefore initiated increased controls of the medical assessors. Klimo, *Im Dienste des Arbeitseinsatzes*, 261.

<sup>92</sup> See State Regional Archives in Pilsen, Škoda General Directorate Coll., Carton 189 and 190. *Věstník ÚSP*, Memorandum No. 1426 of 21 October 1942: Control of the sick. (Addendum to Memorandum No. 1412).

large number of the insured persons suffered from chronic ailments, and therefore the officials did not expect any dramatic improvement in 1943.<sup>93</sup>

Doctors played an essential role in diagnosing and controlling health conditions. It was not uncommon for a sickness insurance company's doctor to declare insured people fit for work despite their real health complications. The doctors were under pressure from Protectorate institutions, such as insurance companies and labour offices, which worked together to create conditions for the smooth distribution of labour to the factories. If patients disagreed with their decision (and deemed continued treatment necessary), they had two options as social insurance clients. They could either go to the district doctor, who was responsible for all those who could not afford private treatment, and thus work and receive free follow-up treatment in parallel; or they could claim a disability pension. The ÚSP could either provide treatment for a subsequent return to work or accept the claim for a disability pension. If the insurance company rejected the claim, the patient was still left with the legal support of the trade union to help him navigate through the complex system of social and health authorities.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, procedural complexity could easily have discouraged any rebellion against the public authorities and encouraged patients to accept the doctor's decision.

The phenomenon of idleness played a role in this story. The almost obsessive drive to prosecute cases of idleness placed more and more burdens on low-level administrative officers and doctors. Various monitoring and control measures supported public order and peace at work. Virtually any employee whose illness was suspicious could face increasing scrutiny from the authorities. The requirement for the 'extensive cooperation of the controllers' was based on creating a comprehensive and effective network of labour productivity protection and introducing sanctions to discourage collusion between doctors and patients.<sup>95</sup>

Patients diagnosed with social diseases found themselves ground down by adverse conditions prioritising war-related tasks and the limited possibilities of the insurance companies. They suffered from a disease whose consequence or immediate cause was the patient's economic situation and that of his family. There was no precise definition of what 'social disease' meant at the time. However, in principle, patients whose diagnosis was not associated with a threat to life or performance at work were included in this category. This is why officers looked at them with suspicion. In the 1940s, sexually transmitted diseases

<sup>93</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 1085: Bericht über den Stand der Krankenversicherung, 19 April 1944, p. 4.

<sup>94</sup> 'Podle dotazů a odpovědí uveřejněných v Dělnické pojištění', *Národní práce* (17 January 1941), No. 16, 9.

<sup>95</sup> Memorandum of the ÚSP No. 1412 of 25 September 1942. See 'Kontrola nemocných', *Sociální reforma* (20 October 1942), Nos 19–20, 1.

(STDs) were also included in this category. There was increased surveillance of the incidence of STDs and consistent registration of the sick. All sickness insurance companies were obliged to report STDs from the mid-1940s.<sup>96</sup> In the Protectorate, like in Germany, much attention was paid to patients with STDs and tuberculosis.

The system was highly restrictive, but the patient was not supposed to be allowed to fall into poverty. If the claims of the insured were not subject to the possibility of appeal, especially if they constituted punitive measures, the applicant could turn to the public indigent care authorities. In the words of Eduard Břeský, a renowned physician and member of the board of the State Institute of Health, this could happen when the insurance company refused to provide financial support or benefits in kind. In such cases, Břeský urged doctors and insurance company officers to remain helpful to the client and try to arrange help from elsewhere.<sup>97</sup> An alternative solution was various forms of poor relief such as social and nursing services provided to everyone from tuberculosis patients to mothers with young children. In the summer of 1939, the National Social and Health Care Centre became the central institution providing this kind of support. Being an umbrella organisation of all voluntary organisations in the Protectorate, it had a network of counselling centres of various kinds. The centre disbursed the funds of its member organisations and the money collected from the public via the National Aid. It helped organise a wide range of activities, from social and health services to food and clothing distribution and holiday care. The centre was particularly active in preventive health care through a network of counselling centres for children and tuberculosis patients and organised special courses for doctors and social health workers.<sup>98</sup>

The importance of the centre grew at a time when the limited options for providing treatment in medical institutions were becoming apparent. The increasing demands of the German military authorities for hospital space naturally favoured members of the armed forces. The beginning of this trend could be tentatively dated to 1941. Only three years later, the public social insurance system made it possible to for a nurse to provide assistance and treatment for a sick person undergoing home treatment at the expense of the insurance company.<sup>99</sup> At that time, however, therapeutic care largely gave way to preventive care.

<sup>96</sup> *Věstník ÚSP*, Memorandum No. 983 of 27 June 1940: Registering and reporting patients with sexually transmitted diseases.

<sup>97</sup> Eduard Břeský, *Zdravotně sociální péče ve svých vztazích sociálnímu pojištění* (Prague 1941), 4.

<sup>98</sup> NA, NÚSZP Coll., Carton 1: Report on the activities of National Social and Health Care Centre in 1941.

<sup>99</sup> Collections of Law and Regulations in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 2/1944 Coll., Section 152.

### Combating contagious diseases

The fight against contagious diseases was highly developed and professionalised during the Nazi occupation, to the extent that it gained the recognition of Czechoslovak physicians after the war.<sup>100</sup> Tuberculosis, diphtheria, typhus, scarlet fever and other diseases were probably the greatest threat to the occupiers, especially because they could paralyse war production quickly and for an unknown period of time. Combating contagious diseases, especially tuberculosis, was one of the most critical areas of health policy and was given particular attention in the war's final years. The worsening social and health conditions characteristic of the Second World War era exposed the population to greater danger than ever before. This was reflected in campaigns promoting prevention and sufficient hygiene among the Czech people. It was also the main aim of the People's Health Week (known as National Health Week until 1942), which was intended to provide an opportunity for a 'broadly based promotion of health care principles among the general population of Bohemia and Moravia.'<sup>101</sup> The event involved officially appointed doctors, educational organisations, schools, staff of counselling centres and other institutions of social and health administration, using administrative committees set up in each district office to draw up a programme and organise lectures. The People's Health Week took place repeatedly. Whereas in 1939 it was held under the auspices of the National Partnership and its central theme was the healthy physical development of women and mothers, three years later the event was dominated by the protection against contagious diseases under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>102</sup> This development illustrates the shift the care of the 'Czech nation' underwent during the occupation: from population issues to general protection measures.

Anti-epidemic measures culminated in April 1941, with the Protectorate government fully adapting regulations according to the procedures used in Germany.<sup>103</sup> This was accompanied by virtually simultaneously running training courses teaching Czech doctors how to combat contagious diseases.<sup>104</sup> Comprehensive measures mandating notification of diseases and disease investigation were introduced to establish protective measures for the twenty-nine most dangerous contagious diseases. Failure to report such a disease in a timely manner

<sup>100</sup> Bohumil Nepustil, *Stát pečuje o zdraví. Obraz práce a snah ministerstva zdravotnictví* (Prague 1948), 9.

<sup>101</sup> 'Týden lidového zdraví 1. až 10. květen 1942', *Věstník českých lékařů* (1942), Nos 17–18, 247.

<sup>102</sup> Alois Zelenka, 'Týden národního zdraví (Matka zdrojem národního života, dítě nadějí národa)', *Věstník českých lékařů* (1939), No. 17, 422.

<sup>103</sup> Collections of Law and Regulations in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 254/1941 Coll., on combating communicable diseases.

<sup>104</sup> 'Kurs pro lékaře, vykonávající praxi v Čechách a na Moravě, o potlačování přenosných nemocí', *Věstník českých lékařů* (1941), Nos 39–40, 584–6.



meant risking a fine of up to K 5,000, and in the case of deliberately breaking the law of up to K 100,000 or six months in prison, starting with the attending physician.<sup>105</sup> In contrast to Germany, physicians were not obligated to report tuberculosis cases in the Bohemian lands before this because it was not on the list of contagious diseases.<sup>106</sup> The change came into force in 1941 and marked not an end but the beginning of the fight against contagious diseases in the Protectorate. Over time, the conditions tightened even further. There was more strict isolation of tuberculosis patients from the rest of the population, which the authorities adapted explicitly at the request of the Wehrmacht in 1942.<sup>107</sup>

In addition to strict isolation, vaccination as a form of epidemic disease prevention was a more modern and increasingly used measure. It became crucial during the war when it became compulsory to vaccinate against diphtheria and smallpox. Vaccination against diphtheria was not made compulsory in Czechoslovakia until 1946, but it had already been carried out during the occupation.<sup>108</sup> Children up to the age of ten were given registration forms for mass vaccination at school, and it was up to the parents whether they registered their child for the vaccination. Reaching out to Czech families, the Protectorate experts introduced vaccination as the only way to prevent the disease.

It is in your hands if you leave [the children] unprepared, or if you do the best that can be done against this disease, that is if you have your son or daughter vaccinated against diphtheria.<sup>109</sup>

In February 1941, the politicians modified the law that had regulated smallpox vaccination since 1919.<sup>110</sup> The Protectorate regulations reduced the booster vaccinations from two additional doses at the ages of seven and fourteen to one booster vaccination at the age of twelve.

Among all contagious diseases, tuberculosis was the most feared. It swept through Europe after the First World War and was still perceived as a disease of the poor in the 1930s and 1940s. In Czechoslovakia in the mid-1920s, approximately

<sup>105</sup> Collections of Law and Regulations in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 254/1941 Coll., Section 41.

<sup>106</sup> Anna Zahálková, 'Povinnost hlásiti některé formy tuberkulósy podle vl. nař. 254/41', *Věstník českých lékařů* (1942), Nos 49–50, 11.

<sup>107</sup> NA, ÚŘP-ST Coll., Sign. 109-4/1204, Carton 68: Gruppe I 6 an Herrn Abteilungsleiter, Betr. Gesundheitswesen, 2 May 1942.

<sup>108</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Act No. 189/1946 Coll., on compulsory diphtheria vaccination.

<sup>109</sup> Josef Zrzavý, 'Letošní očkování proti záškrtu', *Rodiče a škola. Čtrnáctideník rodičovských sdružení pro rodiče a školu* (17 October 1941), No. 3, 1.

<sup>110</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Act No. 412/1919 Coll., on compulsory smallpox vaccination. NB: For Slovakia, the effect was specified by a special regulation of 15 July 1919; Collection of Law and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 140/1940 Coll., on compulsory smallpox vaccination of 12 April 1941; Government regulation No. 141/1941 Coll., implementing Government regulation No. 140 Coll. of 6 February 1941, on compulsory smallpox vaccination.

the same number of people died of tuberculosis as of old age. There were 19.1 cases of death from tuberculosis per 10,000 inhabitants, compared with 10.0 for cancer, 12.3 for heart disease and 20.1 for old age. By the mid-1930s, the number for tuberculosis had declined substantially: the statistics showed 13.4 cases of death per 10,000 compared with 12.3 for cancer, 18.8 for heart disease and 16.6 due to old age.<sup>111</sup> The incidence of tuberculosis did not rise dramatically during the occupation. However, due to the shortage of hospital beds and higher turnover of patients, the average length of inpatient convalescence was reduced by 10 per cent.<sup>112</sup>

In August 1942, Josef Schneider enquired at the headquarters of the District Sickness Insurance Company in Brno, the second largest Protectorate city, about the number of tuberculosis patients and their distribution among various industry sectors. What he learned was not good. In the first half of 1942, the most significant number of patients, 285 cases (approximately 42 per cent), were from the metal-working industry, which was extremely important for the war.<sup>113</sup> The spread of tuberculosis was, among other things, caused by the shortage of beds in the sanatoriums, which, according to German officials, had literally 'catastrophic' effects since it did not allow for the timely treatment or isolation of the patient.<sup>114</sup> Patients reportedly had to wait three to four months for a bed. It was not only the priority given to the conscripts that was to blame. Above all, the independence of Slovakia and the loss of the Sudetenland deprived the Protectorate of three-quarters of all beds in sanatoriums for tuberculosis patients. German officers in the Protectorate and representatives of the Reich Ministry of Labour were seeking a solution in cooperation with the Slovak authorities, who were, in principle, open to the commercial lease of the facilities for Protectorate patients and sick Reich nationals.<sup>115</sup>

The high interest in Czech and German tuberculosis patients on the part of social and health care did not cease by the end of the occupation. On the contrary,

<sup>111</sup> Eduard Břeský, *Jak hodnotit jednotlivé skupiny chorob v sociálním pojištění* (Prague 1937), 6.

<sup>112</sup> In 1935 the ÚSP recorded 9.6 cases for men and 8.8 for women per 1,000 insured persons. In the first half of 1942, the statistics showed 5.7 and 4.6 cases, respectively. The figures for the whole year 1942 were expected to exceed those of 1935. The difference between 1935 and 1942 was in the length of convalescence, which averaged ninety-six days for men and 107 days for women between the wars, compared with eighty-three days and ninety-four days during the occupation. NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 975: Zentralsozialversicherungsanstalt, Oberregierungsrat a. D. Dr. Koreis, Direktor Herr Oberregierungsrat Josef Schneider, Betr. Tuberkuloseerkrankungen in der Sozialversicherung, 24 June 1943.

<sup>113</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 975: Bezirkskrankenversicherungsanstalt in Brünn, Direktion Herr Oberregierungsrat J. Schneider, der Sektionschef im Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit, 8 August 1942.

<sup>114</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 1001: Oberregierungsrat Schneider V 2 c 250/44 an den Herrn Abteilungsleiter V 2, Betr. Verwaltungsbericht für das 1. Vierteljahr 1944, 24 March 1944, p. 2

<sup>115</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 975: Der Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren, J. Schneider, Betr. Belagung der Heilstätte Hoch Hagy, 29 April 1942.

it gradually intensified, as evidenced by the provision in January 1944 of support combining the medical treatment of the patient and the economic support of his family that lost its breadwinner.<sup>116</sup> The family could receive a household allowance of up to half of the sickness benefit belonging to the insured person. The allowance increased up to a maximum of 90 per cent of the full sickness benefit with each additional household member who contracted tuberculosis. A sick person in institutional treatment or isolation received an allowance of K 2.0 per day. In addition to applying for a household allowance, the family could apply for additional support in exceptional cases if the family's financial situation was dire.<sup>117</sup>

If the sick person was at least partially able to work, he or she could receive social and health care and support for returning to work. Patients, doctors and officials were under pressure to make the most of the 'remaining working capacity'.<sup>118</sup> Occupation, especially at the stage of total mobilisation of the workforce, blurred the boundaries between convalescence and return to work. Although it is inherently highly dependent on each individual's circumstances, proper convalescence was not always observed even before, owing to the reduced earnings of the patient. In the case of tuberculosis, it was necessary to prevent the further spread of the disease and to provide appropriate treatment. Tuberculosis patients were a threat not only to the system but also to the family budget. The loss of earnings represented a similar situation that the families of persecuted dissidents faced, as I will show in [Chapter Six](#). At the same time, however, the wartime situation required a reduction in the length of treatment as much as possible since every available pair of hands was needed for the war industry.

## Health care for prioritised population groups

Nazi ideology and the state of war set the criteria based on which the administrative authorities prioritised certain population groups. In this section I focus on three of them: Czech workers, Czech children and youth, and insured Germans. In addition to workers, whose importance increased as the war took a turn for the worse for Germany, priority was also given to the youngest generation of Czechs living in the Protectorate. The Czech and German authorities projected their own ideas about the future of the 'Czech nation' onto the children and youth. While the Czechs discussed this in the context of the national future, the occupiers saw the

<sup>116</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 2/1944 Coll., on certain changes in the insurance of employees against sickness, disability and old age; Section 154.

<sup>117</sup> NA, MHP, Supplements II Collection (MHP dod. II Coll.), Carton 250: The ÚSP in Prague, Guidelines for health and social care of the ÚSP in combating tuberculosis.

<sup>118</sup> NA, MHP dod. II Coll., Carton 250: The ÚSP in Prague, Guidelines for health and social care of the ÚSP in combating tuberculosis, § 11.

youngest generation as the group most suitable for 're-nationalisation'. They did not necessarily have to become German, as the process of Germanisation would have required, but they had to accept the new ideological foundations of the state and political conditions in Europe. The activities of the Protectorate authorities, headed by Czech officials, doctors and social workers speaking the Czech language, had a much better chance of gaining the people's trust and successfully enrolling children in health programmes. The conditions of relatively comprehensive care, the scope of which was insufficient and the intentions of which were ambiguous, provided members of the *národní pospolitost* with an opportunity to receive the medical care they needed while not compromising their nationality by participating in a system under the administration of occupation officials.

The nationality motif was also strongly present in the case of the German population with Reich citizenship, who were entitled to the same level and scope of social and health care as the population in Germany from March 1939. These were not only the Bohemian and Moravian Germans who had embraced National Socialism or opted for Reich citizenship for various reasons but also those who had come to the Protectorate for work. The third section will deal with the provisions for the Reich-insured persons.

### Czech workers

The growing importance of factories and plants for German arms production imposed a considerable workload on a large part of the population. Due to the increasing demands on work efficiency, overworking and workplace injuries were common, which in turn slowed work and reduced productivity. Since the First World War, at the latest, there was an awareness that physical exertion had to be compensated for.<sup>119</sup> The study of the human constitution, physical capabilities, labour productivity and the conditions to which the workers returned for their daily shift transformed the view of the needs of workers and, in effect, the needs of industry. In contrast to modern insurance legislation, regulation of the health and safety of workers was insufficient between the wars. Therefore, when the number of employees grew and companies demanded higher worker performance, the authorities became much more interested in this area.

There were scientifically and statistically proven arguments for maintaining or even improving the social and health conditions of workers. It would seem that taking advantage of the possibility of improving their health condition put Czech workers in a situation where their class identity could again strongly compete with their national identity. Preventing this was the task of the National Trade Union

<sup>119</sup> See Rudolf Kučera, *Rationed Life: Science, Everyday Life, and Working-class Politics in the Bohemian Lands, 1914–1918* (Oxford, New York 2016).

Centre, the united Czech trade union organisation, which looked after the economic, social, health and cultural care of Czech workers in the Protectorate. The complementary national and professional entitlements played an essential role in the building of the *národní pospolitost* and helped to integrate workers into the national community.<sup>120</sup> Performance and work were the two basic categories that determined the worker's immediate future and motivated him or her to actively care and work harder for the Czechs' place in the New Europe.

After the Munich crisis and during the Nazi occupation, care for workers did not stop but became further developed. The genesis of comprehensive care for factory workers in the Czech environment was linked to the large-scale interwar housing construction by the Baťa shoe company in Zlín, eastern Moravia. Baťa, founded in 1894, expanded in the interwar period and built up, among other facilities for workers, the Baťa Hospital. Baťa heavily inspired planners to modernise the plant environment. Preventive health care consisting of 'careful monitoring of all factors affecting human health' became a field that combined both the maximisation of control and the maintenance of good health of each worker with the education on health care.<sup>121</sup> The DAF developed the concept of 'health management' in enterprises in the mid-1930s.<sup>122</sup> In the Bohemian lands, social and health care development followed a similar course, as Emil S. Hokeš of the Research Institute of Energy, an expert on business management, noted.<sup>123</sup> In 1944, Hokeš observed a turn of events that suggested 'new directions' in building the enterprise, which made the enterprise 'a socio-economic and also a cultural agent'.<sup>124</sup> Systematic health records in the form of a medical register, which contained information on the health status of Baťa's employees, made their current state of health more transparent and, if necessary, could provide information about the racial composition of Czech working-class families. With the same intention, the Protectorate authorities introduced regular examinations of all employees which were intended to create 'an extensively planned protective health care'.<sup>125</sup> The study of the health condition of Czech workers and the examination of their racial 'fitness' were intertwined.

The war accelerated the use of the study of the human constitution for the needs of industry in the Protectorate. However, the worker never disappeared from the picture, as the language of contemporary propaganda consistently

<sup>120</sup> There is some remarkable research by the sociologist J. Hanáček on the integration of workers into the national community, which he carried out during the occupation. His findings were published in the *Sociologická revue* (Sociological review) shortly after the war. Jaroslav Hanáček, 'K otázce dělníková sociálního vědomí', *Sociologická revue* (1946), No. 1, 41–6 and No. 2, 24–35.

<sup>121</sup> Ludmila Sinkulová, 'Nemocnice a průmyslové zdravotnictví', *Česká nemocnice* (1941), No. 3, 1.

<sup>122</sup> Winfried Süß, *Gesundheitspolitik, Gesundheitsverhältnisse und Krankenmord im national-sozialistischen Deutschland 1939–1945* (Oldenbourg 2003), 254.

<sup>123</sup> Emil Svozil Hokeš, *Sociální a zdravotní péče v podniku* (Prague 1944), 10.

<sup>124</sup> Hokeš, *Sociální a zdravotní péče*, 10.

<sup>125</sup> Sinkulová, 'Nemocnice a průmyslové zdravotnictví', 1.

indicated. Instead, he remained the recipient of all the promises of improvement made by the reformers.

The increased work effort, the lengthening of working hours and the transition of the workforce to conditions of total mobilisation brought many new things to the organisation of the factories that will be carried over from the wartime to become a lasting benefit in peacetime. These are the factory infirmaries, the ambulatories and the factory doctors' services. The involvement of doctors in the factories has proven to be very efficient and economical. It enables the workers to obtain medical help and medicines without losing precious time, often wasted by waiting for hours in crowded waiting rooms. Employees are also guaranteed first aid, good-quality treatment and timely medication.<sup>126</sup>

These were not just empty promises. Jaromír Balcar researched three major industrial complexes in Bohemia and Moravia and described the forms of care the company management provided to the workers. They included subsidised meals, cultural and sporting events, but also large-scale investments and the expansion of the network of social and health facilities during the Nazi occupation. In addition to many sanitary improvements consisting of the construction of locker rooms, showers and other creature comforts to meet the needs of the workers, the management was also consistently concerned with health care. The establishment of a system of factory doctors, three medical offices and eight surgeries with thirty qualified workers at the Czech-Moravian Machinery Factory (Česko-Moravská továrna na stroje a.s.) in Prague-Libeň enabled the treatment of around 85,000 patients between January and July 1943. The clinics were equipped with a good range of pharmaceuticals and modern medical equipment.<sup>127</sup> In precise numbers, the costs of social and health care in the Prague Ironworks Company (Pražská železářská společnost a.s.) rose continuously from K 41 million to K 63 million between 1940 and 1943.<sup>128</sup>

Health policy served the nation, managing its daily workload and fully accommodating each individual's personal needs. Regular medical examinations introduced across the Protectorate and financed by health insurance companies may have had a tangible impact on social and health conditions. Officials promised 'the best and free treatment', provided promptly in the interest of an individual's health and following the slogan of 'the health of the nation is its greatest asset'.<sup>129</sup> They were also concerned about the time workers spent on work tasks. Thanks to

<sup>126</sup> BArch, DAF-AWI, Archivsignatur 31170: 'Lékařská péče o zaměstnané v továrnách', *Grafik*, March 1944, No. 3 (Unpaginated).

<sup>127</sup> J. Balcar reserched Českomoravská Kolben-Daněk a.s. (Czech-Moravian Kolben-Daněk), Spolek pro chemickou a metalurgickou produkci a.s. (Association for chemical and metallurgical production) and Pražská železářská společnost a.s. (Prague Ironworks Company). Balcar, *Panzer für Hitler*, 255.

<sup>128</sup> Balcar, *Panzer für Hitler*, 248.

<sup>129</sup> BArch, DAF-AWI, Sign. NS 5-VI, Archivnummer 31173: 'Naše nemocenské pojištění a jeho úkoly', *Peněžní a pojišťovací zaměstnanec* (1944), No. 4 (Unpaginated).

factory doctors and on-site treatment, absence from work could be reduced virtually to a minimum. However, it would be a mistake to speak of the friendliness of the labour policy towards sickness insurance clients. The system of factory doctors and occupational physiological research marked out the field of occupational and performance medicine, the task of which in Germany was to achieve maximum labour capacity in preparation for and the prosecution of war while avoiding any potential revolt on the part of the workers.<sup>130</sup>

Health was a reward for work as part of a 'deal' with the authorities. The Germans prioritised Czech workers for a purpose. However, being non-Jewish Czechs, as a group they also played a part in their plans. Health care, provided under the sickness insurance scheme, formed an important social policy segment concerning workers in the Protectorate and those who left for work elsewhere in the German Reich. The good health of the workers moving through the German Reich was a prerequisite for their excellent performance. The Reich authorities had been discussing the state of health of Czech workers since mid-1939, when complaints about their generally poor health started coming from German enterprises. After only a few weeks of work, there were cases of heart problems, jaundice, chronic skin rashes and tuberculosis, which caused considerable concern and a financial burden. Businesses blamed inadequate examinations during recruitment, which the authorities intensified even at the cost of increased expenditure in the autumn of 1939.<sup>131</sup>

Czech civilian workers continued to be clients of public social policy. As I already revealed in [Chapter Four](#), they enjoyed social rights and could claim adequate care, just like Dutch and French workers. The difference in approach only becomes apparent in comparison with prisoner workers. However, the experience of the labour force cannot be generalised. Aerial bombing and labour relations in the factory determined a plant's general atmosphere and workers' impressions. Medical care was, however, a service that was used when needed. It existed in the background of day-to-day operations and thus may not have had a significant impact on the workers' direct experience. Everyone received an explicit promise to this effect: 'In the Reich, you are fundamentally equal to the German workers in your employment conditions', read the *Social-Political Lessons*, the brochure given to each worker deployed for work in Germany.<sup>132</sup> Indeed, the regime always promised more than it was able to deliver. In this case, it was not just propaganda but a consequence of the social rationalisation of industrial operations.

<sup>130</sup> Reminiscences of the November Revolution of 1918 played a role here. Martin Höfler-Waag, *Die Arbeits- und Leistungsmedizin im Nationalsozialismus von 1939-1945* (Husum 1994), 5.

<sup>131</sup> Becker, *Von der Werbung zum 'Totaleinsatz'*, 102.

<sup>132</sup> NA, ÜRP Coll., Carton 988: *Social-Political Lessons*, p. 2 (1942).

Advocating social security for non-German workers was a paradox brought about by wartime needs and the belief in the connection between performance and health. If we look at the situation in the General Government, or occupied Poland, for instance, the Reich insurance regulations applicable to German nationals applied to the Protectorate nationals as well. It was the same for foreign workers from Italy, Slovakia, the Netherlands, Belgium and France.<sup>133</sup> The needs of Germans, Czechs and workers of other nationalities were taken care of by the local insurance company in Katowice and its division in Kraków. However, the Reich Minister of Labour made this decision only in August 1941 at the instigation of the German authorities.<sup>134</sup> Before that, workers of different nationalities were treated differently, which officials considered unsuitable and, above all, contrary to the regulations.<sup>135</sup> When the Reich Minister of Labour considered revising the regulation, the arguments he laid out in correspondence with subordinate German authorities were rational. He pointed to the promise given to the workers at recruitment that they would be entitled to protection according to Reich insurance. Similarly, if the local insurance companies in the General Government did not insure their workers, they could hardly be granted family benefits from German sources.<sup>136</sup> This was a remarkable effort to put the social and health conditions of Czechs on an equal footing with workers from the occupied Western countries and the Reich's allies, or at least to create a similar perspective in their treatment by the German authorities.

Besides work performance, the work ethic was the next most important evaluation criterion. A worker could easily be deprived of social insurance benefits if he violated his employment contract. At the same time, the diligent performance of duties opened up further opportunities for workers. 'Heydrich holidays', as recreational stays were occasionally called at the time, served a dual purpose. Firstly, they were meant as motivation for excellent work performance, and secondly, they were meant to serve as a preventive health care measure since they provided an opportunity for recovery after hard work. Holidays were neither for convalescents nor for the sick. Factories drew up lists of potential participants, and priority was given to the 'best' workers who 'deserved' a

<sup>133</sup> RGBl. I, 1940, p. 908: Verordnung über die Sozialversicherung der deutschen Staatsangehörigen im Generalgouvernement für die besetzten polnischen Gebiete.

<sup>134</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 970: Der Reichsarbeitsminister an die Träger der Krankenversicherung und ihre Aufsichtsbehörden und Verbände, 20 August 1941.

<sup>135</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 970: Ministerium für soziale und Gesundheitsverwaltung an den Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren, Betr. Heilfürsorge für Arbeiten, die im ehm. Polen Arbeiten, 13 September 1940.

<sup>136</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 970, Der Reichsarbeitsminister and die Regierung des Generalgouvernements – Abteilung Krakau, Betr. Sozialversicherung ausländischer Arbeitskräfte und von Protektoratsangehörigen im Generalgouvernement, 13 June 1941.



rest after their hard work for the national community. Czech trade unionists summed up this design:

All achievements in the social and economic field are only attained and maintained when they are pursued through efforts to improve qualifications in the national and social spirit.<sup>137</sup>

Although recreational programmes for Czech workers were organised by Protectorate institutions, they earned their reputation largely thanks to an event called 'Reinhard Heydrich's Legacy'. Industrial enterprises organised several similar programmes, but they could not compare with Heydrich's project in terms of scale and promotion. The recreational holidays had already begun in early May 1942, shortly before the assassination of the Deputy Reich Protector, following the model developed by the DAF and its programme known as *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength through Joy). The Reich Protector's Liaison Office to the trade unions and its head, Wilhelm Köster, were responsible for holidays in the Protectorate, but they were provided exclusively by the Czech trade unions during all three years of the campaign, that is, 1942, 1943 and 1944.

The organisation of holidays was literally a collective project. Köster estimated the cost at K 400 per person, which was to be covered by three entities: the enterprise where the person worked, the trade unions and the health insurance companies.<sup>138</sup> According to the information available to the Reich Protector's Office, 28,676 workers took part in recreational holidays in 1943, with the insurance companies contributing K 150 for each of their clients. The total amount of subsidies for that calendar year was K 4,614,000.<sup>139</sup> In the following year, the number of participants rose to more than 41,000, with approximately one-third being women.<sup>140</sup> The participation of the insurance companies was vital because it enabled the holidays to be declared preventive health care events for the workers. As a result, the recreational holidays were supervised by a doctor appointed by the health insurance company.<sup>141</sup> Despite the overall propagandistic character of the campaign, which even intensified after Heydrich's death, it is fair to say that the holidays served their purpose – to provide active recovery for Czech workers in an environment emphasising safety, hygiene and a cultural or sporting programme. If the workers were staying at a spa, they even had all its facilities at their disposal.<sup>142</sup> Nazi-organised holidays were a successful propaganda tool, so much so

<sup>137</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll., Carton 216: Report on Educational and Recreational Activities of Czech Trade Union Organisations, 10 January 1941.

<sup>138</sup> Jiří Pokorný, 'Dovolená s Heydrichem,' *Soudobé dějiny* 21 (2014), No. 3, 372.

<sup>139</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 976: 'Odborové zpravodajství NOÚZ a ÚVZ; Jhr. IV, Nr. 144, 22. VI. 1944: Der Anteil der Krankenversicherungsanstalten an er Erholungsaktion 'Reinhard-Heydrich-Vermächtnis'.

<sup>140</sup> Pokorný, 'Dovolená s Heydrichem', 369.

<sup>141</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 976: ÚSP – Memorandum No. 1722 of 21 April 1944.

<sup>142</sup> Pokorný, 'Dovolená s Heydrichem', 374.

that they established a tradition of workers' recreational holidays that continued into post-war Czechoslovakia.

### Czech children and youth

The preventive and follow-up care provided to workers employed by industrial plants in the Protectorate became an essential complementary service and a part of proactive industrial policy. However, the public health care system also provided for non-Jewish and non-Roma Czech children and youth, and those from mixed Czech-German marriages. This was strongly supported by Protectorate propaganda, which depicted the youngest generation as bearing the burden of the future social and political direction of the 'Czech nation.' With regard to this population group, the question of health was not to be taken lightly because, as the well-known Prague physician Miroslava Klímová-Fügnerová emphasised, 'if we want to make people healthy, we must teach them to be healthy. Health education is the most critical tool of contemporary preventive medicine.'<sup>143</sup> In her 1941 article, Klímová-Fügnerová explained what 'education to health', as she named her text, should mean in practice.

Health education is not just a collection of posters, it is not about handing out leaflets or measuring and weighing people. It is not about giving an 'occasional' medical lecture, nor is a lesson given. ... Health education is planned guidance leading a person to be healthy.<sup>144</sup>

Everyone had the responsibility to approach self-care consistently and responsibly from an early age. This was the premise of the Czech booklet titled *Be the Guardian of Your Health* (*Buď strážcem svého zdraví*), which was published in 1941 and educated children and young people about essential hygienic habits.<sup>145</sup> The publication, which was prepared by the Health Department of the National Partnership, emphasised biological health and national identification. It urged Czech children to take consistent care of their health every day.

It does not matter how large the nation is, but how many healthy, active and productive people it has. Never rely on other people to help you; do not get used to hiding in numbers. You must one day be those healthy, capable and productive people. ... Education and training will be provided to you by your teachers and your parents; our advice will help you maintain sound health. Take it to heart to make your parents and the whole nation happy.<sup>146</sup>

<sup>143</sup> Miroslava Klímová-Fügnerová, 'Výchova ke zdraví', *Česká nemocnice* (1941), No. 3, 56.

<sup>144</sup> Klímová-Fügnerová, 'Výchova ke zdraví', 59.

<sup>145</sup> Jakub Skála, *Buď strážcem svého zdraví* (Prague 1941), 3.

<sup>146</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll., Carton 197: Press Service of the National Partnership, 30 September 1941, p. 3.

The Czechs did not accept these directive calls to build 'the health of the nation' only in a positive spirit. This was manifested, for example, in hesitancy to accept the diphtheria vaccination. In 1939/40, many Czech mothers resisted vaccinating their children, fearing that it would make them sick, as the rumours warned them.<sup>147</sup> It was crucial for the credibility of health prevention to maintain a dialogue between Czech doctors and patients and not to raise doubts about the intentions and possible incidental objectives of the Protectorate social policy. The public health service was mainly oriented towards the Czech population and provided space for local initiatives.<sup>148</sup> In the regions, well-established voluntary bodies became steadily more important actors in the field of social and health services, offering participation in holiday camps, children's health centres, day shelters for schoolchildren, catering events and recreational holidays in the Czech countryside for city children, who stayed with volunteers referred to as 'national hosts'. In Moravia, social authorities set up social counselling centres. Here, general practitioners worked six days a week alongside special counselling centres for mothers with children. According to the available statistics, the centres met with high interest on the part of the Czech population.<sup>149</sup> An awareness-raising campaign aimed mainly at parents could not have had the desired effect without existing health care. In this case, social insurance also formed the system's basis. In each case of illness, the child of an insured father or mother was entitled to full medical treatment and all necessary medicines and medical aids such as glasses, sanitary material and so forth. The insurance companies contributed to the hospital treatment costs and took care to provide specialist doctors, but there were not always enough of them.<sup>150</sup> However, the preventive education on healthy living sought by the health and education experts could not ensure that the health of Czech children and youngsters would be sound.

In cooperation with the insurance companies, the Protectorate authorities started to organise health examinations for Czech children and youth in 1939. The ÚSP continued health checks of young insured persons in 1940, followed by the workers' health insurance companies, focusing on people born between 1922 and 1926.<sup>151</sup> The insurance companies chose suitable candidates for recreational stays according to the state of their health.

<sup>147</sup> NA, ÚRP-ST Coll., Sign. 109-5/62, Carton 101: Impfung tschechischer Kinder – Auswirkungen, Sicherheitsdienst – SD-Leitabschnitt Prag an das Reichsicherheitshauptamt u. an den Herrn Staatssekretär beim Reichsprotector in B. u. M. SS-Gruppenführer K. H. Frank, 9 October 1942.

<sup>148</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 271: Der Reichsminister des Innern an das Präsidium des Deutschen Roten Kreuzes, 29 June 1939.

<sup>149</sup> State District Archive Zlín, Baťa a. s. Coll., File 239.

<sup>150</sup> Vilém Havlík, 'Pomáháme. Co dává sociální pojištění dětem', *Rodiče a škola: Čtrnáctideník rodičovských sdružení pro rodiče a školu* (1940), No. 5, 3.

<sup>151</sup> O. Bureš, 'Prohlídky mladistvých pojištěnců', *Sociální reforma* (5 April 1940), No. 7, 93.

The creation of health records accompanied the examinations. For those born in 1925 and 1926, the reviewing physicians (medical assessors) created 'health overviews'. This prototypical 'medical chart', as we would understand it today, remained with the physician to aid him in further monitoring the insured person's health. In the public health care system, such records were a novelty. They were intended to help health insurance companies improve health care delivery and efficiency. On this point, O. Bureš, the review officer of the ÚSP, shared his experience from Valašské Meziříčí in eastern Moravia:

An ideal of medical care based on health insurance is that a systematic health record is kept for each insured person, containing all the data on the course of illnesses, just as the registration label contains data on the course of the membership. In order to achieve its true purpose, however, the health overview shall always follow the insured person, just as the records of the course of insurance for disability and old age are moved around in the Reich.<sup>152</sup>

However, cooperation between the insurance company and specialised health care facilities was not a matter of course, and examinations of insured persons were not nearly as systematic as desired. While in the 1930s, examinations of young insured persons were organised to determine their health condition in specific fields of employment and were conducted primarily for study purposes, the systematic examinations of insured persons aged fourteen to eighteen aimed to build up health records. As part of that the insurance companies required records of one's family and personal medical history and X-ray examinations.<sup>153</sup>

Increasing state surveillance and control over the individual was becoming an integral part of health economics, demonstrating Foucault's biopolitics of modern society. Comprehensive health care helped monitor the development of one's health condition. Moreover, through preventive health care, insurance companies wanted to save money by preventing a patient's health condition from progressing to a stage requiring more thorough and possibly more costly treatment. The systematic recording of the health of the population thus seems to have mainly been the work of the health system under Nazi occupation and the efforts of the Protectorate's insurance companies. However, an obvious difficulty concerning interpretation arises from the fact that it was the authoritarian government during the Nazi occupation that allowed for the strengthening of these diagnostic and documentation methods. Moreover, they were also a part of the nationalist and

<sup>152</sup> Bureš, 'Prohlídky mladistvých pojištěnců', 93.

<sup>153</sup> The forms were issued by the ÚSP. Their general structure can be inferred from the forms used in Valašské Meziříčí. Doctors filled in the following fields in the health records: father's occupation, number of children in the family, personal medical and family history, vaccination data, physical constitution, teeth, eyesight, hearing, lungs, heart, blood pressure, urine analysis, other findings (internal, surgical, neurological conditions, etc.), general doctor's assessment – the person is healthy/specialist examination recommended/need for outpatient treatment (carried out by the same doctor)/person is seriously ill and unable to work (the doctor immediately starts treating the patient). Bureš, 'Prohlídky mladistvých pojištěnců', 94.

Group <sup>154</sup>	Boys		Girls		Total	
	1942	1943/4	1942	1943/4	1942	1943/4
'Healthy'	65.2	64.7	69.0	70.6	65.3	67.2
'At risk'	34.9	32.4	28.8	26.6	32.3	30.0
'Sick'	2.6	2.9	2.2	2.8	2.4	2.8

**Table 5.2** Medical examination of Protectorate youth 1942–4 (in %)

Source: NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 976: E. Břeský, Systematische Gesundheitsuntersuchungen junger Versicherter.

Germanising agenda and of no minor importance for coordinating the workforce and regulating the labour market.

The health of Czech adolescents continued to be assessed in the following years and social insurance companies used all available tools to conduct the examinations. Based on Section 154 of the Act on Insurance of Employees against Sickness, Disability and Old Age, the ÚSP could, at any time and at its own expense, place its insured persons in treatment or move them to a suitable institution for health reasons. A peculiarity of the campaigns, which took place in four waves between 1940 and 1944, was the extensive medical examinations of Protectorate adolescents born between 1922 and 1929 who were insured against sickness under their apprenticeship or employment status.<sup>155</sup> In 1942, the health of 95,498 insured persons born between 1926 and 1928 was examined across the country. The last similarly extensive survey was carried out at the behest of the sickness insurance companies between 1 November 1943 and 30 June 1944 and covered 186,794 boys and girls born between 1926 and 1929.<sup>156</sup> The sickness insurance companies financed the campaign, which spent just under K 2.3 million on medical examinations in 1943 alone. The gender distribution was almost balanced in both surveys, with approximately 58 per cent of those examined being boys and 42 per cent girls. The results of the two surveys are shown in [Table 5.2](#).

<sup>154</sup> The individual classification groups were defined by the ÚSP. Health was assessed in relation to age and degree of physical development, objective signs of physical maturity, height and weight. Classification in the 'at risk' group meant that the examined person was at risk regarding his or her further physical development. 'Sick' individuals showed symptoms such as malnutrition, anaemia, physical weakness, family history of tuberculosis, history of contracting infectious diseases and hazardous working environment. According to the doctors, they indicated the possibility of being at risk of disease, especially a social disease, in the future.

<sup>155</sup> For the first campaign, see Memorandum of the ÚSP No. 955 of 17 April 1940 concerning Recreational care for the insured youth in 1940.

<sup>156</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 976: E. Břeský: Systematische Gesundheitsuntersuchungen junger Versicherter. Memorandum on the implementation of 'Consistent curative and treatment care of young insured persons in 1941' modified by Memorandum of the ÚSP No. 1103 of 9 May 1941; ORR F. Koreis, Zentralsozialversicherungsanstalt an ORR J. Schneider, Betr. Ergebnis der systematischen ärztlichen Untersuchungen jugendlicher Arbeiter im Jahre 1942.



**Figure 5.1** National Partnership urges 'Build playgrounds and swimming pools for the health of our youth'. Undated. Source: Military Central Archive – Military Historical Archive, Prague, Poster Collection 1939–45.

At first glance, the results look good. The survey showed that approximately 65–70 per cent of the Czech youth were in good health. However, the figures showing the prevalence of individual diseases were not so encouraging. Compared with 1942, the proportion of tuberculosis patients increased by almost 60 per cent. The mere recording of the existing condition would have been of little value. Thus, the examinations resulted in the organisation of two-week convalescence events for young Czech insured persons aged fourteen to seventeen. From June to September 1944, a total of 3,510 adolescents travelled to recreational areas in Bohemia and Moravia; the 133 young German nationals were all placed in a facility in western Bohemia.

Czech officials were actively involved in the coordination of labour deployment and helped the occupation authorities create the best possible conditions for the war industry. In 1939, when the Czechs had relatively autonomy to take initiatives in social and health care, the persistent efforts of the Protectorate's insurance companies and the benevolence of the occupation authorities were understandable. The efforts in 1943 and 1944 raise doubts, however. The organisation of the youth survey required considerable staff and was also financially costly. A Central Association of Sickness Insurance Companies memorandum dated 23 March 1944 revealed the intent of the surveys. The document was addressed to all sickness insurance companies, giving them straightforward instructions on the procedure for medical examinations: 'No one must escape from the duty to work on account of this campaign.'<sup>157</sup> Official doctors bore full responsibility for the accuracy of the data collected. Although the campaign was fully the responsibility of the Protectorate authorities and officials from the insurance companies and the civil service, its results were submitted directly to the Reich Protector's Office.

Younger Czech children were not left out of the picture either. While they were not affected by workload, they could quickly become the target of Czech and German intentions for different reasons. This group, too, was considered to be in generally poor health.<sup>158</sup> The doctors lacked any comprehensive report on the health of Czech children. Records summarising the necessary data, which could provide a general overview, were not collected by the insurance companies and,

<sup>157</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 976: Memorandum No. 27/VII of the Central Association of Sickness Insurance Companies, Case: Compulsory examinations of insured minors, 23 March 1944.

<sup>158</sup> The health condition of Czech children and youth was highlighted, for example, by the magazine *Rodiče a škola* (Parents and school), which was continuously published between 1931 and 1945. In April 1941, Ladislav Janák commented on the eyesight problems among Czech children, specifically highlighting the situation in the Nymburk district, Central Bohemia, in September 1940. During school examinations there, teachers found that 19 per cent of the children examined had previously unknown eyesight defects. A subsequent medical examination confirmed this condition in 90 per cent of these children. Janák called for regular visual acuity testing using eye charts (optotypes) at individual schools and by parental initiative. Ladislav Janák, 'Péče o zrak', *Rodiče a škola. Čtrnáctideník rodičovských sdružení pro rodiče a školu* (1941), No. 16, 1.

therefore, the only way to obtain them was a blanket survey.<sup>159</sup> This was not something entirely new. Since the establishment of the institution of school doctors in 1925, pupils had regularly been examined twice a year.<sup>160</sup> Nevertheless, the initiative in 1941 and 1942 was unparalleled in its scope. Within the cohort born in the period 1928–31, physicians checked 455,608 Czech children in ninety-six Protectorate districts.<sup>161</sup> The authorities were supposed to build on the experience of organising such a campaign obtained during the previous health survey of German children, which, however, was much smaller in scale (approximately 15,000 children were involved). The execution of the Czech survey was decentralised. In the regions, individual schools organised medical examinations under the district authorities' supervision. A Czech physician working in the district handed over the completed examination sheets to the official doctor, who processed and evaluated the material. The necessary trust and cooperation of parents were ensured by delegating organisational matters to the Protectorate authorities and their Czech-speaking staff. The Ministry of Social and Health Administration planned a similar campaign in the following school year, 1943, for younger Czech children born in 1932–3.<sup>162</sup>

The objectives of the investigation were ambiguous. The Czech authorities officially framed the survey as a campaign to improve Czech children's health. It assigned great urgency to the improvement of preventive and follow-up care in the Protectorate and wanted to use the results of the survey as the basis for future comprehensive health care in schools in the form of compulsory school medicine.<sup>163</sup> The assertion that the results were intended solely to inform strategies in the field of preventive health practice was not true. Indeed, the 'racial health' perspective played an equally important role. The German administration considered the campaign a 'one-off health policing measure', in line with other steps in the Nazis' racial policy. Established in the spring of 1941, the Protectorate branches of the SS Main Office for Racial and Settlement Affairs in Prague aimed

<sup>159</sup> NA, MSZS Coll., Carton 1: Youth dental care, ÚSP to the Ministry of Social and Health Administration, 18 June 1941.

<sup>160</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Government regulation No. 64/1925 Coll., implementing Act No. 226 Coll. of 13 July 1922, amending and supplementing laws on general and civil schools. In addition to examinations, school doctors were also to oversee the prevention of contagious diseases and physical education. The cost of this health programme was covered by the state budget.

<sup>161</sup> NA, MSZS Coll., Carton 1: Examination of the health condition of all children of the Czech nationality born between 1928 and 1931. (Cost coverage contribution). Ministry of the Interior, 11 April 1942.

<sup>162</sup> NA, MSZS Coll., Carton 1: Examination of the health condition of all children of the Czech nationality born between 1928 and 1931, Ministry of the Interior, 1 June 1942.

<sup>163</sup> NA, MSZS Coll., Carton 1: Der Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren an den Herrn Ministerpräsidenten in Prag, 2 April 1941; Examination of school children – Information about the visit to Mr Oberregierungsrat Dr Plato, undated.



to examine the health of Czech and German schoolchildren and, more generally, to explore the racial structure of the Protectorate's population.<sup>164</sup>

The highest-ranking German officials carefully supervised the survey in the Protectorate. State Secretary Karl H. Frank assumed that the public budget of the Protectorate, which bore the brunt of the costs of the campaign, would also pay for the detailed documentation, including photographs. Germans pushed through the making of this documentation over the objections of the Protectorate Ministry of Finance. The total cost exceeded K 5 million, of which the photographic documentation alone made up over K 3.5 million. Czech officials initially resisted this kind of extravagance, considering the photographs to be a completely unnecessary expense.<sup>165</sup> It is unknown whether this was due to an inability on the part of Czech officials to foresee the aims and means of the occupation authorities or an act of passive resistance to the German request. However, both sides eventually participated with interest in implementing the medical examinations.

The results of the campaign were gratifying to Czech nationalists. For the most frequently occurring conditions, such as dental problems (seen in up to 85 per cent of the children), slight malnutrition, poor eyesight and other issues, the individual district authorities received the necessary funds for the procurement of dental care, medicines, eyeglasses, convalescence in health facilities and additional food rations. The financial participation of social insurance carriers and voluntary care organisations was also envisaged. The health complications identified were remedied thanks to the local authorities' care, even if they encountered complications or delays due to a lack of funding or physicians.<sup>166</sup> Indeed, the extent to which the implementation of preventive and remedial measures was successful depended on regional conditions and the institutions involved in the distribution of care. While health care for children and adolescents was certainly not a matter of course during wartime, it became a standard service in the Protectorate, provided as part of the effort to provision and protect the social rights of non-Jewish and non-Roma Czechs and Germans.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>164</sup> NA, ÚŘP-ST Coll., Sign. 109-4/129, Carton 20: Schuluntersuchungen der tschechischer Jugend, an SS-Obersturmbannführer Dr. Gies, 28 March 1941; Vorbereitung der Assimilierung, 27 March 1941. In connection with the examinations of Czech children organized by the Rasse- und Siedlungsamt der SS, Detlef Brandes stated that from 1943 to 1945, a total of 39,845 children were examined for the purpose of racial research, of whom 19,298 (48.43 per cent) were deemed suitable for Germanisation and 20,547 (51.56 per cent) were not. Brandes, 'Umwolkung, Umsiedlung, rassische Bestandaufnahme', 217–18.

<sup>165</sup> NA, MSZS Coll., Carton 1: Examination of the health condition of all children of the Czech nationality born between 1928 and 1931. Ministry of Social and Health Administration to the Ministry of the Interior, 24 April 1941.

<sup>166</sup> NA, MSZS Coll., Carton 1: Examination of the health condition of all children of the Czech nationality born between 1928 and 1931. Cost coverage contribution. Ministry of the Interior, 11 April 1942; Summary report on the results of the examination of schoolchildren of Czech nationality born between 1928 and 1931.

<sup>167</sup> An example is the activity of the Czech National Council, which in June 1941 submitted a petition to the Protectorate government requesting social assistance for the political district of Valašské

### Care for insured Reich citizens

The list of the favoured would not be complete if it omitted the most privileged of all. Ethnic and Reich Germans, both the local population and those moving across Europe in military uniform or in civil service as technocrats and civil servants, were to have an exclusive position within the social security system. In the logic of the segregated national communities, there was to be a separation of institutions and the population. As far-fetched and unrealistic as these ambitions may sound when talking about the population of the Bohemian lands, they were constantly present. The incorporation of the local ethnic Germans into the 'body of the German nation' required the application of the Reich's legal framework in the territory of the Protectorate, including the extension of the Reich insurance regulations, the jurisdiction of Reich insurance companies and other authorities' powers to the employees of the Reich's offices and service posts.<sup>168</sup> In principle, the Reich institutions were bound to care for the Reich's insured citizens, just as the Protectorate insurance companies cared for their Protectorate clients, although – as the case of the insurance companies shows – this promise could not be fulfilled in the short term.

The Convention on Sickness Insurance governed the provision of medical care to Reich nationals in the Protectorate. Concluded between the Reich and Protectorate sickness insurance companies on 22 July 1939, it primarily specified the basic systemic parameters of medical treatment.<sup>169</sup> The Reich health insurance corporations provided free medical treatment to Reich-insured persons in the Protectorate. Social insurance benefits were provided by the district sickness insurance companies having jurisdiction according to the place of residence in the Protectorate.<sup>170</sup> The organisational burden was largely borne by the German Medical Chamber for the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, whose main task was to represent the Reich health corporations and to provide medical treatment for clients of the Reich insurance companies.<sup>171</sup> Still, the Protectorate budget demonstrably provided some funding to support the infrastructure that served the German population too. The exact amounts are unknown, but they were most likely not substantial.

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Meziříčí, in eastern Moravia. Its representatives especially emphasised the need for medical aid to infants and mothers and for improved counselling centres for mothers and children; they requested an increase in the number of social workers, examinations of school children, the establishment of school doctors, more consistent support for larger families and better care for orphans. NA, MSZS Coll., Carton 6: Response from Dpt. V/17, 21 June 1941.

<sup>168</sup> RGBl. I., 1939, p. 1737: Verordnung über die Sozialversicherung der Bediensteten der Behörden und Dienststellen des Reichs im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren.

<sup>169</sup> See Jiří Srnka, *Nemocenské pojištění protektorátních příslušníků v Říši* (Prague 1943).

<sup>170</sup> Article 4 of the Convention of 22 July 1939.

<sup>171</sup> 'Německá zdravotnická komora a nemocenské pojišťovny', *Sociální reforma* (20 February 1942), Nos 3–4, 1–2; on organisational issues see NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 988: Deutsche Gesundheitskammer für das Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, Rundschreiben Nr. 1/39.

In order to be treated, the insured person had to obtain a sickness certificate from the insurance company. A physician commissioned by the German Medical Chamber had to follow its regulations because prescriptions for medicines and therapeutic aids were subject to possible inspection by a sickness insurance company.<sup>172</sup> Medical bills were issued according to the Reich tariff and by the German Medical Chamber. The unique bargaining position of the German Medical Chamber served to arrange for medical treatment of the Protectorate insurance companies' clients working in other Reich territories. The same principle also worked for 'cross-border workers,' that is, workers commuting for work between the German Reich and the Protectorate on a daily basis.<sup>173</sup> The situation of these workers shows that fulfilling the principle of nationally segregated care was arduous given the complexity of the insurance systems and labour mobility.

The logic of social insurance, protecting against the negative social situations to which the population was exposed every day, made it impossible to wait for the establishment of a fully fledged German social and health infrastructure. In practice, providing care was complicated by the consistently insufficient institutional support and staff, which is why, as late as 1941, Czech nurses still predominated in the women's ward of the German University Clinic in Prague.<sup>174</sup> However, a German patient was to be treated exclusively by a German doctor. This requirement was difficult to implement in the Bohemian lands, where Germans were not a majority ethnicity and did not have their own institutions. German officials did not shy away from calling the procedure, which was supposed to put national segregation into practice, a 'failure.' There were not enough German doctors in the Protectorate, and their uneven distribution across the Protectorate regions often made it impossible for German doctors to treat German patients. If this task had been entrusted to Czech doctors, it would have not only violated the principle of the segregation of national communities but also allowed Czechs to earn more, as officials in the Reich Protector's Office argued.<sup>175</sup> Especially in the case of the seriously ill and the treatment of German women, the provision of exclusively German care was considered highly desirable.<sup>176</sup> Officials knew that insurance companies would not pay for a physician's trip halfway across

<sup>172</sup> See 'Lékařům, připuštěným Deutsche Gesundheitskammer k léčení osob, pojištěných podle říšského pojišťovacího řádu!', *Věstník českých lékařů* (3 October 1941), Nos 39–40, 582–3.

<sup>173</sup> Convention of 7 September 1940.

<sup>174</sup> NA, ÚRP-ST Coll., Sign. 109–5/40, Carton 100: SD v. 30 April 1941, durch den Herrn Kurator der deutschen wissenschaftlichen Hochschulen und den Herrn Dekan der medizinischen Fakultät in Prag, an den Herrn Reichsminister für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung Berlin, 16 June 1941.

<sup>175</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 976: Gruppe I 6 an die Gruppe II 4, Betr. Ärztliche Behandlung deutscher Versicherter durch deutsche Ärzte: Anwendung der Preugo, 27 May 1942.

<sup>176</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 976: NSDAP Parteiverbindungsstelle an den Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren, Betr. Ärztliche Betreuung der deutschen Staatsangehörigen im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, 13 October 1941.

the country to see a patient. However, the travel costs of doctors seeing patients could rise unpredictably. Officials sought to ensure special funding so that every German enjoyed the right to be treated by the nearest German doctor. The monetary advance was provided by the Volkstumsfond, which provided subsidies for German cultural and social projects and to German businesses in the Nazi Protectorate.<sup>177</sup>

However, the treatment of German patients had perhaps a more sinister context. National segregation was essentially the idea of Nazi officials, but not much of a necessity, especially when people's health was involved. German officials estimated that approximately 65 per cent of Germans would settle for being treated by a Czech physician for at least two reasons: the immediate proximity of medical assistance to provide quick relief for their health problems, and the ease of obtaining a certificate of incapacity to work for the labour office. The lack of proper consciousness on the part of German patients, who consistently failed to think about Nazi nationality policies, worried the occupation authorities more than the imperfection of the institutional basis in the Protectorate. The rules of social behaviour according to the principle of segregated care were to be enforced in the case of medical care as well, and the German population was expected to observe them at all times. Josef Schneider, Chief Government Councillor at the Reich Protector's Office, saw this matter as falling within the sphere of awareness-raising activities belonging to the NSDAP and the DAF, which were to take adequate steps to ensure the desired conscientiousness of the German population living in the Protectorate. For propaganda reasons, however, this awareness-raising was to take place only in selected forums, for instance, at meetings of individual organisations, and not in the form of public agitation so as not to incite conflict between the nationalities. This led to several misunderstandings with Czech insurance officials, who were unaware that this particular 'right' for German nationals had been introduced.<sup>178</sup>

After a year, in February 1943, the German Medical Chamber submitted a proposal that reviewed the practice. German patients gained the right to freely choose their attending physicians from a list drawn up by the Medical Chamber, which had been allowed throughout Germany with the hitherto exception of the Protectorate. The head of the Medical Chamber, Rudolf Wächter, believed that he would negotiate a lump sum per patient with the Protectorate's insurance companies and thus assume responsibility for the medical care of the German population. Thus, from July 1943 onwards, the insurance companies distributed medical

<sup>177</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 976, II 4 c an I 2 b, Betr. Ärztliche Betreuung der deutschen Staatsangehörigen im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, 28 January 1942.

<sup>178</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 976, Vermerk über die Besprechung vom 12. 12. bei Herrn ORR Schneider, 12 December 1941.

vouchers to German-insured persons, which the district sickness insurance companies reimbursed.<sup>179</sup>

In the context of the ongoing military conflict, the surviving relatives of war victims were also important. This was not a large group in the Protectorate. In 1940 there were only approximately 1,800 to 2,000 persons in the category of war victims and survivors of war casualties, but this number grew in subsequent years.<sup>180</sup> German officials rightly considered the care of war widows and survivors a 'Reich matter', which is why it was regulated exclusively by Hitler's decrees.<sup>181</sup> The Reich bore the cost of this kind of sickness insurance in total, and it was assumed that nothing would change in this financing principle at least for the duration of the war.<sup>182</sup> The extent to which the provision for war widows and orphans was a necessary regulation in the Protectorate resulted from the very principle of belonging to the German nation. Thus, Germans in the Protectorate could enjoy the same benefits as the population in the Reich, among other things in order to keep the families of prominent members of the military and paramilitary units together and safe.

A complete systemic separation of German- and Czech-insured persons never took place. The reason was the complexity of the whole procedure and the fear of disrupting the continuity of the payment of benefits to both groups. The Protectorate insurance companies were a vital transfer conduit in the existing system. They contributed significantly to the fact that the German population living in the Bohemian lands could also benefit from the 'social success' of Nazi Germany and enabled members of the civil and military administration to enjoy their entitlements even during their deployment in the occupied territory. This scheme was not based on the financial backing of the Protectorate insurance companies, which could not have borne a disproportionate amount of the burden, but on cooperation between the Reich and Protectorate authorities funded primarily by German resources.

### **Two examples of expertise: occupational medicine, social genetics and eugenics**

The reconstruction of the state and society also gained its concrete form through visible figures in scientific circles. While an apolitical approach to scientific knowledge persisted in the technical fields, a similar separation of science and politics

<sup>179</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 976: Deutsche Gesundheitskammer and die NSDAP – Parteiverbindungsstelle beim Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren, 12 February 1943.

<sup>180</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 1046: Oberlandrat an den Herrn Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren, Betr. Zuweisung von 2 Beamten für die Abteilung Reichsversorgung, 16 September 1940.

<sup>181</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 1046: Krankenversicherungsanstalt der Privatangestellten Prag-Merkblatt KH-1.; Decree of the Ministry of Economy and Labour A-IV-3161-26/9-42 of 26 September 1942.

<sup>182</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 988: Auszug aus dem Reisebericht des ORegRat Dr. Laggai vom 2. 9. 1942 – II 4 c 948/42 – Krankenversicherung der Kriegshinterbliebenen

was virtually impossible in biology and medicine. The Nazi programme acted as an inspirational platform, and the application of knowledge in the field of national, racial and biological sciences suited the reconstructionist ethos of the 1930s and 1940s. Through the ethnic homogenisation of the country, Czech political leaders demanded adequate protection of the biological essence of the 'Czech nation', including its health. Within this basic framework, Czech expertise developed occupational medicine and national eugenics, each with varying degrees of German acceptance or even support. While the former became increasingly crucial as labour mobilisation progressed, eugenics was fraught with contradictions regarding the nationality policy in the Protectorate. Czech supporters of eugenics lost the opportunity to pursue it from a research perspective after 1941, but they did not abandon their professional careers. Although their work was somewhat contradictory to Nazi Germanisation, they attempted to conduct expert research in this context.

In the context of the methods of occupational medicine applied in Germany, Stanislav Župka, a physician based in Brno, viewed occupational health care as 'the cornerstone of the overall social building of the nation and the state'.<sup>183</sup> Occupational medicine developed on three levels. Factory doctors were supported by occupational medicine counselling centres, which monitored the correlation between illness and working conditions. Official occupational doctors attached to the labour offices worked alongside them, and trade inspectors conducted medical examinations of persons at risk directly in the factories.<sup>184</sup> Factory doctors treated all employees at the expense of health insurance. However, due to the shortage of medical personnel, doctors only worked in 'war-relevant' factories with at least 500 employees, or often only in those where statistics showed high sickness rates.<sup>185</sup>

Expert research into occupational diseases included reviewing workers' health at their own request or the request of trade inspectorates, sickness insurance companies' medical examiners and employers. To this end, several occupational medicine counselling centres, initially referred to as 'counselling centres for occupational disease', were established. They were set up in places where, given the concentration of industry, they were most useful – in the internal medicine departments of general public hospitals and clinics in Prague, Brno, Moravská Ostrava, Kladno and Zlín. In 1943, experts prepared to open counselling centres in Pilsen and Pardubice. The largest counselling centre of this kind was established at the Second Czech Internal Medicine Clinic of Charles University in Prague,

<sup>183</sup> Stanislav Župka, 'Hospodárnost a důležitost pracovně-lékařských opatření v závodech', *Práce a hospodářství* (April 1942), No. 4, 107.

<sup>184</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Government regulation No. 41/1938 Coll., on protection of life and health of unskilled labourers, Section 147.

<sup>185</sup> NA, MHP dod. II Coll., Carton 250: Zentralverband der Industrie für Böhmen und Mähren an den verantwortlichen Leiter des Betriebs, 9 August 1944.

which gradually became the central institution of occupational medicine in the Protectorate. The combination of clinical and laboratory examinations aimed to help obtain the most accurate picture of workers' health. The reports produced were used by the labour offices when assessing whether to transfer the examined person to another job.<sup>186</sup> Authoritative figures in Czech medicine, including the renowned internal medicine expert Josef Pelnář, played a significant role in the operation of this system. Pelnář, who had gained expertise during stays in France, Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands, headed the Prague centre until 1942. He was then succeeded by Jaroslav Teisinger, who served as director of the Institute of Occupational Hygiene and Diseases (formerly the Institute of Physiology, Pathology and Occupational Hygiene) up to the 1960s.<sup>187</sup> The collaboration of Czech doctors, whose presence points to significant personnel continuities between the occupation era and post-war Czechoslovakia, created a background for maximum rationalisation of work and distribution of workers to maximise the efficiency of the war industry. Pelnář, still regarded as the father of Czech internal medicine and the creator of the modern clinic, had been a member of the Masaryk Academy of Labour since the 1920s and served on the board of the Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts from 1942 to 1947.<sup>188</sup>

On the part of the occupation authorities, the formation of a system of consistent prevention, diagnosis and timely medical treatment of Czech workers was based primarily on the need to minimise threats that could lead to disruptions of war production. Interventions were to come early and reduce not only the threat to the worker's health but also the time the worker spent off work. The institution of factory doctors and other specialist posts affiliated with the labour offices was created for this purpose. The role of official occupational doctor appointed by the labour office came into being in 1939. Such doctors exercised 'medical supervision' over working and hygienic conditions in the factories, such as dustiness or insufficient lighting. It was within their power to demand that the factory management improve working conditions. Thus, directly in the factory, they monitored the area that in Nazi Germany was covered by the Institute of Labour Sciences (Arbeitswissenschaftliches Institut) of the DAF. As late as 1943, however, not all labour offices had an official occupational doctor.<sup>189</sup>

The Nazi occupation offered favourable conditions for studying occupational diseases and further developing the field of occupational medicine. This was aided

<sup>186</sup> Tauchen, *Práce a její právní regulace*, 195.

<sup>187</sup> Rudolf Zahradník, 'Jaroslav Teisinger, lékař a badatel', *Vesmír* (1997), No. 7, <https://vesmir.cz/cz/casopis/archiv-casopisu/1997/cislo-7/jaroslav-teisingerlekar-badatel.html> (26 October 2022).

<sup>188</sup> Vlasta Mádlová, 'Josef Pelnář (1872–1964)', *Akademický bulletin. Oficiální časopis Akademie věd ČR* (September 2014), <http://abicko.avcr.cz/2014/09/11/> (26 October 2017).

<sup>189</sup> Jan Hromada, 'Nemoci z povolání a spolupráce lékařů a nemocenských pojišťoven s poradnami pro pracovní lékařství', *Věstník českých lékařů. List pro hájení sociálních zájmů lékařských* (1943), Nos 31–2, 424.

by the ramping up of war production and the desire to improve worker safety in factories, as was also shown concerning accident insurance. In contrast to occupational medicine, national eugenics contributed to the ethos of the 1938 reconstruction as a method to improve the population's physical and mental condition. In a broader context, it is possible to speak of a 'social genetic' background to the reconstruction of the state and society initiated by the Czechs.<sup>190</sup> According to Vladislav Růžička, one of the leaders of the eugenics movement in interwar Czechoslovakia, social genetics was

a set of biological facts and sciences looking into the origins, existence, and changes or extinction of larger groups of human beings, be they social classes, tribes, nations, ethnicities, or human civilisation in general.<sup>191</sup>

In the Bohemian lands, the popularity of eugenics increased massively with the First World War, when eugenicists formulated the Czechoslovakian concept of 'national eugenics'.<sup>192</sup> The popularity of eugenics in Czechoslovakia corresponded to the orientation of reform movements in Europe and the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries, and Czechoslovak eugenicists had a significant international presence.<sup>193</sup> The pioneering work of experts seeking to legislate for health examinations before marriage (Ladislav Haškovec) or the establishment of a genetic cadastre of the Czechoslovak population (Artur Brožek) contributed to their renown. Social genetics and eugenics were supposed to help scientifically secure the nation's existence and gain a deeper biological understanding of it. While social genetics was rather theoretical, eugenics put the knowledge into practice and was its instrument at the national level. As late as the 1920s, it was seen as a modern way of improving health within the broader project of the welfare state, as Paul Weindling has noted.<sup>194</sup> Thanks to the abuses of the Nazi era, which made eugenics the exclusive perspective for understanding health and the human body, interwar enthusiasm for eugenics was replaced by solid post-war scepticism and even revulsion.

At the end of the 1930s, when Czech nationalism was becoming increasingly radical and the political programme of 'national cleansing' was taking shape, the

<sup>190</sup> On the interwar history and intellectual background see Michal Šimůnek, 'Eugenics, Social Genetics and Racial Hygiene: Plans for the Scientific Regulation of Human Heredity in the Czech Lands, 1900–1925', in *Blood and Homeland: Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900–1940*, ed. Marius Turda and Paul J. Weindling (Budapest, New York 2007), 145–66.

<sup>191</sup> Vladislav Růžička, *Biologické základy eugeniky* (Prague 1923), 599.

<sup>192</sup> Šimůnek, 'Eugenics, Social Genetics and Racial Hygiene', 161.

<sup>193</sup> See Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania* (Pittsburgh 2002); Bjö M. Felder and Paul J. Weindling (eds), *Baltic Eugenics: Bio-Politics, Race, Nation in Interwar Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania 1918–1940* (New York 2013); Christian Promitzer, Sevasti Trubeta and Marius Turda, *Health, Hygiene and Eugenics in Southeastern Europe to 1945* (Budapest 2011); Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine, *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (New York 2010).

<sup>194</sup> *Medizin im Nationalsozialismus. Kolloquien des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte* (Munich 1988), 32.



population's health was discussed in Czech medical circles in connection with the then-pressing problems of infant mortality and low birth rates. The connection between eugenics and building a national community was evident. Looking into the institutional structures, we can see that the Czechoslovak Eugenics Society, founded in 1915, continued its activities in the following years and partly also during the Nazi occupation. However, the history of the Eugenics Society and the Czechoslovak Institute for National Eugenics, founded as a research and popularisation institute in 1924, is complicated to reconstruct. Virtually no sources have survived on the activities of the two closely intertwined institutions. During the Nazi occupation, there were efforts to build up the Institute for National Eugenics organisationally and materially under the leadership of the well-known Czech psychiatrist Jaroslav Stuchlík, formerly head of the nervous and psychiatric department of the State Hospital in Košice, Slovakia, and from 1937 a ministerial official at the Ministry of Public Health.<sup>195</sup> However, the institute was permanently closed in 1941 following the arrest of one of its employees by the Gestapo. Only the German institutes continued serving as institutional platforms – the Institute for Racial Hygiene at the German Medical Faculty and the Institute for Racial Biology at the German Faculty of Science, both located in Prague.<sup>196</sup>

Nevertheless, the activities of the Czech Eugenics Society did not formally cease after the war. Up to 1948, when the Communists took power in Czechoslovakia, Bohumil Sekla, a biologist and professor of genetics, still served as its executive director.<sup>197</sup> Sekla, together with Růžička, approved of the adoption of the sterilisation law in Nazi Germany, which took effect on 1 January 1934.<sup>198</sup> They viewed this German act as a technical solution to a specific problem and allegedly did not foresee its abuse for political and ideological aims.<sup>199</sup> In several texts published during the Nazi occupation, Sekla contributed to the debate on the qualitative side of population development. He saw inspiration in Germany, which had introduced a rigorous 'care of the race' soon after the Nazi rise to power. According to Sekla's comments in his 1940 paper aptly titled *The Growth of a Nation*, 'population liberalism' was already a thing of the past.<sup>200</sup> The transformation of liberal democratic

<sup>195</sup> Ludmila Cuřínová, 'Ústav pro národní eugeniku', in *Technokracie v českých zemích (1900–1950)*, ed. Jan Janko and Emilie Těšínská (Prague 1999), 155; 'Prof. Jaroslav Stuchlík (1890–1967)', available at <https://www.phil.muni.cz/fil/scf/komplet/stuchl.html> (26 October 2022).

<sup>196</sup> See Petr Lozoviuk, *Interethnik im Wissenschaftsprozess: deutschsprachige Volkskunde in Böhmen und ihre gesellschaftlichen Auswirkungen* (Leipzig 2008).

<sup>197</sup> Bohumil Sekla, 'Eugenika a populace', *Věstník ústřední jednoty porodních asistentek v Československé republice* (23 June 1947), No. 6, 2–6.

<sup>198</sup> RGBL I, 1933, p. 529: Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses.

<sup>199</sup> Cuřínová, 'Ústav pro národní eugeniku', 155.

<sup>200</sup> Bohumil Sekla, *Růst národa* (Prague 1940), 25. The focus of this work on the qualitative aspect of population problems was also appreciated by Jaromír Korčák. Jaromír Korčák, 'Populace. Bohumil Sekla, Růst národa', *Svazky úvah a studií*, No. 11, 1940, 25; *Statistische Rundschau. Zeitschrift für statistische Theorie und Praxis* (1940), No. 21, 128.

Czechoslovakia into the authoritarian democracy of the Second Republic and then the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia also impacted the theory and practice of population science. As defined by expert discourse, the national socialist notion of the racial community formed the research framework and was enforced in practice by state policy. Sekla agreed with the theory of group or racial differential fertility, arguing in 1941 that

under present population conditions, the below-average groups of people reproduce comparatively much faster than other, normal and above-average groups.<sup>201</sup>

He was convinced that the belonging of the Protectorate to Germany's sphere of influence and the general understanding of population policy by all strata of society would lead to national self-preservation. After the closure of Czech universities in November 1939, Sekla worked as an expert witness for hereditary-biological examinations. It is reported that he saved many people from concentration camps by 'proving' their 'Aryan' origin.<sup>202</sup> Still, he pushed for 'medical genetic counselling' prior to the conclusion of marriage and continued advocating this idea even after the war.<sup>203</sup> However, there is not much evidence of Sekla's work during the Nazi occupation.

Sekla was not the only one who worked within official structures during the occupation. Jarmila Veselá, the first woman habilitated at the Faculty of Law of Charles University in Prague, also a pre-war member of the Czechoslovak Eugenics Society, was concerned with the socio-pathological background of criminal behaviour. She initiated research into 'hereditary predispositions towards criminal behaviour' and professed to have found inspiration in the racial doctrine of Nazi Germany in her 1938 work entitled *Sterilisation and the Population: Social and Criminal Policy Problem*.<sup>204</sup> However, in her view not even the German legislation fully implemented the contemporary findings of genetic science because it did not apply to 'healthy carriers of defective hereditary traits'. According to Veselá, legislators feared a lack of understanding of the doctrine among the broader German public.<sup>205</sup> As an advocate of sterilisation on the basis of eugenics, which she considered a beneficial tool of social policy, she considered forced sterilisation of mentally deficient persons to be the necessary minimum in the

<sup>201</sup> Bohumil Sekla, *Dědičné zdraví* (Prague 1941), 194.

<sup>202</sup> Vlasta Mádlová, 'Bohumil Sekla (16. 5. 1901 – 7. 8. 1987)', *Akademický bulletin. Oficiální časopis Akademie věd ČR 2001*, No. 6, <http://abicko.avcr.cz/archiv/2001/6/obsah/bohumil-sekla-16.-5.-1901--7.-8.-1987-.html> (accessed 18 June 2017).

<sup>203</sup> NA, Ministry of Health Collection (MZd Coll.), Carton 2: Compulsory medical counselling before marriage (Report of Prof. Dr. Sekla, chairman of the Fourth Subcommittee of the Institute of Preventive Medicine at the Ministry of Health, presented at a working meeting of the subcommittee held on 19 May 1947 in Brno).

<sup>204</sup> Jarmila Veselá, *Sterilisace: problém populační, sociální a kriminální politiky* (Prague 1938).

<sup>205</sup> Veselá, *Sterilisace*, 208.

Czechoslovak context.<sup>206</sup> After November 1939, she became head of the criminal biology department of the Czech Eugenics Society, and in August 1942, she was officially assigned as an assistant to the Institute of Criminology at the Faculty of Law of the German University in Prague.<sup>207</sup>

At that time, Czech experts in the matter of eugenic protection of the population were exclusively concerned with the 'Czech nation'. Although the occupation made it impossible for Czech eugenicists to continue their research, Germans continued to provide intellectual capital that helped develop ideas about what could be done to protect the 'quality' of the nation. For the most part, Czech experts did not adopt the Nazi ideological interpretive pattern. Thus, they were able to continue their university and academic careers in post-war Czechoslovakia.<sup>208</sup> This was perhaps because it was relatively easy to argue in the post-war period that liberated Czechoslovakia needed a 'biological regeneration', as echoed during the 'national revolution' of 1945. Paul Weindling's comments regarding Germany, that its defeat in the war did not necessarily mean the defeat of eugenics or population policy, could well apply here.<sup>209</sup> Nor did the demise of the Protectorate cause the disappearance of the eugenic perspective from scientific circles in Czechoslovakia. Both eugenics, gradually transformed into the post-war study of the 'quality of the population', and occupational medicine, focusing on research into occupational diseases, continued to develop after the Second World War.<sup>210</sup>

<sup>206</sup> For the interwar debate see Michal Šimůnek, 'Pro et Contra. Debaty o zavedení tzv. eugenické sterilizace v Československu, 1933–1938', *Speciální pedagogika* (2012), No. 3, 224–40.

<sup>207</sup> She was acquitted of the charges of collaboration but never returned to the Faculty of Law of Charles University. Petr Cajthaml, 'Jarmila Veselá – první docentka Právnické fakulty UK', *IFORUM. Časopis Univerzity Karlovy*, 18 November 2013, <http://iforum.cuni.cz/IFORUM-14852.html> (28 October 2022).

<sup>208</sup> Bohumil Sekla was cleared by the purge commission for public employees of the Provincial National Committee in Prague on 24 October 1946. Several charges were brought against Jarmila Veselá, among other things for her comments made in the magazine *Naše věda* (Our science) (No. 19, 1946), where she reiterated her ideas contained in her book on sterilisations, and also the fact that she provided 'expert opinions' to the German authorities. Charles University Archive in Prague, Academic Senate Collection, Inv. No. 2684 (Carton 196) and No. 2707 (Carton 197).

<sup>209</sup> Paul Weindling, *Health, Race and German Politics between National Unification and Nazism, 1870–1945* (Cambridge 1989), 565.

<sup>210</sup> On the history of eugenics in Czechoslovakia after 1945 see Radka Šustrová and Jakub Rákosník, 'Everyday Eugenics: Expert Thought and Social Practice in Czechoslovakia after 1945' (article manuscript).

## Family Policies for Segregated Nations

Public policies under National Socialism are generally associated with the idealised image of the family and motherhood. Their sacredness and biological functions were presented ostentatiously to the public in order to mould the roles of individual family members, especially the woman, who was to be the anchor and the matron of the household. Alongside work and health, family was the third key component of Nazi social policy, but its importance goes back much further. The archetypal character of the family and its various meanings allowed it to be studied within the broader framework of the population and demography of the German nation. The cult of motherhood developed exclusively in the context of the reproduction of a race-based community. It appeared to be a unique means to ensure national integrity, which was threatened by the consequences of the First World War, industrial progress and high unemployment.

The family was the essential structural component of society, the cornerstone of community social life, and it reflected the principles underlying the National Socialist state. During the Second World War, German families came to embody the German ideal of national defence on the home front, just as soldiers did on the front lines. The family's vital role was determined through its biological function. Thus, Nazi family policy was a public policy which was, in the view of the Nazi 'social revolution', designed to benefit the German nation exclusively. From the perspective of genetics and research in racial biology, the primacy of the German ideal was indisputable, yet some occupation regimes allowed for a certain amount of tolerance in the formation of the New Europe. Such was the case of the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

The veneration of the family had deep roots in the Bohemian lands. The Autumn Revolution emphasised that national unity would be established through the traditional family. Restoring the family was the first step in a long-term effort aiming at the moral reformation of Czech society, viewed as corrupted by liberalism and free-thinking in the interwar period. The new conservative rhetoric was not simply the result of the Czech political and social elite striving to imitate

the population programme implemented in Germany after 1933. The Nazi project aiming to restore the family was both an inspiration and a catalyst of certain policies, but the path to restoring the Czech family began much earlier. One of the factors behind the political turn in the autumn of 1938 was the declining birth rate, which had continued since the end of the 19th century, affecting the entire industrial world. Interwar Czechoslovakia lacked the means to reverse this trend. Critical voices blamed the moral breakdown of society, using arguments such as the increasing divorce rate and the number of children born out of wedlock. For instance, between 1921 and 1930, the average number of births out of wedlock was 130.6 per 1,000 in Bohemia. The figures in the eastern parts of the country were lower (99.9 in Moravia and Silesia; 76.1 in Slovakia; 81.9 in Carpathian Ruthenia). Still, the interwar period saw the most dramatic increase, with the rate of births out of wedlock for all regions combined soaring from 52.5 to 96 live births.<sup>1</sup> The divorce rate was also continuously increasing.<sup>2</sup>

There were some compelling reasons to focus on the family. The decline in population growth and the stubbornly high infant mortality rate raised concerns among political reformers and experts. The family, they argued, lacked the state's support. The response came in the anti-liberal Revolution of 1938 and the subsequent rule of Rudolf Beran's government. All that had been achieved through female activism and the struggle for equal civil and social rights in the previous decades was discarded by public statements appealing to women to take up their 'noblest and most responsible task' and become mothers and housewives.<sup>3</sup> Despite preaching equal civil rights, neither the First Czechoslovak Republic nor the Weimar Republic could live up to these ideals, as historians Melissa Feinberg and Jennifer E. Walcoff have argued. While the debate on female political participation continued in the early years of the Nazi regime, in Czech society it took a conservative turn more quickly.<sup>4</sup> Falling back on the anti-liberal political and social landscape of the Autumn Revolution, post-Munich Czecho-Slovakia had been working on getting women to return to caring for the household and children since late 1938. The Protectorate government then built upon this policy.

The population logic of the Volksgemeinschaft led to the focus on the biological reproduction of the 'Czech nation'. The overlap between political rebirth

<sup>1</sup> Josef Nechamkis, 'K otázce nemanželských dětí u nás', *Sociální problémy* (1932), No. 1, 192–207.

<sup>2</sup> Rákosník and Šustrová, *Rodina v zájmu státu*, 148.

<sup>3</sup> Czechoslovak Government's programme statement of 13 December 1938, available at <http://www.vlada.cz/assets/clenove-vlady/historie-minulych-vlad/prehled-vlad-cr/1938-1939-csr/rudolf-beran/ppv-1938-1939-beran.pdf> (1 November 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Jennifer E. Walcoff, 'Von der Staatsbürgerin zur "Volksgemeinschaftin." Der Disput um die Rechtsstellung der Frau', in *Volksgemeinschaften. Frauen in der NS-Volksgemeinschaft*, ed. Sybille Steinbacher (Göttingen 2007), 49; Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*.

and population renewal was essential. Using Protectorate propaganda, regime leaders claimed:

Supporting and promoting the family, family life, and family education must be among the first and foremost responsibilities when building a new social order. It is only from a restored family and proper family education that lasting reform and moral, social, political, and economic revival can be brought about in any human society.<sup>5</sup>

Pro-family measures, however, were partially at odds with the needs of labour mobilisation. Placing family first was not in line with the demands of the labour market; family policy in the Protectorate thus had its limitations. Historians specialising in the Third Reich are also often critical when assessing Nazi family policy. Going against the conclusions of previous research on National Socialism, Gisela Bock asserts that the ideology of motherhood was not the cornerstone of Nazi policies regarding women and the population. Like other masculinist dictatorships, such as those in Spain and Italy, the Nazis strongly favoured the cult of fatherhood. Women, in reality, conformed to the male-dominated and professionalised race politics.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter focuses on family welfare policy that was in line with the principles of the protection and unity of the nation, as established by the Autumn Revolution. Two main aspects of the policy will be presented, whose common goal was to protect the Czech family. Firstly, the social support of Czech households, financed from public social insurance and public social welfare organisations, remained a vital tool for maintaining social stability in the Protectorate. Secondly, the continuing efforts of the Czechs to demographically safeguard the 'Czech nation' bore witness to the emergence of an anti-liberal movement using population paternalism in terms of instruments and objectives.

The programme of population growth was exclusively the programme of the Czech conservative right. The Germans pursued their own national interests within the ideological framework of *Volksgemeinschaft*. In terms of social policy, they were mainly concerned with social issues and stabilisation. In contrast to labour and health care, family policy could become an area of conflict, underscoring the long-standing tensions between Czech and German nationalists. After introducing the terminology and subject matter through real-life examples, this chapter will focus on the three fundamental pillars of family policy: marriage, childbearing and postnatal care, and social care for mother and child. The chapter will conclude with an in-depth study that I refer to as *Czech demography*.

<sup>5</sup> 'Obrodou rodiny k obrodě společnosti', *Rodiče a škola*. Čtrnáctideník rodičovských sdružení pro rodiče a školu (2 January 1942), No. 8, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Gisela Bock, 'Equality and Difference in National Socialist Racism', in *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity*, ed. Gisela Bock and Susan James (London 1992), 92.

## Concepts and practices

From the perspective of historical semantics, the term ‘family’ has many layers and is the most difficult of the three concepts in this book to delineate. Instinctively we feel that family has always been here and is the foundation of our value system. As the renowned interwar sociologist Otakar Machotka, who systematically researched the family, put it:

The Old Testament Jew or ancient Roman had as much social interest in the family as the medieval and nineteenth-century bourgeois.<sup>7</sup>

However, the relations that the term family describes, as well as the perception of who belongs to the family, are constantly changing, most notably with the development of modern technology and the rise of capitalism.<sup>8</sup>

Until the late modern period, the term family was not used, at least not in its modern sense. The Latin *familia* instead denoted a house, household or homestead. In this period, the family referred to an institutionalised social entity in which the personal relationships of family members were inseparable from their economic functions. A family was an economic unit not only in terms of what they consumed but also in the economic relationships they created, for example, through the inheritance of a family trade or business.<sup>9</sup> The latter criteria, however, soon gave way to the aspect of consumption as a need shared by the family. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the family gradually became a community based on blood-kinship, as servants and grooms at a farmstead ceased to be included. Eventually, the term family evolved into the form that Émile Durkheim called ‘conjugal’.<sup>10</sup> The only lasting familial tie in a modern family is between the spouses, as the offspring – by a marriage of their own – unbound themselves from their existing family.

Austrian Emperor Joseph II first attempted to establish a civil institution of marriage in the Habsburg Empire at the end of the 18th century. The 1783 Marriage Patent did not deviate significantly from the Church’s understanding of marriage. Yet the blurred lines between the jurisdictions of the state and the Church gave credence to radical voices calling for the introduction of compulsory civil marriage. The Austrian General Civil Code of 1811 adjusted matrimonial and family law, defining marriage as a union of two unequal subjects.<sup>11</sup> Only after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise did the institution of marriage become liberalised regarding the declaration of fundamental civil rights. At the same time,

<sup>7</sup> Otakar Machotka, *K sociologii rodiny. Příspěvek k metodám empirické sociologie* (Prague 1932), 11.

<sup>8</sup> See Ivo Možný, *Moderní rodina: Mýty a skutečnost* (Brno 1990).

<sup>9</sup> Jan Horský and Markéta Seligová, *Rodina našich předků* (Prague 1996), 17.

<sup>10</sup> Machotka, *K sociologii rodiny*, 21.

<sup>11</sup> Renata Veselá (ed.), *Rodina a rodinné právo. Historie, současnost a perspektivy* (Prague 2005), 69 and 71.

the question of the freedom of individual family members arose; this could potentially disintegrate the family, even if it still appeared firm and virtually unchanged. Dieter Schwab has drawn an interesting analogy between the state and the family, pointing out that both seek to create a specific contractual relationship. While for the state this would be a social contract providing for citizens' verbal consent to the government, marriage was the foundational relationship in the case of the family.<sup>12</sup>

Marriage was probably the most constant element of what constituted family throughout history. To enter into a marriage, the parties needed to obtain consent from ecclesiastical authorities (and, in some cases, even their manor lords' administration).<sup>13</sup> On the one hand, marriage was a private affair founded on a heterosexual relationship; on the other hand, being subject to a legally binding contract, it became a public matter. One cannot disregard the moral aspect, which naturally influenced matrimonial and divorce law. The first half of the 19th century saw an increasing trend towards the Romantic ideal and the view that marriage is subject to divine law.

It was not until the mid-19th century that things took a more liberal turn. The granting of individual rights, gradually emancipating women and children, further developed marriage as a declarative contract. These rights freed them from dependence on the patriarch, who continued to represent the family outwardly. This development bore testimony to the rise of liberalism, which transformed the understanding of the family as a social institution and introduced the issue of individual ownership. The emerging socialism caused the concept of the family to fall apart into distinct structural categories that varied throughout history: the bourgeois family, the pre-industrial family or the patriarchal family. At the time, family – which constituted a small social group, very much like we see it today – was considered both a natural and a socially constructed institution that was the cornerstone of the state and the nation.<sup>14</sup>

With the onset of the Industrial Revolution, the state and market capitalism grew in power while traditional family and community relations were weakened. Whereas in pre-modern times the extended family could provide all necessary services and assistance, in modern times the state has assumed most economic and political functions. Gradually, state politics became concerned with demography. With birth rates declining all over Europe from the late 19th century, demographers were increasingly worried about the threat of extinction, particularly in industrial

<sup>12</sup> Dieter Schwab, 'Familie', in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart 1975), 280.

<sup>13</sup> Horský and Seligová, *Rodina našich předků*, 73.

<sup>14</sup> In the long 19th century, the family referred to individuals related by marriage, consanguinity and adoption. Milena Lenderová, Tomáš Jiránek and Marie Macková, *Z dějin české každodennosti. Život v 19. století* (Prague 2010), 158.



societies such as Germany, France, England and Czechoslovakia. According to the architects of the Nazi 'social revolution', the First World War caused political and demographic disaster in Germany, leaving more than one million German children orphaned and about 600,000 families without a principal breadwinner. Natality in post-war Germany, at only 14.3 births per 1,000 inhabitants in 1918 (compared with 28.6 per cent in 1911), was an open invitation to talk about birth policy.<sup>15</sup> However, much as women were glorified as mothers in the Weimar Republic, there was no political consensus on a reasonable policy that would promote natality and social welfare.<sup>16</sup>

Trends in the Czech environment did not dramatically deviate from those in the rest of Europe. Liberalisation in terms of more democratic family law, as divorce laws were adopted, did not occur before the establishment of the First Czechoslovak Republic in 1918.<sup>17</sup> According to some, the liberal democratic revolution of 1918 launched the 'crisis of marriage', an allegation made by renowned journalist Ferdinand Peroutka in the mid-1920s.<sup>18</sup> Liberalism, Peroutka claimed, with its emancipatory ethos and emphasis on individual rights, was the root cause of an as-yet-unspecified social crisis that affected marital life and caused its sudden fragility. Putting men and women on an equal footing and weakening the inherited religious sexual morality made it impossible to benefit from the patriarchy, which cemented the relationships of older generations. These issues were attributed to the loosened conditions of establishing an independent state in 1918. This trend could no longer be reversed in the interwar period, leading to greater expectations from authoritarian regimes. Melissa Feinberg has noted that in the period following the 1938 Munich Agreement, gender issues were regarded similarly in the Bohemian lands and in Nazi Germany.<sup>19</sup> From 1938 on, women were to walk a completely different path than men, which was justified by arguments ultimately referring to their biological nature. It was not long before this viewpoint dominated the public debate and practice, particularly in schools and government programmes.

Negative demographic trends continued without the state intervening. Though many have tried throughout the 20th century, there was no universal formula to increase the birth rate. However, infant mortality could be addressed, as it was an issue related to hygiene and the quality of social and health care. Decisive political action could have helped, yet none was taken until the 1938 Munich Agreement.

<sup>15</sup> Schwab, 'Familie', 280.

<sup>16</sup> Horský and Seligová, *Rodina našich předků*, 73.

<sup>17</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Czechoslovak State, Act No. 320/1919 Coll., amending the provisions of civil law on the ceremonies of the marriage contract, on divorce, and on obstacles to marriage.

<sup>18</sup> See Ferdinand Peroutka, 'Krise manželství? I', *Přítomnost* (12 February 1925), No. 5, 65–6; 'Krise manželství? II', *Přítomnost* (19 February 1925), No. 6, 81–2.

<sup>19</sup> Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 184.

The population policy of interwar Czechoslovakia – whose politicians were generally better with words than with deeds – provoked calls for a more severe approach, particularly regarding morality and education, aiming to ‘restore the family’ and eventually ‘restore society’ as well. Both these points were on the agenda of the Autumn Revolution.

The low birth rate was not a problem solely threatening national integrity. The alarmingly low natality was also a concern regarding the mathematical sustainability of insurance, putting the reimbursement system on which the insurance companies depended at risk. A shortage of taxpayers could thus cause either an increase in contributions or lower pensions. Such prospects for the future naturally raised concerns within the context of the ‘strength’ and ‘quality’ of the nation. One of the greatest advocates of ‘a radical population policy’, an epithet he bestowed upon himself, was the sociologist, political economist and proponent of political Catholicism Marko Weirich.<sup>20</sup> He argued that

the population policy these days cannot simply strive to increase the population for posterity. Natality, and particularly the number of girls, which are to be the future mothers, is evolving in such a way that if the current mothers do not wake up and realise that they should give birth to 6 to 8 children instead of 4, in thirty years the birth rate in absolute numbers is bound to be even lower.<sup>21</sup>

However, even four children per family was above the contemporary norm. In Czechoslovakia, the average fertility rate at the time was about 3.2 children per mother. Weirich seems to have disregarded economic arguments as a subsidiary. He argued that a woman should realise that her principal role was to be a wife and mother, which he described as her ‘honourable duty and moral commandment’. Population policy was, for him, ‘the truest form of social policy’ because, besides caring for pensioners, widows and orphans, this policy focused on the younger generation on which the nation’s future depended. Indeed, the social and health system needed improving regarding care for the mother and child, which reformers should implement by other means. In his writings from the early 1940s, Weirich emphasised the well-being of society over that of the individual and the importance of eugenics.

It is no coincidence that I chose to cite Weirich among all his contemporaries. Weirich was the first one to develop the concept of ‘family policy’, which had not previously been a part of Czech political discourse. According to Weirich, the population policy implemented before was dehumanised and alien and resembled no more than ‘cattle breeding’, as he stated in an article written in 1940.<sup>22</sup> Yet there

<sup>20</sup> Marko Weirich, ‘Populační politika je v zájmu sociálního pojištění’, *Národní obnova* (19 February 1938), No. 8, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Marko Weirich, ‘Populační a sociální politika’, *Národní obnova* (12 March 1938), No. 11, 7.

<sup>22</sup> Marko Weirich, ‘Česká rodina’, *Národní obnova* (3 February 1940), No. 5, 3.

was more to it than just replacing one word with another. Weirich claimed that a systemic change was needed, one that would be committed to providing complex care for everyone throughout their lives but conditioned on their personal engagement. In his nationalist and paternalist treatise *For the Czech Cradle*, Weirich wrote:

If we spread the word of the beauty and power that paternal and maternal roles entail, and if, above all, we can educate our people not to indulge in shallow and comfortable 'humanism,' but to embrace self-denial and toil, only then can we successfully implement all measures in the area of 'family' policy.<sup>23</sup>

In his public statements Weirich made it clear that he favoured social organisation based on the estates. The new ideology aimed to become a suitable groundwork for the state's structure and the community's life. Due to the ever-growing importance of population quality, Weirich demanded a fundamental change in family policy. He drew inspiration from Nazi political theory and practice. Weirich was building upon Catholic conservatism, ideologically close to the newly founded ruling National Unity Party, making him a proponent of the party's values.

In contrast to categories such as 'health of the nation' and 'work for the nation', as we have seen in the previous chapters, family policy had a very special meaning. The family itself was a projection of the nation, its values and its thinking. Its microstructure, projecting its form onto the higher levels of an imagined inverted pyramid, represented the organisation of the national community, from the family to the nation. Hoping to transform society on the levels of mentality, biological race and demographic indicators, the Nazis had to turn to the family, the most fundamental unit constituting the nation. Nazi family policy was regarded as an existential matter for the German nation. This was manifested in their concern for marriage, the birth rate and the education of children and youth, united under the ideological influence of organisations such as the Hitler Youth (Hitlerjugend) and the League of German Girls (Bund deutscher Mädel).<sup>24</sup> Indoctrinating German youth was an essential part of the Nazis' population strategy.<sup>25</sup>

The Protectorate also focused its political efforts on the youngest generation. Besides the regular health checks mentioned in [Chapter Five](#), these policies included the Board of Trustees for the Education of Youth in Bohemia and Moravia (Kuratorium pro výchovu mládeže v Čechách a na Moravě). The Board of Trustees, which started its activities in May 1942, was a Czech counterpart to the Hitler Youth in Germany. Through education and socialisation, it aimed to enforce the reconstruction of society. Consequently, an effective pro-family policy

<sup>23</sup> Weirich, *O českou kolébku*, 29.

<sup>24</sup> See Buddrus, *Totale Erziehung*.

<sup>25</sup> O. Albrecht, 'Führung der Jugend zu bevölkerungspolitischen Zielen', *Die Gesundheitsführung*. 'Ziel und Weg' (1944), No. 1, 4.

Year	Total		Children of Czech and other nationality	Children of German nationality
1937	155,996	100%	113,800	41,200
1938	163,525	104%	115,142	48,400
1939	192,344	123%	119,662	72,700
1940	218,043	140%	131,400	86,600
1941	208,913	134%	132,800	76,100
1942	199,159	128%	140,000	59,200
1943	225,372	144%	161,000	64,300
1944	230,183	148%	163,800	66,900
1945	195,687	125%	158,329	37,600

**Table 6.1** Live births in Bohemia and Moravia, 1937–45

Source: Vladimír Srb, *Vymírající národ* (Prague 1947), 53.

would confirm that the current political course was correct, especially in the eyes of those Czech patriots who were carefully watching the population curve. Strangely enough, despite the adversity of the times and the gloomy predictions of Czech experts, there was no population decline in the Protectorate. The birth rate was increasing, as shown in [Table 6.1](#).

The increasing birth rate of the ‘Czech nation’, which was not affected by the global conflict, cannot be attributed to the brilliance of the Protectorate’s population policy. The strong population cohorts born around 1918 reached reproductive age during the Protectorate. There were other supporting factors. Czech men did not leave to fight in the war, which positively affected family cohesion. Moreover, the standard of living under the Protectorate was relatively stable. Czechoslovak historiography, emphasising the narrative of Czech society in resistance, often states that women getting pregnant to avoid work contributed to the increased birth rate.

Yet, in reality, the occupation authorities did not consider accumulating cases of pregnant Czech women as a specific strategy. Attempts to escape work were closely monitored by the German Security Service (Sicherheitsdienst). In January 1943, it suspected that female workers at the Škoda plant in Adamov, in southern Moravia, were trying to escape their work obligations by becoming pregnant. Here, eighty cases of pregnancy were reported among 2,000 female workers aged between eighteen and thirty (i.e. 4 per cent of the employed women).<sup>26</sup> In the

<sup>26</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Sign. 114–314/4, Carton 313: Sicherheitsdienst RF SS, SD-Leitabschnitt Prag, Tagesbericht Nr. 5/43, 14 January 1943, p. 14.



**Figure 6.1** Awarding the winners of the Czech ‘Youth Day’, organised by the Board of Trustees for the Education of Youth in Bohemia and Moravia in Prague-Strahov in September 1943. The woman on the left is dressed in a Moravian folk costume, and the winners have symbolic emblems of their countries on their shirts (Czech lion, Moravian eagle). Source: National Archives, Prague, Karl Hermann Frank Photo Collection, no. 1982.

autumn of 1943, out of 4,000 women in Prague who were to work in the Reich, 1,100 showed proof of pregnancy. A year later, the Security Service returned to the same issue in connection with recruiting Czech workers born in 1924. At the time, the recruitment of only single women in the early years of the Protectorate was later changed, and marriage was no longer an obstacle.<sup>27</sup> Women did not rush into marriage now. When asked whether she and the child’s father would marry, they often could not answer, as a German officer noted.<sup>28</sup> Knowing the mood and personal strategies of the Czech population was a matter of concern to the occupation authorities at a time of total war. Czech women reported their pregnancy from its very beginning, with the assumption that they would soon be released from the labour force or not even enter it. Nevertheless, as the sources indicate, the suddenly growing desire for motherhood was not a serious enough problem—and probably

<sup>27</sup> Comment to the document No. 73 from 3 July 1943. In Kokošková, Pažout and Sedláková, *Pracovali pro Třetí říši*, 217.

<sup>28</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Sign. 114–301/1, Carton 299: Sicherheitsdienst RF SS, SD-Leitabschnitt Prag, Tagesbericht Nr. 22/44, 15 February 1944, p. 7.

not such a widespread trend—to keep the Reich Protector's Office busy. Still, the popular Czech memory continues to be dominated by narratives describing the variety of strategies of Czechs in the resistance against the German occupation, here by a well-timed pregnancy.<sup>29</sup>

Generally, the rising population curve was not common knowledge at the time, especially among Czechs. German officials and statisticians who were aware of it were not particularly pleased, nor were they happy about Czech efforts to model their own family policy on German population projects. Still, marriage and birth rates were central to the contemporary debate on family in the Nazi Protectorate.

### The predicament of mixed marriages

In this book, I have repeatedly highlighted the aspect of segregated care organised along national lines. While such segregation was feasible in employment and health care, it was not the case in family policy. After centuries of mutual cohabitation, the idea of two strictly separate communities of Czechs and Germans was unrealistic. Therefore, interest grew in mixed Czech–German marriages, which were a manifestation of the failure to adhere to exclusive nationality. Both Czech and German nationalists cautioned against the lack of a clearly defined national identity within the marriage, which could lead to indifference towards one's nationality.<sup>30</sup> This trend was discussed even more under occupation, when the demand for a national-racial order influenced national policies.

The biological conception of the population was predominant over the cultural one, which led to the use of biopolitical measures such as marriage and birth rate regulation and, on the extreme end, 'correction' through sterilisation and castration as the most invasive methods of Nazi population control. The racism that permeated population policy in Nazi Germany was not, according to Gisela Bock, the racial anti-Semitism that historiography often connects with Nazi Germany, but racism of a different type – one based on eugenics and racial hygiene. The woman as the 'mother of the race' or, on the contrary, as the agent of 'racial degeneration', became a central trope. In the latter case, a woman's undesirable ancestry could become grounds to deny her reproductive rights.<sup>31</sup> Motherhood and the birth rate were thus not promoted indiscriminately but were rather carefully coordinated within clearly defined boundaries.

<sup>29</sup> Elaborated in Rákosník and Šustrová, *Rodina v zájmu státu*, 43.

<sup>30</sup> See Tara Zahra, 'Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis', *Slavic Review* 69 (2010), No. 1, 93–119; Tara Zahra, 'Reclaiming Children for the Nation: Germanization, National Ascription, and Democracy in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1945', *Central European History* 37 (2004), No. 4, 501–43.

<sup>31</sup> Gisela Bock, 'Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization and the State', *Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 8 (1983), No. 3, 401.

During the Autumn Revolution, mixed marriages were discussed in connection with establishing exclusive national communities. Benjamin Frommer, who has explored marriages between Jews and non-Jews, has noticed that German officials tended to exempt these unions from certain anti-Semitic sanctions and delay their deportation. In 1943, there were 6,000 Jews married to 'Aryans' living in the Protectorate. Although the Protectorate government banned marriages between Jews and gentile Czechs, the occupational authorities did not approve the promulgation of this Czech adaption of the Nuremberg Decrees. Still, marriages between them became rare due to escalating persecution, as Frommer points out, which enclosed Jews in a 'ghetto without walls'.<sup>32</sup> While Frommer's analysis shows the convoluted situation that German officials tried to untangle and the consequences of marrying and divorcing Jews, in this book I use the term 'mixed marriage' to refer exclusively to gentile couples made up of partners of different nationalities. Occupation authorities looked disapprovingly on mixed marriages, but they were never as significant an issue as marriages between Jews and non-Jews. Thus, regarding family policy, the selection was racist and anti-Semitic rather than nationality-based. Racism was the dominant outlook, which was confirmed by the (never issued) ban on mixed Czech-German marriages and the extension of German law to include ethnically mixed marriages.

From August 1939, German family law began introducing changes that applied to mixed Czech-German marriages.<sup>33</sup> The most significant amendment was passed in October 1941, mandating, for instance, that for a mixed marriage to be valid, the couple had to be married before a German official if the bridegroom was German.<sup>34</sup> This was not necessary the other way around. Only under these conditions was it possible to enter into a mixed marriage. Moreover, some new grounds for divorce were introduced, namely the partner's refusal to take German Reich citizenship. [Table 6.2](#) shows the effect these regulations had on marriage in the Protectorate.

The marriage rate for Czech couples increased in the first half of the period of the occupation, as [Table 6.2](#) shows. It reached two milestones in this period: the first in 1939, when 75,027 couples got married, which was about 19,000 more than in 1938; and in 1942, when the marriage rate again rose to over 70,000 marriages. The trend in Czech-German marriages is worth pointing out. Surprisingly, the

<sup>32</sup> Benjamin Frommer, 'Privileged Victims: Inter-marriage between Jews, Czechs, and Germans in the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia', in *Inter-marriage from Central Europe to Central Asia*, ed. Adrienne Edgar and Benjamin Frommer (Lincoln 2020), 49.

<sup>33</sup> In detail in Jaromír Tauchen, 'Manželské právo v Protektorátu Čechy a Morava', in *Melior est aquisitio scientiae negotiatione argenti, Pocta prof. Ignácovi Antonínovi Hrdinovi, O. Praem. k šedesátým narozeninám* (Prague 2013), 315–25.

<sup>34</sup> RGBI I, 1941, p. 654: Verordnung zur Durchführung und Ergänzung des Ehegesetzes und zur Vereinheitlichung des internationalen Familienrechts (Vierte Durchführungsverordnung zum Gesetz), 25 October 1941.

Marriage	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Czech	53,662	75,027	70,938	64,233	72,330	54,160	47,732	67,361
Czech–German	445	536	362	83	133	87	61	617
Czech–Russian	224	275	259	242	222	238	205	927
Czech–Slovak	868	1,289	1,044	688	688	689	474	1,162
Marriages total	56,178	78,169	73,117	65,908	73,722	55,490	48,792	73,681

**Table 6.2** Czech and mixed marriages in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia (with the Sudetenland excluded), 1938–45

Source: *Pohyb obyvatelstva: Sňatky, porody, úmrtí a příčiny smrti v zemi české a moravskoslezské bez pohraničí* – for the years 1938–40 (Prague 1940); for the years 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944 (Prague 1948), and 1945 (Prague 1949).

highest figures were reached in 1938, at the time of the growing Czech–German conflict, and in the years marking the beginning and end of the occupation period (i.e. 1939 and 1945). The figures dropped to their lowest in 1941, when the Germans took the most severe action against domestic resistance and when Heydrich became Deputy Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia.

It was not only the number of Czech marriages that increased but also the number of mixed marriages, particularly Czech–German ones. The drop in numbers in the second half of the occupation period can be explained by the worsening political and economic conditions resulting from the total war. That being the case, the high marriage rate in the preceding years is more thought-provoking because the marriage rate usually increases in times of prosperity.

The Reich Protector's Office was not particularly pleased about this development. In 1940, German officials stated there had been virtually no reduction in the number of mixed marriages since the Protectorate had been established. Thus, the propaganda and awareness-raising campaigns had proven a failure.<sup>35</sup> Aware of that, the German authorities adopted a different strategy towards mixed couples. Czech–German marriages were regarded as a fact of life and the children were viewed as an opportunity to strengthen the Nazi Volksgemeinschaft in the Bohemian lands. Although the parents were not legally entitled to Reich support, they could receive it under certain circumstances. The authorities were careful to ensure that the children receiving the support would receive a 'German upbringing' as well. If the parents were reluctant or local conditions prevented it, the child could be placed into day and night childcare. The constant struggle over children and their national identity continued from the

<sup>35</sup> BArch, R 43-II/1325a, Bl. 66: Der Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren an den Herrn Reichsminister des Innern, 21 August 1940.



interwar period into the period of Nazi occupation. In the words of occupation officials, uttered as late as 1944,

it is a woe to lose any child who is German by nature and should only be lost because of special circumstances.<sup>36</sup>

The German ambitions in population policy set the framework for this constant struggle. Surprisingly, German officials prioritised making mothers and families 'comfortable' rather than leaving the mother and child socially deprived. In practice, they aimed to support the children and simultaneously ensure that the parents received the proper ideological education. The general idea was to grant support on principle and refuse it only when all attempts to establish a proper 'German upbringing' had failed. There was a particular concern for illegitimate children of German men and foreign women in the occupied territories in the east. On the grounds of Adolf Hitler's decree of 11 October 1943, the Reich took care of these children under the condition of the 'good racial value' of their population stock.<sup>37</sup> It worked the other way around too. If a family was found to be 'antisocial' or 'worthless' to the *Volksgemeinschaft*, there was no possibility of providing child allowances, not even on a one-off basis.<sup>38</sup> The national policy was mainly concerned with the child's nationality (mostly tied to paternity) and its upbringing following cultural tradition and ideology.

The existence of mixed marriages was proof that not everyone respected the national dichotomy, but it did not violate any official regulations concerning race. Based on German eugenic research, discussions about the racial value of the 'Czech nation' were ongoing during the occupation. Within the Germanisation of Bohemia and Moravia, a part of the Czech population was to be subjected to 'complete re-nationalisation'. Still, having the racially suitable Czechs adopt the German culture, language and worldview was a goal that could only be achieved in the long term. Formally separating the two national groups and leading them towards ideological convergence was part of the long-term Germanisation strategy employed by the Reich and occupation authorities. Czech-German marriages were a hybrid result of this ethnic background but never a direct instrument of the *Volkstumspolitik*.

Nevertheless, officials could not ignore ethnically mixed marriages. They became the central dilemma in an otherwise seemingly unproblematic social

<sup>36</sup> NA, NSM Coll., Sign. 110-4/200, Carton 25: K. H. mit Anlage SS-Standartenführer Dr. Gies an Herrn Staatssekretär Dr. Klopfer, Partei-Kanzlei, Betr. Gewährung der Kinderbeihilfe für Kinder aus deutsch-tschechischen Mischehen, 17 June 1944.

<sup>37</sup> NA, NSM Coll., Sign. 110-4/199, Carton 30: Erlass des Führers über die Betreuung der unehelichen Kinder von Deutschen in den besetzten Ostgebieten vom 11 October 1943.

<sup>38</sup> State Regional Archives in Litoměřice, Government President Office Collection (ÚVP Coll.), Inv. No. 12/3, Carton 755: Der Reichskommissar für die sudetendeutschen Gebiete, Betr. Verordnung über Ehestandsdarlehen und Kinderbeihilfen, 16 January 1939.

practice in the Protectorate – segregated care determined by one's nationality. Reich Protector Konstantin von Neurath rejected a proposal to ban Czech–German marriages in the autumn of 1939. However, there was no consensus on regulating the 'mixing' of the Czech and German populations. According to the decision of September 1940, individual cases were to be approached 'on a case-by-case basis'.<sup>39</sup> This proved to be a strain on German officials in the areas where mixed marriages most frequently occurred, such as the town of Domažlice in south-west Bohemia. Officials of the Oberlandrat took an ad hoc approach and either tried to talk the parties out of their planned marriage or make it more difficult for them to get married. However, as their report stated in disappointment, these efforts brought only limited results.<sup>40</sup>

Even if the Protectorate authorities viewed Czech–German mixed marriages as 'undesirable,' they allowed them due to a vague tolerance for nationality. The eugenic postulates, however, were equally uncompromising towards both national groups, creating insurmountable walls between people based on racial-hygiene policy. An example of this was the obligation of doctors and midwives to report to health authorities the birth of any children of German nationality who might have had physical or mental disabilities.<sup>41</sup> The language of racial hygiene was complemented by the rhetoric of National Socialist population policy. The population in the Protectorate was naturally also bound by these rules, which defined marital fitness and suitability. Racial requirements determined a certificate of marital fitness, and for Reich citizens, it was vital to get a marriage loan.<sup>42</sup> A Czech woman would encounter such practice if she intended to marry a German national.

Regulation followed the formal procedures imposed in the Reich and the Sudetenland, but still, officers faced troubles with the mixed nations. In April 1941, the Reich Minister of the Interior decreed that future newlyweds must present a German municipal official with a certificate of marital fitness issued by the Protectorate authorities. The betrothed couple's racial suitability, political orientation, political and national conduct, character traits, social certification, knowledge of the German language and willingness to put their children exclusively in German schools were prerequisites for obtaining official approval.<sup>43</sup> Although in some

<sup>39</sup> Brandes, 'Umwolkung, Umsiedlung, rassische Bestandaufnahme', 50.

<sup>40</sup> NA, ÜRP Coll., Carton 290, Folio 491: An die Gruppe I/3 im Hause, Betr. Deutsch-Tschechische Mischehen, 29 June 1940.

<sup>41</sup> NA, ÜRP-ST Coll., Sign. 109-4/983, Carton 54: Der Reichsminister des Innern, Betr. Meldepflicht für missgestaltete usw. Neugeborene, 18 August 1939.

<sup>42</sup> Regarding the issue of marriage loans in the Weimar Republic after 1933 see Gabriele Czarnowski, 'Die Ehe als "Angriffspunkt der Eugenik". Zur geschlechterpolitischen Bedeutung nationalsozialistischer Ehepolitik,' in *Rationale Beziehungen? Geschlechterverhältnisse im Rationalisierungsprozess*, ed. Dagmar Reese, Eve Rosenhaft, Carola Sachse and Tilla Siegel (Frankfurt am Main 1993), 251–69.

<sup>43</sup> NA, ÜRP-ST Coll., Sign. 109-4/966, Carton 53: Der Reichsminister des Innern an die Aufsichtsbehörden der Standesbeamte und an die Oberlandräte im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, 3 April 1941

documented Protectorate cases the knowledge of German was so poor that an interpreter had to be called in, the strenuousness of the whole procedure did not seem to have put off couples from entering into a mixed marriage.<sup>44</sup> Nor was the German partner's party affiliation with the NSDAP an obstacle; despite the assumptions on the part of German officials, this did not particularly discourage Czech women from marrying Germans. In 1940, a district official lamented the impossibility of educating the German population. As far as his district was concerned, mixed marriages were being contracted in large numbers, and the overall statistics showed that the 'German element' was declining in a 'deeply regrettable manner'.<sup>45</sup>

In November 1940, State Secretary Karl Hermann Frank wrote to Berlin, mentioning the 'not insignificant number' of mixed Czech-German marriages.<sup>46</sup> To his knowledge, between August 1939 and August 1940, 828 mixed couples had married, while seventeen Reich officials married women who were Protectorate subjects. On that note, Frank recalled Hitler's decision that the 'racially valuable resources' of the 'Czech nation' were to be separated from the rest in order to Germanise them.<sup>47</sup> In 1940, the Oberlandrat in Prague granted marriage permission to 179 Czech women and 136 men. A year later, there were no more than thirty-six and thirty-eight successful applicants, respectively, as revealed by Detlef Brandes.<sup>48</sup> Marriages between members of the Nazi Party and Czechs were subject to even more cumbersome paperwork, as they required the approval of the District Governor (Gauhauptmann), according to an order of the regional NSDAP leadership in Prague.<sup>49</sup>

Occupation authorities were also trying to solve the problem of how to increase the birth rate among Bohemian and Moravian Germans. The Oberlandrat in Jičín, in north-east Bohemia, came up with a non-repressive solution. In February 1941, they proposed institutional measures to the Reich Protector's Office to reduce the number of undesirable Czech-German marriages. According to the German officials in Jičín, the leading cause of this situation was not the unwillingness of the German population to conform to the 'national interest' and to seek out a partner of their own nationality but the lack of opportunity to meet German partners. A 'marriage brokering institution', established on the Berlin model and working closely with the Protectorate's state and party authorities, seemed to be a suitable

<sup>44</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 290, Folio 491: An die Gruppe I/3 im Hause, Betr. Deutsch-Tschechische Mischehen, 29 June 1940.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, Folio 488: In der Zeit vom 1. 8. 39 bis 1. 2. 40 sind in meinem Bezirk folgende Eheschliessungen, Geburten und Sterbenfälle zu verzeichnen ... (undated).

<sup>46</sup> BArch, R 43-II/1325a, Folio 91: Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren an den Herrn Reichsminister des Innern, den Stellvertreter des Führers, 16 November 1940.

<sup>47</sup> BArch, R 43-II/1325a, Folio 91: Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren an den Herrn Reichsminister des Innern, den Stellvertreter des Führers, 16 November 1940.

<sup>48</sup> Brandes, *Umvolkung, Umsiedlung, rassische Bestandaufnahme*, 51.

<sup>49</sup> NA, ÚŘP-ST Coll., Sign. 109-4/1386, Carton 86: Ehen von Parteimitgliedern mit Angehörigen fremder Volksgruppen, 9 December 1940.

solution in theory as it had a proven track record. No sources mention whether the strategy was successfully implemented in the region of Jičín; most likely, it was not.<sup>50</sup> Rather than establishing an institution for the Germans scattered across the Protectorate (Streudeutsche), in June 1941 Reich officials were already thinking of resettling the Germans to create larger and more tightly knit German communities. Marriages within the small German communities in the Protectorate were allegedly at high risk of possible incestuous relationships. The plan was to have Germans from the Reich move to the emerging islands of German settlement, thus improving the chances of meeting and marrying a German.<sup>51</sup>

### Population growth of the 'Czech nation'

The long-term threat of depopulation demonstrated in the statistics and the unfulfilled ideas of interwar experts made population politics an easy card to play for advocates of the Autumn Revolution. Support for Czech families was considered essential for the stability of *národní pospolitost* and the nation's future. A department of the National Partnership called 'Czech Family' promoted and supported exclusively 'orderly families'. Families displaying proper morality and upbringing were considered the main pillars of national health and the nation's performance.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the family policy, which introduced various means of social discipline for the 're-education' of Czech families, was also tied to the national dimension of labour and health policies.

The programme statement of the post-Munich government, published in December 1938, marked the start of the political turn in the approach to the family. It explicitly stated:

In addition to the health of every citizen, healthy families, particularly families with many children, were the lifeblood of the nation and the state. The Government will take all necessary measures to encourage the formation and development of large families, both socially and morally.<sup>53</sup>

The recognition of the nation's political, economic and, notably, moral decline gave Christian conservative political leaders a strong mandate, enabling them to begin an immediate population 'regeneration' by restoring the traditional family. The

<sup>50</sup> NA, ÚŘP-ST Coll., Sign. 109-4/970, Carton 53: Der Oberlandrat Jitschin an den Herrn Reichsprotektor, 10 February 1941.

<sup>51</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Folio 502, Carton 290: Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, Partei-Kanzlei, Der Leiter der Rassenpolitischen Amtes der NSDAP an die Partei-Kanzlei, zu Hdn. Pg. Neeße, München, 19 June 1941.

<sup>52</sup> 'Splnění sociální úkoly: "Radost ze života" v roce 1940', *Národní práce* (12 January 1941), No. 11, 6.

<sup>53</sup> Government's programme statement of 13 December 1938. Available at <http://www.vlada.cz/assets/clenove-vlady/historie-minulych-vlad/prehled-vlad-cr/1938-1939-csr/rudolf-beran/ppv-1938-1939-beran.pdf> (10 November 2022).

emphasis on Christian values was to ensure that marriages did not break up and to restore the reproductive function of marriage, thus enabling society's 'renewal'.

Instruments accompanied the appeals to bring about this change. The Czech elites took up the task of population renewal with unexpected vigour. In December 1938, the government ordered adjustments to the public administration to eliminate dual-income families. The real intention, however, was different. Forcing married women to retire was intended to free up positions in the civil service for unemployed men, whose numbers had increased due to the loss of the Sudetenland. At the same time, it was meant to help implement the announced population programme of the government.

Although excluding women from the civil service undermined gender equality by preventing married women from receiving a salary in a civil service position, its impact was not too far-reaching.<sup>54</sup> Of the approximately seven million economically active citizens, the employment rate of Czechoslovak women was about 20 per cent, but among public servants, women were the least represented.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the total number of female employees who had to retire was at most 100,000. By Prime Minister Beran's decree, these women could voluntarily give up their jobs by 16 January 1939 in exchange for a lump-sum payment for each year of service and a retirement salary upon reaching the age of fifty-five.<sup>56</sup> If the woman refused to quit on her own, she would be dismissed with a reduced lump-sum payment.

Reducing unemployment by forcing women out of the labour market was not an entirely new idea. In the 1930s, when Czechoslovak Finance Minister Karel Engliš had contemplated it, representatives of the interwar women's movement fiercely condemned the proposal, claiming that it was a 'reactionary return to primitivism' and dismissing the 'women's return to the family' argument as a cause that only seemed noble.<sup>57</sup> The Autumn Revolution, however, changed the priorities. Compared with the Reich's regulations, the government of the Second Republic came up with a much lighter version of employment regulation. Its long-term goal was to 'enable' low-income young people to 'set up households.'<sup>58</sup> In

<sup>54</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Government regulation No. 379/1938 Coll., on the adjustment of certain personnel relations in the public administration.

<sup>55</sup> In Czechoslovakia in 1930, every fifth woman of Czech nationality was gainfully employed. Among Germans, the proportion was as high as 24 per cent, while among Slovaks, Hungarians, Poles and Carpathian Ruthenians it was only around 10 per cent. The lowest figure was among the Jewish population, where the female employment rate was 9.6 per cent. *Sčítání lidu v republice československé z dne 1. prosince 1930*, Part II: *Povolání obyvatelstva*, Part III: *Povolání a sociální rozvrstvení obyvatelstva podle národnosti (také cizinců) a podle náboženského vyznání* (Prague 1935), 24.

<sup>56</sup> *Sčítání lidu v republice československé*, 28.

<sup>57</sup> Františka Plamínková, *O právu vdáných žen na výdělečnou práci* (Prague 1934), 10.

<sup>58</sup> NA, PMR Coll., Carton 4154, Folio. 502: 46/XXI, 4/VII/1940: 2/ Outline of the Government regulation supplementing Sections 15 and 19 of the Government regulation of 21 December 1938, No. 379 Coll., on the regulation of some personnel relations in the public administration: draft of Government resolution amending the guidelines for the dismissal of married female employees issued by Government regulation of 21 December 1938.

other words, officials wanted to suppress the career ambitions of young women and force them to start a family. Women who remained employed received a cap on their maximum income.<sup>59</sup> As average prices and salaries rose in the following years, women moved lower and lower on the wage ladder, and their economic situation deteriorated. The regulation was partially repealed by the end of the war, but the reactivation of married women in the civil service did not occur until after liberation.<sup>60</sup>

Prior to the occupation, the Czech government had failed to develop a comprehensive solution to unemployment and falling birth rates. Instruments to influence the nation's neglected demographic situation were often isolated attempts to increase the natality of the 'Czech nation.' Whatever may have been behind this unsystematic approach by Czech officials (perhaps trying to enforce population measures in stages), the Czech family policy in the Protectorate was reminiscent of the Reich population policy.

The Czechs wanted to take an example from the most model practice of Nazi Germany – newlywed loans. Looking at Europe in the 1930s, there was probably no law more famous than the German population measures, which implemented loans for young couples. The Nazi Unemployment Relief Act of June 1933 combined measures against unemployment and support for functional families and applied exclusively to Reich nationals.<sup>61</sup> Through interest-free marriage loans, which Tim Mason evaluated as one of the most influential employment policy instruments in Germany, the Nazis sought to stimulate the German marriage and birth rate.<sup>62</sup> The regulation approved by the Protectorate government in March 1940 went in the same direction. It was concerned with the nationally protective function of social policy and the population growth of the 'Czech nation.'

The idea of marriage loans had existed in the Czech environment for some time, but its concrete form began to emerge only during the Autumn Revolution. The first, temporary variant was the marriage trust fund of the youth wing of the National Partnership called the Young to Themselves (Mladí sobě) for the poorest couples. The trust fund was somewhat limited, taking into account the social circumstances of the young couple above all other considerations. This was, of course, reflected in the sums paid out by the trust fund until its liquidation in April 1940. It had received 7,554 applications and disbursed K

<sup>59</sup> Memorandum of the ÚSP No. 1240/42.

<sup>60</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 420/1942 Coll., on the simplification and new adjustment of some personnel relations in the public administration; Decree of the President of the Republic of 10 September 1945 on the reactivation and reinstatement of married women in the civil service.

<sup>61</sup> RGBl, Teil I, p. 323: Gesetz zur Verminderung der Arbeitslosigkeit vom 1 June 1933.

<sup>62</sup> Mason, *Social Policy in the Third Reich*, 116.

1,377,000 from public funds (approximately RM 138,000) in aid.<sup>63</sup> Its liquidation was closely tied to the new and much more complex set of regulations to replace the Young to Themselves trust fund, considerably extending the reach of its function.

Czech officers first mentioned marriage loans in a draft government regulation aptly titled 'On Public Support for the Growth of the Nation'. In a discussion held in the autumn of 1939, Czech officials agreed at a meeting of the Committee for Economic Affairs that the regulation should be 'exactly according to the Reich model'.<sup>64</sup> However, from an economic point of view, the Reich Unemployment Relief Act inspired the Czechs only by the generous amount of financial assistance. In contrast to the Germans, the Czechs did not find a solution for the high costs associated with the distribution of social benefits.<sup>65</sup> Considering 'various moral, health, and social motives', the Protectorate government clarified that it sought to provide interest-free marriage loans exclusively for the ethnically Czech population. 'Public interest' and the ambition to achieve the desired 'population quality' were the goals of the planned reform. Hence, only physically and mentally fit young Czechs might receive the loans.<sup>66</sup>

As was consistent with the technical construction of the proposal, the government offered financial largesse to couples on the condition of accepting the patriarchal order in family and employment. Worked out in detail, the proposal envisaged the allocation of interest-free aid amounting to between K 5,000 and K 8,000. A loan of a few thousand crowns was a significant sum (in July 1940, the annual salary of a worker in the metal industry was about K 15,000).<sup>67</sup> The government's submission consisted of two parts. It envisaged the introduction of interest-free loans for newlyweds and support for families with several children. However, it applied exclusively to Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia nationals who could prove they had a clean criminal record. The granting of the loan was non-claimable. An advantage was the possibility of repaying it after the first year

<sup>63</sup> As of mid-April 1940, the trust fund totalled K 1,700,000, which it received from various Czech organisations. The highest contribution was given by the Ministry of Social and Health Administration (K 750,000). Further contributors were Youth Wing of National Partnership (K 345,000), National Aid (K 250,000) and National Partnership (K 250,000). Smaller contributions were provided by National Bank, Provincial Bank, Slavia Bank (K 83,000 in total) and private persons (K 28,000). NA, PMR Coll., Carton 2453: The 'Young for Themselves' event. Donations to the Trust Fund – status as of 16 April 1940. NA, PMR Coll., Carton 2453: Marriage fund of Young for Themselves and its liquidation by the Ministry of Social and Health Administration [1940].

<sup>64</sup> NA, PMR Coll., Carton 2453: Minutes No. 44 of the meeting of the Committee of Ministers for Economic Affairs held on 10 October 1938 at 5 pm at the Ministry of Finance, 11 October 1939.

<sup>65</sup> RGBl. I, 1933, 323.

<sup>66</sup> BArch, R2/56.222, Bl. 410–424: Der Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren, Betr. Ehestandsdarlehen und Unterstützung kinderreicher Familien im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, 17 April 1940; Entwurf der Regierungsverordnung vom 14 March 1940.

<sup>67</sup> *Statistická ročenka Protektorátu Čechy a Morava* (Prague 1940), 316.

of marriage, with a monthly instalment of 1 per cent of the loan. The final section offered the possibility of reduction or even a waiver of repayment: at the birth of the first and second child, 20 per cent of the loaned amount was waived, another 25 per cent after the third child, and after the fourth child, the whole loan was to be forgiven altogether. The second part of the proposal had a primarily social dimension. It was designed to help families with five or more children by providing an upbringing allowance. Any financial support during periods of rationing had, however, one major drawback – without ration cards, it was only possible to buy things on the black market at exorbitant prices.

Occupation officials did not look upon this generosity with approval. Indeed, in the autumn of 1940, State Secretary Karl H. Frank rejected the full implementation of loans for Czech newlyweds. The official reason for denying marriage loans to 'Aryan' Czechs was insufficient resources to cover the costs. Not only was the German administration opposed to the project, but the Protectorate Minister of Finance was unable to find suitable means of implementing it. The Germans were aware of the Protectorate's rising birth rate, and thus any pro-population measures seemed pointless. The 40 per cent increase in the Czech birth rate could not be overlooked; classified statistics comparing 1937 and 1940 proved this quite reliably.<sup>68</sup> In 1944 the number of live births increased by a full 44 per cent compared with 1937.<sup>69</sup> This growth peaked in 1944 and was a notable trend compared with the rest of Europe. As mentioned earlier, it was related to the strong birth cohorts born after the First World War who had just reached reproductive age. The Protectorate's political, social and economic conditions also played a role, while the ongoing war in Europe did not reach the territory.

The proposal that was implemented was only a tiny fraction of what the Czechs had planned. In the end, only families with many children received support.<sup>70</sup> Czech mothers did not obtain even symbolic recognition of exemplary motherhood, which the Protectorate government had sought simultaneously. In mid-1940, the Reich Protector did not approve a new Protectorate award, the 'Honorary Badge of Motherhood', for meritorious Czech mothers.<sup>71</sup> The 'Czech nation' again failed to follow the German model, that is, the 'Cross of Honour of

<sup>68</sup> In interwar Czechoslovakia, demographers distinguished between different 'demographic' characteristics of the population based on ethnicity. During the First Republic, Poles had the highest natural increase, while Germans always had the lowest. The Czechs were approximately in the middle. J. Macháčová and J. Matějček, *Sociální pozice národnostních menšin v českých zemích 1918–1938* (Opava 1999), 258.

<sup>69</sup> Vladimír Srb, *Vymírající národ* (Prague 1947), 53.

<sup>70</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 441/1941 Coll., on special allowances for large families; Government regulation No. 87/1944 Coll., supplementing Government regulation No. 441 of 21 November 1941, on special allowances for large families.

<sup>71</sup> NA, PMR Coll., Carton 4154, Folio 479: The 46th meeting of the Presidency of the Ministerial Council, 4 July 1940.



the German Mother', an award to honour German women with four or more children, which was first handed out on Mother's Day in 1939.

Towards the end of the war, Minister of Social and Health Administration Vladislav Klumpar recalled the Czech initiative, claiming it was a strategy designed to outsmart German officials: to change the grand project of 'loans' into a smaller project of 'child allowances'.<sup>72</sup> This plan succeeded, as Klumpar knew it would at the time of writing his memoirs. Thus, it is hard to imagine that the Czech proposal for marriage loans was intended only as a cornerstone for further negotiations and did not entail population goals such as those pursued by the Reich's regulations. It may not necessarily have been the result of an ideological fascination with the Nazi policy but merely a rational calculation and an attempt to use a proven idea to promote the population growth of the 'Czech nation'. The Czechs had to wait until 1948 to apply for marriage loans.<sup>73</sup>

During the war, marriage loans remained an exclusive public welfare for Germans. Although those holding Reich citizenship and living outside the Reich (*Volksdeutsche*) could apply for it, the measure took time to be implemented, most likely due to the slow building of the social policy infrastructure for Reich nationals. As late as November 1939, negotiations on the approval criteria were not yet underway, nor did bodies to consider the loan applications even exist.<sup>74</sup> The German Medical Chamber was not established in the Protectorate until almost a year later, so until then there was no institution to provide information that there were no obstacles to marriage or starting a family.<sup>75</sup> Germans in the Protectorate received the first loans in February 1941, two years after the incorporation of the Bohemian lands into the German Reich.<sup>76</sup> The maximum amount allocated was RM 500 (K 5,000). To apply for the loan, the future husband contacted the Oberlandrat in the district of his residence. The Oberlandrat also examined the 'fitness' of the applicant couple. The official notification was given exclusively 'to the husband, personally', if the loan was granted.<sup>77</sup>

As has been shown, two separate worlds of social welfare existed for the separate national communities. When dealing with natality in particular, German officials resolutely opposed the introduction of Reich measures in favour of

<sup>72</sup> ANM, Vladislav Klumpar Coll., Inv. No. 5/4, Carton 1: Memoirs, IV. Social Administration, p. 68.

<sup>73</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Act No. 56/1948 Coll., on state support for newlyweds.

<sup>74</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Folio 248, Carton 393: I 6 – 621 an Gruppe I3 zu I 3 – 23157, 2 November 1939.

<sup>75</sup> RGBl. I, 1935, p. 1246: Gesetz zum Schutze der Erbgundheit des deutschen Volkes (Ehegesundheitsgesetz).

<sup>76</sup> RGBl. I, 1941, p. 103: Verordnung zur Einführung von Ehestandsdarlehen, Kinderbeihilfen, Einrichtungsdarlehen und Einrichtungszuschüssen im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren.

<sup>77</sup> Moravian Provincial Archive (MZA), Oberlandrat Brno Collection, Carton 13: Der Reichsminister der Finanzen, Betr. Gewährung von Ehestandsdarlehen, Kinderbeihilfen, Ausbildungsbeihilfen, Einrichtungsdarlehen und Einrichtungszuschüssen an Deutsche Staatsangehörige im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, 15 February 1941.

other ethnic groups. They believed that an increase in natality was desirable exclusively for the German nation and that similar support must not be given to non-Germanic nationals. In other words, the thought horizon was the welfare of one's own nation and the promotion of the population curve in such a way that it allowed for tolerance in some circumstances. While in the Protectorate this tolerance manifested in Czech–German marriages, the situation in the former Czechoslovak borderlands was more challenging.

In the Sudetenland, German officers struggled to maintain the same political direction as their Protectorate counterparts. By the end of 1938, applications for marriage loans were piling up in the Sudetenland offices. Germans living in the border provinces were entitled to marriage loans almost immediately after the annexation of the Sudetenland by Nazi Germany in October 1938. The loans went to Reich nationals who showed 'no hesitation' in their attitude towards National Socialism.<sup>78</sup> However, in contrast to the criterion regarding political allegiance, the criterion regarding nationality was much more difficult to apply. Officials repeatedly encountered situations where the national identity of the applicants was not entirely clear or even situations where the applicants were Czech. In January 1939, the mayor of Velké Hamry (Großhammer), a small town in northern Bohemia, asked the Landrat in Jablonec nad Nisou (Gablonz an der Neiße) for guidance concerning applications filed by recently married Czech couples. The answer he received was matter-of-fact in nature. Rather than expressing benevolence towards other ethnic groups, it bore witness to the officials' bureaucratic problems. According to the Landrat, the incorporation of Velké Hamry into the German Reich and the acquisition of Reich citizenship could, in theory, allow ethnic Czechs to qualify for the Reich support for the newlyweds.<sup>79</sup> However, there were other conditions to be considered. Applicants had to meet three criteria: firstly, there could be no legal impediments to the marriage in question; secondly, a medical examination had to confirm the partners' fitness to start a family and raise children; and thirdly, they had to prove that both spouses came from medically and hereditarily fit families.<sup>80</sup>

The Reich authorities solved the thorny issue of marriage loans for non-Germans in July 1939. Married couples in which both partners were of Czech nationality were denied the right to receive marriage loans. However, there were exceptions. The support could be granted in 'highly exceptional cases' and on the recommendation of other authorities, such as the Kreisleiter and the Landrat in

<sup>78</sup> RGBL I, 1937, p. 1158: Das dritte Gesetz über Förderung der Eheschliessungen, zde § 1.

<sup>79</sup> State Regional Archive Litoměřice (SOA Litoměřice), Government President Office Collection (ÚVP Coll.), Carton 88: Der Landrat dem Herrn Bürgermeister in Groß-Hammer, Betr. Ehestandsdarlehen an Tschechen, Ihre Z. 40/39 vom 14. 1. 1939, 24 January 1939.

<sup>80</sup> SOA Litoměřice, ÚVP Coll., Inv. No. 12/3, Carton 755: Richtlinien für die ärztlichen Untersuchung der Ehestandsdarlehensbewerber, 5 January 1939.

the German Reich or the Gauleiter and the Reichsstatthalter in former Austria and the Sudetenland. If there was any doubt about the nationality of the spouses, the authorities requested an opinion on the case from the Landrat. Granting the loan to mixed Czech–German couples was conditional on their agreement that German would be the language spoken at home, as well as on the permission of the authorities.<sup>81</sup> The grassroots initiative may have been more effective than the efforts of Czech anti-liberals negotiating at the political table.

It is surprising, to say the least, that despite the bureaucratic obstacles, Czechs in the Sudetenland – an area rife with nationality issues – had a theoretical chance of receiving generous Reich support. The reasoning behind this was the same for ethnically mixed families. It was imperative not to lose a single member of the young generation on whom the regime could rely in the future. In contrast to this partial benevolence in terms of ethnicity, there could be no compromises on ‘racial’ principles. They conclusively determined who was entitled to social or other support and who could not even dream of it based on their origin. Genetic health conditions mentioned in the medical report strictly disqualified couples from receiving state support. In this case, the rejection was definitive.<sup>82</sup>

### **Regulated births: midwifery and counselling**

Alongside regulating marriage and birth rates, delivery and postnatal care for women was no less essential. Family policies concerned with marriage and birth promotion devoted a great deal of effort to the delivery of a new member of the national community. The authorities were most concerned about women and their reproductive functions. However, they had no effective tools other than legislative regulations. Thus, it had to be the midwives, general practitioners, specialised doctors and nurses in counselling centres who were in contact with the mothers, executing and supervising the state’s policies, as we witnessed in [Chapter Five](#). Such intermediaries or even agents of care for the nation were irreplaceable since it was through them that the state and experts attempted to control the population’s behaviour. They were essentially an extended arm of the state, allowing the state to implement its policies successfully. In the 1930s and 1940s, midwives, counselling centres, and other social and health institutions and organisations played this role and became an indispensable part of the public social welfare system.

<sup>81</sup> SOA Litoměřice, ÚVP Coll., Carton 88: Der Reichsminister der Finanzen, Runderlass č. H 2075/441 VI, Betr. Ehestandsdarlehen und Kinderbeihilfen an Antragsteller tschechischer Volkszugehörigkeit, 16 July 1939.

<sup>82</sup> SOA Litoměřice, ÚVP Coll., Inv. No. 200/14, Carton 88: Der Vorsteher des Finanzamts Teplitz-Schönau an Herrn Ladrat Dipl. Ing. Wenzel, Teplitz-Schönau, Betr. Kinderbeihilfe, Ablehnungsbescheid, 13 October 1941.

Children were mostly born at home in the first half of the 20th century. Childbirth being an intimate matter, it remained largely hidden from the state, even though it was the state that tried to regulate birth rates and birth conditions and kept statistics on the subject. Its role was to provide an adequate number of well-trained midwives and to eradicate unprofessional medical assistance and poor hygiene. Having been approved by the state authorities, voluntary institutions of postnatal care also played an important role. Still, most of the burden of childbirth and postnatal care lay on the shoulders of midwives. Being self-employed in interwar Czechoslovakia, midwives were constantly subject to material deprivation, although the childbearing system could not do without them. In Nazi Germany, meanwhile, midwives were not allowed to be self-employed from January 1939.<sup>83</sup> During the German occupation, midwives were supposed to be incorporated into the public health care system in the Bohemian lands, but this only happened in 1947 when the Czechoslovak state took over the role of caregiver.<sup>84</sup>

Although the state established the legislative framework of prenatal and maternal care in the Bohemian lands, its involvement was limited to declaratory obligations of a moral nature. The interwar state intervened minimally in obstetric practice. Regulations issued by the Habsburg monarchy in the 1870s and 1880s continued to govern obstetric practice until 1928, but legislators still needed to come up with a major reform.<sup>85</sup> The practice of midwifery was based on professional education and experience, but professional education stagnated, and hygiene was poor.<sup>86</sup> The midwifery reform proposed in the Czechoslovak Parliament in 1927–8 brought great expectations. ‘It is an opportunity to pass a law for the people’, commented the well-known physician and obstetrician František Pachner on the reform.

Among so many other laws, this law is extremely useful, serving not only the material interests of individuals, not only the proletarian class, but also the woman giving birth and the child being born, and, therefore, it is in the most vital interest of the state.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>83</sup> RGBl. I, 1938, p. 1893: Hebammengesetz, here § 2. Its extension to the Reichsgau Sudetenland took place in November 1939. RGBl. I, 1939, p. 2180: Verordnung über die Einführung des Hebammengesetzes im Reichsgau Sudetenland.

<sup>84</sup> Michal Šimůnek, ‘Planung der nationalsozialistischen “Euthanasie” im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren im Kontext der Gesundheits- und Bevölkerungspolitik der deutschen Besatzungsbehörden (1919–1942)’, in *Die nationalsozialistische ‘Euthanasie’ im Reichsgau Sudetenland und Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren 1939–1945*, ed. Michal Šimůnek and Dietmar Schulze (Červený Kostelec 2008), 150.

<sup>85</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Act No. 200/1928 Coll., on auxiliary midwifery practice and the education and training of midwives. The Austro-Hungarian Imperial Code for the kingdoms and countries represented in the Imperial Council, Regulation issued by the Ministry of the Internal Affairs on 25 March 1874, issuing instructions to midwives, p. 31. Elaborated in Milena Lenderová, ‘Od porodní báby k porodní asistentce’, *Theatrum historiae* 1 (2006), 129–54.

<sup>86</sup> František Pachner and Richard Bébr, *Učebnice pro porodní asistentky* (Prague 1932), XIII.

<sup>87</sup> František Pachner, ‘Co bude se zákonem o porodnické pomoci’, *Časopis porodních asistentek* (1928), No. 2, 4.

The main difficulty of obstetric practice at the time was the low availability of care and the absence of a public system to guarantee it. In terms of public health care, the level of care in pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium was of considerable importance to the social and health conditions of the population. Indisputably, as the proponents of midwifery argued,

midwifery reform was a social reform because of its direct connection with public health. If we want to have good public health care, we must have good midwifery practice. And thus, it is a vital issue.<sup>88</sup>

Criticism of the continuing dismal situation in the midwifery profession was levelled primarily against the state. Critical voices blamed the state for not taking enough interest in the issue and taking arbitrary steps.

A debate over who provided the best care for women arose in the 1930s and 1940s. The Union for Controlling Births (*Svaz pro kontrolu porodů*) in Czechoslovakia proposed establishing a network of counselling centres run by health care professionals and modelled on similar facilities that had been operating in Great Britain, Germany and Austria for many years. Women who were members of the Union were to be given expert advice as well as provided with contraceptives. The counselling centres had both an informative and a disciplinary function, putting eugenic knowledge into practice. The Union did not intend to reduce the population nor promote a 'two-child policy'. It sought to prevent the 'waste' of maternal energy and to redirect the focus from the quantity of offspring to their 'quality'.<sup>89</sup> The ideal means to this end was to establish direct contact with mothers-to-be. The counselling centres had their own agenda in this respect. While the authorities in charge were trying to compensate for the lack of state interest, at the same time, they were creating the conditions for the later post-war state-controlled family policy.

Practitioners in the late 1930s did not believe that safe childbirth and immediate postnatal care required a physician. In 1938, almost 68 per cent of all births were attended only by a midwife. Less than 30 per cent of births occurred in medical institutions, and a doctor was present outside a medical facility in no more than 2 per cent of cases. The increase in births led to a greater demand for safe labour and childbirth. This consequently caused a systematic reduction in situations where a woman would give birth alone without professional assistance. Between 1938 and 1945, the total number of births increased, while there was also an increase in the number delivered by a midwife (by a full 34 per cent) and in a medical facility (by 25 per cent). As shown in [Table 6.3](#), there was also a considerable increase in the number of births in 1945. However, in the conditions of the

<sup>88</sup> 'Reforma a budoucnost povolání porodních asistentek', *Časopis porodních asistentek* (1929), No. 6, 4–5.

<sup>89</sup> 'Dopis Ženské národní rady', *Časopis porodních asistentek* (1933), No. 4, 7.

	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945
Midwife	71,521	70,761	79,467	80,135	84,893	96,413	98,725	109,004
Medical facility staff	36,607	36,015	40,272	41,985	44,882	53,379	52,566	48,647
Physician (outside a medical facility)	2,212	2,001	2,318	2,362	2,592	2,606	2,424	2,137
Other	582	695	486	517	483	256	238	2,008
Total births	105,922	109,472	122,543	124,999	132,850	152,654	153,953	161,796

**Table 6.3** Births sorted by assistance at delivery, 1938–45 (excluding the Sudetenland)

Source: *Pohyb obyvatelstva: Sňatky, porody, úmrtí a příčiny smrti v zemi české a moravskoslezské bez pohraničí* – for the years 1938–40 (Prague 1940); for the years 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944 (Prague 1948), and 1945 (Prague 1949) – compiled by the author.

liberation of the country and in the revolutionary atmosphere, it was unknown how they went.

Midwives played a vital role in the public health system up to the end of the war. In practice, however, the state could not provide them with professional qualifications, even though educational reform was a ‘requirement of national self-preservation’ and was demanded by the midwives themselves. The midwife was responsible for the mother, as she was supposed to provide her with medical assistance and immediate postnatal consultation in the event of difficulties, such as a lack of breast milk. Although contemporary expertise acknowledged the importance of midwifery, the prevailing opinion among doctors was that complicated cases could only be dealt with in a medical facility. Cooperation between doctors and midwives in a medical facility could help to avoid a situation where a difficulty in childbirth arose only at the last moment.

However, the possibilities of contemporary obstetrics only allowed for shifting some of the responsibility onto them, even if they were the most qualified professionals. In early 1939, Květoslav Merhaut, a renowned Brno obstetrician, highlighted the importance of home births as an emotional event. Making births a matter of institutional care, he claimed, would only contribute to childbirth ceasing to be a family affair. Moreover, midwifery would completely disappear, and doctors would boast of the high success rate of institutional treatment. Contemporary debates on the transformation of obstetrics were rooted in the question of whether to strengthen the medical profession at the expense

of intimacy. Yet another significant issue was the cost of childbirth, which was understandably higher with institutional treatment. Since 95 per cent of births had an ordinary course of labour, many doctors defended the practice of home births with a midwife to assist.

Let us not look for the causes of the decline in birth rates with artificial institutional crutch where they do not exist, and let us look for them with a practical and human eye where they do exist. What is certain is that this paltry fraction of a per cent or a paltry percentage of children lost in home births ... will not save the nation and will not cause an increase in the birth rate.<sup>90</sup>

Proponents of midwifery had strong statistics on their side. In terms of the number of stillbirths, midwife-assisted births seemed to have a lower risk of complications. In 1938, a birth tragically resulting in the death of the newborn occurred in 1 per cent of assisted cases, less than in a medical facility (1.5 per cent) or with a doctor in attendance (12 per cent).

Advocates of institutional care warned of the low predictive value of these statistics. In 1940, Hugo Husslein, a German physician who worked as an assistant at the Women's Clinic at the German University in Prague, stressed the need to distinguish between primary and secondary institutional births. In the former case, the mother was in the hands of the doctors from the very beginning (from the very first signs of labour, she was headed to the hospital), while in the latter case, the doctor was 'rescuing' a complicated birth, initially entrusted to a midwife. Husslein refused to accept direct responsibility for the high mortality rate in the second type of institutional birth since the doctor was not in control of the childbirth from the outset and thus had limited influence over its course. He explained the situation drawing on statistics from Germany: hospital births had a mortality rate of 7.65 per cent of babies, whereas home births had a mortality rate of only 3.35 per cent. According to Husslein, other figures in the Protectorate should be compared: the mortality rate of 0.89 per cent for primary and 7.08 per cent for secondary births in institutional care. These should lead the mother-to-be to deliver in a hospital rather than at home. The mortality rates, according to Husslein's data, showed the following disproportions: 3.35 per cent for home births, 3.4 per cent for institutional deliveries (primary and secondary combined) and 2 per cent for primary institutional births.<sup>91</sup>

Despite critical voices, home births still prevailed over institutional ones in other parts of the Reich and non-medical authorities had little interest in changing

<sup>90</sup> Josef Opletal, 'Názor dlouholetého odborného lékaře gynekologa a porodníka o vedení porodů v ústavech a v domácích podmínkách', *Časopis porodních asistentek* (1939), No. 1, 4–5.

<sup>91</sup> NA, ÚRP-ST Coll., Sign. 109–5/40, Carton 100: Hugo Husslein, Zur Frage Haus- oder Anstaltsgeburt, in *Zentralblatt für Gynäkologie* (1940), 1954–5.

that. In October 1939, a regulation was passed, applicable to annexed Austria, Saarland and the Sudetenland. Now, the needs of the army had priority over assisting a woman giving birth. Only the direst cases were to be referred to a medical institution. Generally, women were to deliver at home with the help of a midwife. The Nazi regime offered a convenient explanation:

It must be acknowledged that home births are possible even in very modest housing conditions and that the mother and the child benefit more from the treatment by a midwife than from being confined in overcrowded hospitals, besieged by patients of various kinds, without a sufficient number of obstetricians.<sup>92</sup>

Although the motivation behind the regulation was the need to free up medical institutions for war casualties, the National Socialist regime thus, surprisingly, deliberately reinforced confidence in midwives and affirmed their indispensability.

Under these circumstances, it was necessary to build a modern midwifery system to stabilise obstetric care. In December 1941, the Provincial Office in Prague began to survey the numbers, qualifications and approximate earnings of midwives to get a picture of the services provided to the population at the district level.<sup>93</sup> Under segregated care based on nationality, it was most challenging to provide care in ethnically mixed districts. As shown in [Chapter Five](#), these problems emerged when a network of German doctors for German patients was being formed. Midwifery, meanwhile, was governed by similar regulations on both sides, even though midwives were often trained at the same institutions. According to the German Medical Chamber in Bohemia and Moravia, both Czech and German midwives were, without exception, required to have an official permit, without which they could assist at childbirths for a maximum of one year. If the midwife obtained the permit, she could continue her practice.<sup>94</sup> The position of 'district midwife' was established to have a trained professional actively involved in prenatal and neonatal care.<sup>95</sup> They called in pregnant women for regular visits to maternity clinics, assisted in childbirth and in some cases helped with care for newborn children. A district midwife improved the logistics of providing care and offered new mothers a greater range of counselling and health care. Having a midwife operating at the district level was the first step towards fully integrating midwives into the public health care system in 1948.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> 'Důležité nařízení ohledně rodění v domácnostech jakož i v ústavech', *Časopis porodních asistentek* (1939), No. 12, 5.

<sup>93</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 486: Memorandum No. 5714/1941 issued by the Provincial Office in Prague, draft for a new regulation on the economic and work conditions of midwives, 17 December 1941.

<sup>94</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 486: Deutsche Gesundheitskammer in Böhmen und Mähren an Herrn Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren, Betr. Hebammenberuf, 19 January 1942.

<sup>95</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 486: Richtlinien für die Ausbildung vom Distrikts-Geburtsassistentinnen in Mähren.

<sup>96</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Act No. 248/1948 Coll., on district midwives and on the regulation of the authorisation to practise auxiliary midwifery.



Alongside midwives, social workers also played an essential role in providing comprehensive care for the mother and reducing health risks.<sup>97</sup> They worked mainly in counselling centres and industrial plants. In October 1942, there were fifty-eight nursing facilities in the Protectorate, and there were plans to further expand the network of counselling centres.<sup>98</sup> Counselling was offered to mothers almost exclusively by the Czech Provincial Youth Welfare Centres based in Prague and Brno. Authorities organised the service from health districts built around a general practitioner who worked closely with the district health office.<sup>99</sup> The importance of these counselling centres grew, especially in rural areas, where medical care was less accessible and infant mortality was the highest. This type of social and health care had an everyday dimension, which is why the state valued its network of intermediaries. As Czech officials stated:

Counselling centres are where the doctor and the social worker are most actively in touch with the mother and the child these days, and thus can offer help with nutrition, small items of laundry, and even groceries.<sup>100</sup>

Care for mothers was to be reinforced through a network of specialised counselling centres for mothers, which were to complement the counselling centres mainly focused on caring for children. Set up in June 1939, they provided social and health care for women during pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium.<sup>101</sup> Seeking out future mothers in the district, registering them and monitoring their health were all strategies intended to help detect possible complications of childbirth in advance. The counselling centres also kept a register of all children born in their district. The centres kept children's records up to the age of six, while school doctors filed the papers of children between the ages of six and fourteen. In Moravia, the counselling centres managed to register only 51 per cent of the children born; in Bohemia, the figure was probably slightly lower.<sup>102</sup> The system thus had to rely on the initiative of health professionals at the lower administrative levels. For example, Karel Kadlec, a physician who supervised the counselling centres in Vodňany, in southern Bohemia, worked from 1943 on the 'Measures for the Improvement of Care for Mother and Child' programme, launched in January 1945. Kadlec built the programme on the assumption that it was necessary to

<sup>97</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 486: Ministerium des Innern an den Herrn Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren, Betr. Ausbildung vom Geburtisasistentinnen als Distrikthebammen, 12 March 1942.

<sup>98</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 463: Ministerium des Innern an die Landesbehörden in Prag und Brünn, Betr. Krankenpflege- und Gesundheitsdienst in Familien – Übernahme durch die Landesbehörden, 8 October 1942.

<sup>99</sup> According to Government regulation No. 279/1942 Coll., on Public Health.

<sup>100</sup> NA, MSZS Coll., Sign. A 3000, Carton 6: Proposal for social aid in the political district of Valašské Meziříčí, 3 April 1941.

<sup>101</sup> Directive of the Ministry of Social and Health Administration No. 1770/1939.

<sup>102</sup> Miroslav Šulc, 'Úkoly a organisace dobrovolné sociálně zdravotní péče', *Věstník českých lékařů. List pro hájení sociálních zájmů lékařských* (1944), Nos 47–8, 641.

support new mothers in the puerperium, who usually stayed at home with their children, particularly during winter. Based on his experiences in Vodňany in wartime, Kadlec later described his programme, in which he engaged all the medical staff in the district.

I, therefore, applied ... the principle that we must go to the mother and child ourselves and that we must carry out regular medical supervision throughout the entire maternity period.<sup>103</sup>

Nevertheless, the inability to reach all mothers was not unusual and was the case in Germany as well. Despite a massive propaganda campaign, the counselling centres in Germany managed to get in touch with about half of all mothers, who, in most cases, did not come for advice but rather for medical treatment, which the centres provided free of charge.<sup>104</sup> It appears that the reason for this was a general distrust of state-coordinated welfare institutions rather than mothers' political resistance.

The interest in the mother went beyond childbirth. Social and health professionals continued to question the mother about her own and her newborn's health. Social and health prevention was overseen by the counselling centre, which employed a gynaecologist or obstetrician and a social worker. However, there is no exact data to show the density of such centres over the whole territory. Still, in Moravia alone, fourteen maternal counselling centres were established between 1941 and 1944. In 1946, a total of thirty-four centres were still operating under the auspices of District Youth Welfare.<sup>105</sup> The counselling centres within community welfare offered a more comprehensive range of services. There were counselling centres for venereal diseases, pregnant women, mothers and infants, preschool and schoolchildren, and pre-marriage counselling centres, popularly known as 'eugenic centres'.<sup>106</sup> Surprisingly, social and health institutions for Czech mothers experienced no decline under the German occupation, and post-war Czechoslovakia later continued the trend of protecting mothers and children.

### Public care for mother and child

In the community-building atmosphere after the Munich Agreement and during the occupation, there was no doubt that public care for mothers and children was a vital part of social welfare. The protracted debates about midwifery,

<sup>103</sup> Karel Kadlec, 'Zlepšení péče o matku a dítě na Vodňansku', *Péče o mládež* (1946), No. 2, 31.

<sup>104</sup> Mouton, *Nurturing the Nation*, 174.

<sup>105</sup> Ludvík Havlásek, 'Porodní asistentky a poradenská péče o matky', *Časopis porodních asistentek* (1940), No. 2, 3–7; Markéta Sturzová, 'Vývoj poraden pro matky na Moravě', *Péče o mládež* (1946), No. 2, 33–4.

<sup>106</sup> NA, MSZS Coll., Carton 124: Presidium of the Ministry of Social and Health Administration, Memorandum No. 11, 25 April 1941.

fuelled by fears of depopulation and high infant mortality, addressed some of the most severe issues of the era. Still, they were primarily concerned about the phase that preceded the starting of a family. Social insurance and various social welfare organisations funded public welfare services for mothers and children. Starting as charities, these institutions demonstrated national solidarity for years, which manifested publicly, especially in the late Protectorate. Welfare services for mothers and children remained within the boundaries of social assistance. They never had a pro-population mission, not even in the context of benefits for families with multiple children. In this respect, the welfare services were exactly what the occupation officials expected them to be.

During the Nazi occupation, social insurance supported Czech mothers with the same quality as before. Care for the mother-to-be in the form of prenatal care and assistance during childbirth was paid for by an insurance company as part of the woman's sickness insurance, to which she was eligible by virtue of her employment or her husband's insurance.<sup>107</sup> However, if the birth was classified as 'poor', the municipality, possibly with financial support from the state, covered the assistance during childbirth.<sup>108</sup> There were also other benefits from social insurance. If the insurance arose from the pregnant woman's employment, she was a direct insurance holder, receiving cash benefits equivalent to sickness benefits for six weeks before and six weeks after giving birth.<sup>109</sup> Female direct insurance holders received more generous benefits than the wives of the male insured, who were not entitled to cash benefits except for a one-off payment. However, insurance companies equalised the cash benefits for both groups in 1944.<sup>110</sup> After giving birth, mothers began receiving the puerperium benefit and the nursing allowance. According to the sickness regulations in force, health care paid a nursing allowance substantiated by a certificate from a doctor or midwife. Proper nursing allowed for up to twelve weeks of benefits equal to half the daily sickness benefit.

Other forms of support were provided to the Czech population. In the command economy, mothers could receive special rations. From October 1939, pregnant women, nursing mothers and women in the puerperium could receive increased food rations 'for the period of actual need' based on a certificate

<sup>107</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Act No. 221/1924 Coll., on insurance of employees against sickness, disability and old age. Note: the provisions of Section 285 come into force on 30 October 1924; Section 95.

<sup>108</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Czechoslovak state, Act No. 236/1922 Coll., supplementing and partially implementing provisions of Act No. 332 Coll. of Laws and Reg. of 15 April 1920, by which the State assumes health policing responsibilities. Note: for the other territories of Czechoslovakia, except Slovakia, Carpathian Ruthenia and Silesia, the Act does not come into force until 1 January 1923; Section 15.

<sup>109</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll., Carton 236: Woman in social insurance.

<sup>110</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 2/1944 Coll., on certain changes in the insurance of employees against sickness, disability and old age. 'Nemocenské pojištění pečuje o matky a děti. Nová úprava dávek od 1. dubna 1944', *Žena v povolání. Časopis pracujících žen* (1944), No. 4, 2.

concerning their state of health issued by a doctor or a midwife.<sup>111</sup> However, this certificate was valid for no more than eight weeks, after which the entitlement to special rations had to be extended by the same procedure. Mothers were thus included among the 'hard' and 'very hard' workers for whom the system provided special or increased rations during the war.<sup>112</sup>

Many of the Reich regulations concerning German mothers were extended to the Protectorate.<sup>113</sup> Unlike Czech mothers, German mothers with Reich citizenship, under the occupation authorities' jurisdiction, applied for nursing certificates almost exclusively to the NSV Mother and Child Counselling Centres. However, it was up to the Protectorate sickness insurance companies to accept the certificates and pay the nursing allowance.<sup>114</sup> For German nationals, pregnancy and puerperium care fell under the category of 'emergency aid' as part of public welfare. The welfare system would provide cash or benefits in kind according to the degree of need. This included medical treatment, childbirth allowance, maternity benefits and, in the case of mothers in the puerperium period, the nursing allowance.<sup>115</sup>

The welfare benefit for German families in the Protectorate was intended to partially compensate for the breadwinner's absence, who usually went to fight in the war. The allowance amount was RM 10 per child when the family had three or more children. If a widow remarried, further reduced allowances were payable solely to her new husband, even though the children were from her previous marriage.<sup>116</sup> Oberlandrats, the first-instance authorities, provided child allowances, which had replaced the district welfare associations. A decision by the Oberlandrat could only be repealed by the Reich Protector, who had the final say. Public support was, however, covered differently than in the Reich. Whereas in the German Reich, the state contributed four-fifths, and the remaining fifth was shared between the municipality and the district, in the Protectorate all expenses were covered by the German government.<sup>117</sup> As for child allowances in mixed

<sup>111</sup> Prime Minister's Decree No. 225/1939 Coll., on the rationing of food for hard-working and very hard-working citizens, women, pregnant women, nursing mothers, mothers in the puerperium and sick and infirm persons; Section 8.

<sup>112</sup> Tauchen, 'Manželské právo', 317–20.

<sup>113</sup> See RGBl. I, 1936, p. 327: Familienunterstützungsgesetz; RGBl. I, 1939, s. 1225: Familienunterstützungsdurchführungsverordnung; RGBl. I, 1939, s. 1563: Einsatzfamilienunterstützungsverordnung.

<sup>114</sup> *ÚSP Bulletin*, Memorandum No. 1486, 19 January 1943: NSV Mother and Child Counselling Centres, Issuance of Nursing Certificates.

<sup>115</sup> BArch, R 43-II/1325b, Bl. 143: Zusammenstellung der nach Ziffer 1 anzuwendenden Bestimmungen der Reichsgrundsätze über Voraussetzung, Art und Maß der öffentlichen Fürsorge.

<sup>116</sup> MZA, Oberlandrat Brno Coll., Carton 13: Ausschnitt aus den StM F September 1944, 173. Kinderbeihilfe, Vermeidung von Ueberzahlungen, wenn anrechnungsfähige Kinder im Laufe eines Monats des Haushalts wechseln /S. 2197/.

<sup>117</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 359: Der Reichsprotector in Böhmen und Mähren, Betr. Familienunterstützung für die deutschen Staatsangehörigen im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren, 5 October 1939.

marriages, the same conditions applied here as with marriage loans – the requirement was that German would be the language spoken at home.

Public health insurance was a central part of public social policy in the Protectorate regarding the care of mothers and children. It was later supplemented by family allowances, whose origins were mentioned in connection with the unimplemented project of marriage loans. Social assistance benefits to support families with multiple children was a long-term allowance of K 100 per month provided to families for their third and each additional child under the age of sixteen. There was no legal entitlement to this special benefit, and only some families in the Protectorate qualified. The essential criterion was nationality – only gentile Czechs and Germans could apply.<sup>118</sup>

This family allowance was probably the first welfare policy introduced for both national communities simultaneously. The allowance was meant to be exclusively for families settled in the Protectorate caring for their children at home. Each applicant had to certify in writing on behalf of himself and his children that they were not Jewish. If discrepancies arose, the authorities requested family documents or possibly a certificate of non-Jewish ancestry.<sup>119</sup> Besides being a client-defining category, the race criterion had a secondary effect on Czechs' national self-awareness and their ideas about who constituted the national community.

The authorities granted the allowance on condition of the applicant's 'spotless reputation'.<sup>120</sup> The word 'spotless' (*bezúhonný*) refers to a broader range of meanings than those used in criminal law at the time. The assessment of the applicant's previous lifestyle and character guaranteed that the allowance would cover the child's upbringing and maintenance. In addition, there could be no objection to denying the benefit on the grounds of 'public interest'. What 'public interest' meant and who defined it was not specified. The Czech officials who drew up the directive were probably referring to determining the extent to which the families were well adjusted in terms of employment, social contacts and parental care. Even if the formal conditions were met, authorities considered the benefit would be 'pointless' for 'feeble-minded parents', Roma, vagrants, prostitutes, 'habitual offenders' and alcoholics.<sup>121</sup> The list of these social 'indications' was merely a general guide. The authorities scrutinised the circumstances on a case-by-case basis.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 441/1941 Coll., Section 1.

<sup>119</sup> Within the meaning of Government regulation No. 136/1940 Coll., on the legal position of Jews in public life.

<sup>120</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Government regulation No. 441/1941 Coll., Section 2 (b).

<sup>121</sup> In the directive on the payment of benefits, the Roma are included among those who do not qualify, probably because from 1940, a ban on travelling and an obligation to settle in a village of domicile were in effect. The Protectorate authorities did not adopt measures against the Roma until 1942.

<sup>122</sup> NA, PMR Coll., Carton 2452, Directive on the granting of a special family allowance. Directive implementing Government regulation No. 441 of 21 November 1941.

The breadwinner's own initiative was vital to get the whole process started. Trade unions helped with the administration, but the applicant himself had to apply to the municipal authority in the place of his residence.<sup>123</sup> If his application was approved, he received the benefits retroactively – from September 1941. In addition to large working-class families, employees could also qualify for the benefit. In both cases, however, the applicant's total gross wage could not exceed K 2,000 per month. The authorities checked compliance with the conditions at the beginning of each calendar year and could punish beneficiaries who did not report a change in status (for example, a child reaching the age of sixteen or a change in income). The allowance helped to bring the monthly real gross income up to a set threshold of K 2,000 and to support childcare. The authorities closely monitored the relationship between the beneficiary and the children on whose behalf he was receiving the benefits.

Reviewing applications and granting social allowances points to one typical feature of the organisation of public welfare in the Protectorate. The process of applying for and approving the allowance for large families involved Czech institutions at the lowest administrative level: municipal authorities, district youth welfare offices and district doctors. They could draw on their knowledge of the local environment and the financial circumstances of the applicant and his family and enquire about the family's reputation.<sup>124</sup> This gave rise to solid social control of the neighbourhood, one of the principles of maintaining order in the occupied territory. This resulted in rigorous self-regulation and self-discipline by the Czech population. A secondary, but not insignificant, effect was the Czech population's adaptation to the discourse of racial exclusion, with which applicants had to comply.

Voluntary and charitable organisations also joined in family protection activities. Under the umbrella of the National Social and Health Care Centre, established in the summer of 1939, district aid committees operated in each judicial district and coordinated the activities of the individual organisations, such as the National Aid, the District Youth Welfare, the Charity, the League Against Tuberculosis and others at this administrative level.

One of the best-known in this field was the Health and Nursing Service in the Families (*Zdravotní a ošetrovatelská služba v rodinách*), which had a proven track record of many years in social health work. The Health and Nursing Service was established as early as 1929 to meet the needs of those who could not get treatment in a hospital for whatever reason. As introduced in previous years, indigent families also received free medical assistance during the occupation. In 1940, nurses

<sup>123</sup> VOA ČMKOS, NOÚZ Coll., Carton 216: Stanislav Čása, 'Přídavky rodinám s více dětmi' [1941].

<sup>124</sup> NA, PMR Coll., Carton 2452: Directive on the granting of a special benefit to large families. Directive implementing Government regulation No. 441 of 21 November 1941, here p. 10.

reportedly paid 19,000 visits to families in the Greater Prague area.<sup>125</sup> This sounds almost unbelievable compared with 1937, when nurses made fewer than 1,200 visits in Prague.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, it is likely that the number of visits has indeed increased considerably. In 1937 there were no more than twelve registered nurses in Prague, while by October 1942 there were fifty-eight nursing facilities in the Protectorate, and the network continued to expand.<sup>127</sup>

In contrast to the standard behaviour of officials, social workers were to be as sensitive as possible. In 1940, the renowned professor of social medicine and former director of the Pedological Institute of the City of Prague, Václav Prošek, argued that

these nurses must look out for all health and social issues in any family they encounter and all those within their area of responsibility. They should ascertain briefly, but comprehensibly whether anyone is there to solve these issues and whether the children are cared for in all respects.<sup>128</sup>

According to Prošek, social health care, especially care for children, was not provided satisfactorily. The high infant mortality rate, repeatedly mentioned throughout the 1930s and 1940s, resulted from insufficient 'closed' or institutional care, for example, an insufficient number of hospital beds for child patients.

The situation, therefore, required the system to be supplemented by 'open care', which was provided in the organisational structure by a network of district and municipal maternal and child health clinics providing medical examinations of infants and preventive medical care. This included the Health and Nursing Service in the Families, which took responsibility for patients after their discharge from hospital care. Supervising their recovery at home, it aimed at discharging chronic patients when the threat of spreading the disease had passed. This was meant to relieve the pressure on the Protectorate's overcrowded hospitals. In this form, it further extended its original purpose, which it had had since its creation in 1929.<sup>129</sup> It provided care for indigent families in cases where a family member had been ill and could not be treated in a hospital for lack of beds or because of the nature of the illness.

The provision of welfare for mother and child in the Nazi Protectorate was extensive. Combining welfare, nurturing and ideological principles, providers used various tools to reach their goals. They often built on interwar projects. As in the case of holiday care for children, especially children of public employees

<sup>125</sup> Břeský, *Zdravotně sociální péče*, 5.

<sup>126</sup> *Zpráva Čs. červeného kříže 1937* (Prague 1938), 54.

<sup>127</sup> Prior to 1940, this form of care was provided by several entities active in the field of social and health care (e.g. Diaconia, League Against Tuberculosis, etc.). NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 463: Ministerium des Innern an die Landesbehörde in Prag und Brünn, Betr. Krankenpflege- und Gesundheitsdienst in Familien – Übernahme durch die Landesbehörde, 8 October 1942.

<sup>128</sup> Václav Prošek, 'Sociálně zdravotní péče o děti', *Česká nemocnice* (1940), No. 6, 191.

<sup>129</sup> Břeský, *Zdravotně sociální péče*, 4.

from urban, socially disadvantaged areas, shows, combining these principles could be straightforward. Going to holiday villages in the countryside, organised throughout the war, children in convalescent homes received rations of various foods, such as wheat flour, potatoes, milk and jam, to improve their eating habits and health.<sup>130</sup> From May 1943, the educators had to undergo an instruction course organised by the Board of Trustees for the Education of Youth in Bohemia and Moravia, which, in cooperation with the Hitler Youth, was performing the ideological function of the care of children and youth.<sup>131</sup> Achieving social stability in Bohemia and Moravia was one of the central goals of the Czech providers and German supervisors.

### **On the edge of social deprivation? Social relief programmes**

Hardship and deprivation were closely tied to the experience of the Second World War, especially in occupied areas. However, it did not affect everyone, and I venture to say that it did not affect most of the Czech population. Social relief was used sparingly for obvious reasons, namely, to maintain the labour performance of the 'Czech nation' and out of fear of epidemic diseases. Social deprivation was experienced mainly by 'problematic' individuals excluded from the community because of their racial origin or the unacceptable political views they or their close relatives held. In this exclusion process, we can recognise a phenomenon referred to here as the 'primacy of racism'. Nationality itself played a secondary role not only in the overall conception of social policy but also in social relief programmes. Moreover, in contrast to the Jewish population, gentile Czech families whose breadwinner was persecuted for political reasons could still apply for social relief.

Care was targeted and underpinned by a solid institutional structure. For this purpose, the Provincial Office in Prague, the Provincial Office in Brno and the Prague City Hall provided benefits during the entire period of German occupation. The hundreds of surviving case files point to an extensive system designed to help minimise social deprivation in Bohemia and Moravia. It did so, however, only under certain conditions and often only if the families themselves took the initiative.

From 1940 at the latest, the Prague City Hall and, specifically, the Central Social Office paid special social benefits to Czech families with very low or no income. A difficult financial situation usually arose when a family lost its breadwinner

<sup>130</sup> NA, ZÚPM Coll., Carton 37: Provincial Centre for Holiday Care in Prague, Supply of Holiday Facilities in 1944, 9 May 1944.

<sup>131</sup> NA, ZÚPM Coll., Carton 203: Memorandum No. 6/43 to all members of the Provincial Holiday Care in Prague – keepers of holiday facilities, 18 May 1943.



because he was arrested for political reasons. This was the case for Zdenka K., the wife of a former chief accounting secretary at the Ministry of Trade, Miroslav K., who was taken into custody by the Gestapo on 23 February 1940, placed in Prague-Pankrác Prison and executed on 2 April 1943. After his arrest, Zdenka K. and her two children, aged sixteen and seven, were left without any income. She was a housewife who had never worked and later also took care of her elderly mother. From October 1940, she received alimony of K 37 per day, 'revocable at any time', from the Provincial Office in Prague, which was granted retroactively in December of that year. However, its payment was suspended on the last day of October 1941 because Zdenka K. received a new regular income equal to one half of her husband's pension. However, her financial situation was not good. In September of that year, she turned to the Provincial Office in Prague with a request for extraordinary one-off aid based on the urgent need to buy winter clothes for her children and coal for the winter. She received a response in the middle of the month granting her a one-off allowance of K 700. In July 1943, however, she turned to the Social Department of the Prague City Hall again. She asked for a one-off allowance, this time in the amount of K 2,200, because her financial situation had suddenly deteriorated. She owed money for rent which cost her K 8,800 a year. The authorities informed her that she had been receiving a pension since her husband's death unlawfully and that she must, therefore, repay the money. Of course, the authorities did not rely solely on the applicant's good word and, as usual, had the circumstances in which the family lived investigated. In Zdenka K.'s case, they confirmed that her economic distress was genuine.<sup>132</sup>

It took much work for an ordinary person to navigate the benefits system. Moreover, the benefit allocation was entirely dependent on the initiative of the family concerned, whose correctly formulated application could set the benefits system in motion. Following the advice of the Social Aid office for Greater Prague, Zdenka K. turned to the Prague City Hall in 1943. The Protectorate institutions, staffed by Czech officials, created a safety net, but there was no evidence of covert support on the part of the resistance movement. The Prague City Hall was headed by Josef Pfitzner, a Bohemian German and former historian, and German officials also occupied other senior positions. It is implausible that Czech officials could have developed such an extensive relief programme without the knowledge of the German supervisors. Thus, support for the families of those affected by persecution must have been part of the official agenda, as indicated by the recorded documents, individual files and related correspondence. Although it was mainly the wives and widows who applied for the benefits, the individual files contained only the names of the persecuted individuals.

<sup>132</sup> Prague City Archives, Central Social Institute of the Capital City of Prague Collection, Sign. U 1000, Carton 409.

Moreover, there were specific mechanisms that helped regulate the whole system. These included not only the individual assessments of families but also a certificate from the applicant in which she affirmed 'by solemn oath' that neither she nor any of the minors on behalf of whom she was applying were Jewish. The racial implications of these benefits set clear boundaries regarding which Czech families could get social assistance and which ones could not.

In addition to the programmes of the provincial authorities and the Prague Central Social Office, the Dr Wilhelm Frick Foundation for the Protectorate Subjects in Need (Dr Wilhelm Frick-Stiftung für bedürftige Protektoratsangehörige) also provided a specific form of social assistance to the poor. The foundation, named after the former Reich Minister of the Interior and later Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, was established on the fifth anniversary of the proclamation of the Protectorate on 16 March 1944. This case is interesting because it disrupted the existing concept of segregated care based on nationality. The declared intention of the foundation was to acknowledge the performance of the Czechs during the war who had directly or indirectly 'contributed' to the Reich and the Protectorate. They or their surviving relatives could apply for one-off or long-term support. In five points, the foundation defined the circumstances under which an application for support would be accepted. War victims and surviving relatives of those killed or wounded in the First World War had good prospects. However, the support was conditional on their participation in combat on the side of Germany and its allies. The second situation applied to Czechs who were injured or even died at work in the war industry, including mining, both inside and outside the Protectorate territory. In the event of death, their surviving relatives received support. The third possibility was injury or death during a work assignment which the person performed as their 'official duty'. In this case, officials also sent the money to the surviving relatives. The fourth possibility was an application in case of injury or death of a Protectorate national who was active in the Air Defence Police or the Technical Emergency Aid. Based on the Anti-Air Protection Act, Czechs could also be called up for this service, which was not unusual.<sup>133</sup> The fifth case applied to Czechs who, in the course of their duties, incurred a claim against Germany. The foundation was to compensate for this claim from the Reich Protector's funds. The total amount of funds available to the foundation was RM 1 million.<sup>134</sup>

The sources do not reveal how many people applied for support from the Frick Foundation and received a positive response. Unfortunately, no more than partial reports have survived. Although the Moravian Provincial President reported to the lower administrative authorities at the beginning of April 1944 that there

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Martin Veselý, *Sudetská župa jako protiletecký kryt Říše? 1939–1945* (Ústí nad Labem 2011).

<sup>134</sup> *Verordnungsblatt des Deutschen Staatsministers für Böhmen und Mähren*, č. 12, 3 June 1944: Erlaß des Reichsprotectors in Böhmen und Mähren über die Errichtung der 'Dr. Wilhelm Frick-Stiftung für bedürftige Protektoratsangehörige', 16 March 1944.

were exactly twenty-five suitable and already verified candidates in Moravia,<sup>135</sup> a few weeks later, the provincial authority in Brno received a mandate from Prague to process thirty-nine applications received within the first two months after the foundation's establishment.<sup>136</sup> However, the beneficiaries were not selected from above, as the quick response of the Provincial President might suggest. The granting of aid from this fund did not stop until the end of the war: the processing of applications was still underway in March 1945. It seems clear from the sources that this was not a mere propaganda tool, although propaganda was one of the main objectives in the implementation of the project. The Frick Foundation provided real benefits, albeit not extensive ones. Of the five situations covered by the foundation, the second and third were the most common reasons for providing aid to Czechs in the Protectorate. Forced labour outside the Protectorate involved some 400,000 Czechs in total by April 1944, and industrial accidents became more frequent as the war progressed.<sup>137</sup>

However, the foundation's work must be understood primarily in the context of disciplining the population through authoritarian welfare. Nonetheless, it was not so much the social circumstances faced by the applicant that were relevant to eligibility for social assistance but rather the degree of social and political adjustment. To give a concrete example, in February 1945, the authorities dealt with an application filed by Ludmila B., a twenty-eight-year-old woman from Nová Ves near Uherské Hradiště, in south-east Moravia. Her social circumstances had declined since becoming a widow in May 1944. Her husband, a carpenter by profession, had fallen ill while working in Germany; he was subsequently hospitalised with pulmonary tuberculosis and eventually died in a Berlin hospital. The widow was looking after a two-and-a-half-year-old child and paying off a mortgage of K 7,200. The mayor's statement confirmed that Ludmila B. was an honest woman living a decent life.<sup>138</sup> These good references prompted the German administration to give a favourable opinion and to recommend that the application be granted.

<sup>135</sup> MZA, Regional President of Brno, Reichsauftragsverwaltung Administration (1939–1945) Coll., Carton 50: Der Landespräsident in Mähren, Reichsauftragsverwaltung an die Herren Bezirkshauptmänner – RAV in Mähren, an die Herren Oberbürgermeister – RAV in Brünn, Mähr. Ostrau und Olmütz, Betr. Dr. Wilhelm Frick – Stiftung für bedürftige Protektoratsangehörige. Erstattung von Vorschlägen, 6 April 1944.

<sup>136</sup> MZA, Regional President of Brno, Reichsauftragsverwaltung Administration (1939–1945) Coll., Carton 50: Der Minister des Innern, Reichsauftragsverwaltung an den Herrn Landespräsidenten – Reichsauftragsverwaltung in Brünn, Betr. Dr. Wilhelm-Frick-Stiftung für bedürftige Protektoratsangehörige – Überprüfung von Beteiligungsgesuchen, 22 May 1944.

<sup>137</sup> Stanislav Kokoška states that if all the forced labourers, including prisoners from concentration camps and members of various uniformed formations, were added up, the number would range from 400,000 to 600,000. Stanislav Kokoška, 'Nucené pracovní nasazení českého obyvatelstva v letech druhé světové války (historický úvod)', in *Pracovali pro Třetí říši*, 23.

<sup>138</sup> NA, ÚRP Coll., Carton 556: Bericht des Bezirkshauptmannes (Leiters der Stadt mit eigenem Statut) – Reichsauftragsverwaltung in Ung. Hradisch zum Antrage der Protektoratsangehörigen Ludmila B., Neudorf bei Ung. Ostra auf Gewährung einer Beihilfe aus der Dr. Wilhelm Frick-Stiftung für bedürftige Protektoratsangehörige, 20 February 1945.

According to the officials, Josef B. from Třebíč also met the conditions for receiving support from the Frick Foundation. From September 1939 to October 1941, he worked as a locksmith in Berlin, where he fell ill. In addition, from May 1942, he was listed as a tuberculosis patient, which prevented him from carrying out his previous occupation, leaving him and his family, including two children aged three years and six months, destitute. There were no doubts about his virtue from the ‘political and policing point of view’, as the competent authorities put it, and the administrative officer confirmed that Josef B. could obtain aid.<sup>139</sup>

Although the applicants’ motivation was primarily their social needs, political docility was a decisive factor in granting support. The control over the benefits paid is evident from the officials’ files on each case. The administrators of the foundation checked the family’s reputation based on statements from the Gestapo, the German security service and a German administrative official. It would, of course, be a mistake to see an altruistic intention of the occupation administration in the activities of the Frick Foundation. Instead, it was one of the many stabilising mechanisms of social welfare in the Protectorate with an added propaganda value for the authorities. However, even this latter aspect was almost irrelevant by the end of the war, when everyone was hoping it would end.

### **Population experts on growth and quality**

The scientific area presented here is referred to as Czech demography, even if the term is slightly inaccurate. The experts who contributed to it came from various disciplines, and most of them probably would not describe themselves as demographers in the contemporary sense. Czech demography was remarkably responsive during the occupation era and also, compared with the interwar period, particularly influential. Its understanding of population and nation had two distinctive features, which must be explored in a broader European context. Throughout industrial Europe, many demographic experts studied the causality between the low birth rate and the future existence of the nation. The other area they explored was the quality of the population. This reached back to the emergence of eugenics at the beginning of the 20th century, which historians generally see as a movement seeking to eradicate the social ills of modern society. In the 1930s and 1940s, eugenics was still very popular, as evidenced by countless efforts to promote it.

<sup>139</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 556: Bericht des Bezirkshauptmannes (Leiters der Stadt mit eigenem Statut) – Reichsauftragsverwaltung in in Trebitsch zum Antrage der Protektoratsangehörigen Josef B., geb. am 13. 9. 1915 auf Gewährung einer Beihilfe aus der Dr. Wilhelm Frick-Stiftung für bedürftige Protektoratsangehörige, 20 February 1945.

When Czech experts identified the ‘Czech population problem’, as they called the problematic demographic situation of Czechoslovakia in the 1930s, declining birth rates were typical across Europe. As population expert Ernst von Kietzell observed, the loss of thousands of young German men, for whom their betrothed waited in vain, had reduced both the marriage rate and, consequently, the German birth rate. As far as specific figures are concerned, there was a 40 per cent decline in the number of births between 1910–14 and 1915–19.<sup>140</sup> Germany dominated the statistics of casualties in the First World War at 1.8 million dead and 4.2 million wounded, while France was in second place on this grim chart, with 1.3 million dead and 2.5 million wounded.<sup>141</sup> The ongoing issues, which the politicians of the Weimar Republic seemingly failed to tackle, were addressed with much more resolve by Nazi Germany and its escalating paternalism towards the population. A widely read German pamphlet aptly titled *The ABCs of Population Policy*, which was first published in 1940 and saw at least eight editions by 1945, defined the basic premise of German population policy as ‘health management applied to the body of the nation.’<sup>142</sup> The promised grand strategies, which were to influence the population’s behaviour, manifested in legislation introducing marriage loans and social support for German families. None of these efforts disregarded the ‘qualitative’ aspect of human reproduction, which experts closely monitored. This turned matters of individual choice, such as engagement, marriage and child-birth, into a public matter on which it was necessary to consult with public authorities in advance. The state appealed to everyone’s responsibility to their nation and claimed nothing was more important than knowing one’s partner’s racial and medical background.

In interwar Czechoslovakia, there was an extensive debate about the threat of ‘national extinction’, but it lacked a political response in the form of a deliberate population policy. As the renowned demographer and statistician Antonín Boháč noted in 1936, the cause was not only ‘depopulation’ but also emigration, which had been ongoing since the mid-19th century. Whether one or the other prevailed, it was inevitable that

the radical reduction in birth rate, which could soon result in a population decline, presents us with a number of problems concerning the population’s quantity and especially its quality.<sup>143</sup>

Boháč, who cooperated closely with the democratic founder of the Republic, Tomáš G. Masaryk, understood ‘quality’ to mean both physical and mental traits,

<sup>140</sup> Ernst Von Kietzell, *Weltkrieg und Bevölkerungspolitik* (Munich, Berlin 1940), 32 and 34.

<sup>141</sup> Friedrich Burgdörfer, *Krieg und Bevölkerungsentwicklung* (Munich, Berlin 1940), 13.

<sup>142</sup> Paul Danzer and Hannes Schmalfuß, *Das bevölkerungspolitische ABC* (Munich, Berlin 1940), 15.

<sup>143</sup> Antonín Boháč, *Populační problém československý se zřetelem k příštímu vývoji hospodářskému* (Prague 1936), 17. On the situation in the 1920s see Antonín Boháč, *Studie o populaci v Československé republice. Rok 1927* (Prague 1928).

as well as the population's composition and stratification. Other field experts were fascinated by the situation in Germany, particularly the interaction between experts and politicians. Thus, it is often difficult to distinguish between the pro-population policies in a democracy and the population policies in a nationalist dictatorship. Many Czech demography experts have made professional breakthroughs in democracies and in authoritarian regimes.

This was the case of Jaromír Korčák, the renowned Czech geographer, demographer and statistician who, since the 1930s, had studied the demographic developments and the contemporary discourse in Germany. In this context, Korčák asked laconically in 1931: 'Why should we overestimate the Nordic blonde men so much?'<sup>144</sup> Korčák's research on nationality, ethnicity and the development of fertility resulted in the theory of 'ethnic layering.' The ancient character of the 'Czech nation,' Korčák claimed, was reinforced by three migration waves from the Rhineland, which, in addition to the ancient Moravian layer, were the most critical layers of the 'Czech nation's' ethnic profile. Korčák's conclusions bear testimony to his lingering fascination with Nazi Germany. In his 1940 essay titled *Ethnic Profile of Our Nation* he argued that, ethnically speaking, the 'Czech nation' was related to the German nation, which gave it the perfect disposition to understand and cooperate with its western neighbour.

There is a guarantee of a better future in the ethnic composition of our nation. There is one other nation in Europe that experienced an exceptionally rapid decline in birth rates since the early 1920s: the German nation. Since 1934, however, there has been an unexpected turn, and their national renaissance has manifested in their birth rate. ... Therefore, objectively, we do not lack the prerequisites to follow the great German example and to bring the interest of individuals into harmony with the nation's interest also in terms of population.<sup>145</sup>

Korčák was being political consciously, as he had demonstrated in his earlier writing.<sup>146</sup> According to him, the 'renaissance of the nation' should also come to the Czechs without them renouncing their ethnicity. A similar argument was made by Emanuel Vajtauer, as shown in [Chapter Two](#). Here, 'racial biologism' completely diverged from the Germanising intention, and it was clear that the two concepts could not be more divergent in the theories of influential Czech political and expert figures. The ethnic affinity between the Czech and German nations and the ethnic uniqueness of the Czechs made it possible to develop further the idea of reconstructing the state, society and the independent position of the 'Czech nation' in the New Europe. This scientifically supported the ideology of the nation as an ethnically homogeneous community projected into the *národní pospolitost*.

<sup>144</sup> Jaromír Korčák, 'Příspěvek k teorii národnosti', *Sociální problémy. Revue pro sociální teorii a praksi* (1931), 188.

<sup>145</sup> Jaromír Korčák, *Etnický profil našeho národa* (Prague 1940), 35.

<sup>146</sup> Jaromír Korčák, *Geopolitické základy Československa. Jeho kmenové oblasti* (Prague 1938).

Korčák worked in the State Statistical Office during the occupation and for a short time after the Second World War. In 1948, he returned to Charles University in Prague, where he was habilitated and became a renowned professor of geography. Korčák's work is appreciated as original and fundamental in geography.<sup>147</sup> It is also worth mentioning that his brother Jaroslav Korčák joined the Czech resistance movement and published the illegal magazine *Český kurýr* (Czech courier), one of the most widely read illegal periodicals in the Nazi Protectorate.

The study of the quality and quantity of the population remained very popular among Czech demographers. Otto Schmidt, a Czech economist and a prominent figure in expert circles, explored the issue of the 'population optimum' and especially pro-population measures, particularly those in Germany after the National Socialists came to power. In contrast to Antonín Boháč, Schmidt believed that proportionality between the population's quality and other economic factors was the most important issue. His distrust of traditional population indicators and statistical analyses led him to take an interest in the Nazis' solution to the population crisis. His case study, published in 1939 under the title *Nations at the Crossroads*, presented a detailed analysis of the 'German struggle for the population' based on birth, marriage and abortion rates. Reflecting on the German pro-natalist policy adopted in the Unemployment Relief Act of 1933 – which was intended to offset one of Europe's most significant population declines – Schmidt concluded that marriage loans were only a minor cause of the improvement in the fertility curve, thus supporting the claims of Germany's renowned demographer Friedrich Burgdörfer. While Burgdörfer saw the cause of the growing birth rate as the German people regaining confidence in their future, which had been championed by none other than the government of Chancellor Adolf Hitler, according to Schmidt, the crucial question was whether

the Third Reich would change the 'institutional background' of the German nation to such an extent that neo-Malthusianism, the immediate cause of population decline, would lose ground in Germany.<sup>148</sup>

In other words, it was a question of whether and how quickly neo-Malthusianism, a movement advocating contraception as the solution to the mismatch between population growth and the amount of available food, raw materials and energy resources, would be thrown into the dustbin of history.

Schmidt addressed more trends that were convenient to the contemporary power constellation in Europe. In 1939, on the pages of the journal *Moderní stát* (Modern state), he lavished praise on Romania under the rule of Marshal Antonescu, an ally of the Third Reich. For Schmidt, Romania was 'the country

<sup>147</sup> Attila R. Imre and Josef Novotný, 'Fractals and the Korcak-Law: A History and a Correction,' *The European Physical Journal H* 41 (2016), 69–91.

<sup>148</sup> Otto Schmidt, *Národy na rozcestí (populační studie)* (Prague 1939), 190.

of tomorrow', both politically and in terms of population. Its high birth rate bore testimony to its 'tremendous biological strength'. Schmidt predicted that the Romanian nation would soon reach the 30 million mark, by 1960 at the latest.<sup>149</sup> However, his prediction never proved true.<sup>150</sup> Schmidt was particularly optimistic about future challenges and about overcoming the population crisis. He believed that Germany and other rising nations would prevail in their 'struggle'.

At the same time, Schmidt predicted a steady decline in population and in the number of women of reproductive age in Czechoslovakia up to 1960–5. The number of women able to reproduce was supposed to peak in 1945 and then decline uncontrollably. He envisioned Czechoslovakia's fate as similar to that of Western societies, which was caused by the predominance of the Czech population over the Slovaks: 'Nowadays, it is obvious that in population terms we are Slavs merely in name.'<sup>151</sup> Therefore, Czech society would face the same fate as those of France and Austria. According to Schmidt, Europe in 1939 was at a 'population crossroads', and he believed that it made sense to take a page from Germany's book and actively pursue similar population goals through appropriate means. He believed the only right way was to resist 'the loosening social ties and the atomisation of national communities' and, at the same time,

to cling tightly to the national unity and to oppose individualism and individual selfishness with the well-known German slogan: 'Social benefit comes above private benefit.' It is necessary that we build national cohesion and community which will unite in spiritual bonds all the members of the Czech branch into an inseparable and lasting whole.<sup>152</sup>

Schmidt's contributions to the debate on population growth, alongside Marko Weirich's studies, are among the most intellectually compelling reflections of the era. However, they were far from alone in their campaign against neo-Malthusianism. Josef Talacko, a demographic statistician, was particularly offended by the political authorities' long-standing disinterest in the nation's demographic fortunes. In January 1939, he explained in the journal *Národní obnova* (National renewal):

The growth of the white race is slowing down as a result of neo-Malthusianism, moral decay, the disintegration of families, and moral degeneration – while the coloured races multiply without restraint.<sup>153</sup>

The features of scientific racism, the naive belief in modern science, social rationality and planning, were obvious in Talacko's writings several weeks prior to the Nazi

<sup>149</sup> Otto Schmidt, 'Rumunsko – země budoucnosti', *Moderní stát. Revue pro vědy státní* (1939), 162.

<sup>150</sup> See <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/pliante%20statistice/04-recensamantul%20populatiei.pdf> (20 September 2017).

<sup>151</sup> Schmidt, *Národy na rozcestí*, 241.

<sup>152</sup> Schmidt, *Národy na rozcestí*, 247.

<sup>153</sup> Josef Talacko, 'Být či nebýt', *Národní obnova* (7 January 1939), No. 1, 7.



occupation. He argued that the 'quality' of the population was steadily deteriorating. This process could only be countered by reforming social conditions and imposing a new order that would shift attention away from individual rights towards the nation. Talacko openly called for the restoration of conventional morality and the creation of a new social order where 'it is clear what the function of a woman is and where her place is'.<sup>154</sup> In his case, population paternalism emerged in a strictly conservative and racist form. The state and society were moving in the direction Talacko called for. However, as observed earlier, implementing specific policies was somewhat problematic given the interests of the German administration. Moreover, total war set Talacko's plans back since the universal obligation to work applied to women.

Talacko advocated paternalism in his later years, although his writings are based on pure positivism. The state leaders' concern for the 'biological essence of the national body' was supposed to boost natality while reducing the infant mortality rate. The mortality gap between legitimate and illegitimate children had widened considerably since the 1920s as illegitimate children suffered the consequences of insufficient care. Talacko concluded that if the infant mortality rate were at the German level, there would be 130,000 more children in Bohemia and Moravia. Natality and infant mortality were closely interrelated, a presupposition on which Talacko agreed with Jiří Trapl, a renowned physician and chairman of the Provincial Youth Welfare Centre. They both lectured at the Society for Hygiene and Social Medicine convention in April 1941.<sup>155</sup>

Czech demographics was then a field in which experts from various disciplines, including economics, statistics and medicine, participated. In particular, physicians in dialogue with national economists and statisticians, including Schmidt and Talacko, came to similar conclusions despite their differing points of view. Infant mortality was causing tremendous controversy, and its rate did not show the Bohemian lands in a good light. As late as 1945, the infant mortality rate was 110 per 1,000 newborns, that is, 11 per cent. This was the same rate as in Czechoslovakia in 1931, but in the following years it steadily declined until 1940, when it reached its lowest point of 95.6 per 1,000 births; yet it started rising again.<sup>156</sup> His position as chairman alone made Jiří Trapl an advocate of strengthening the institutional structures supporting mothers-to-be. In May 1939, he recommended that pregnancy prevention through contraception should be omitted entirely from public counselling, lest women were discouraged from becoming mothers.<sup>157</sup>

There was a basic consensus among experts concerning the roots of the contemporary population crisis. The 'moral' crisis of the 'Czech nation' was caused by

<sup>154</sup> Talacko, 'Být či nebýt', 7.

<sup>155</sup> Jiří Trapl and Josef Talacko, *Problém kojenecké úmrtnosti s hlediska lékaře a statistika* (Prague 1941), 31–2.

<sup>156</sup> Jan Melichar, 'Jak zachránit naše děti?', *Péče o mládež* (1947), No. 3, 67.

<sup>157</sup> Jiří Trapl, 'Matka zdrojem národního života. Studie k řešení populační otázky', *Péče o mládež* (1939), No. 5, 125–30.

a more profound economic, social and, above all, political crisis. 'I am convinced,' wrote Trapl in his 1939 essay on how to solve the population problem, that

the increased birth rate in Germany after the establishment of the National Socialist regime was enabled not only by intensive material support but also by a radical change in the atmosphere and general outlook on life of the whole nation.<sup>158</sup>

Trapl was parroting the words of Friedrich Burgdörfer about the necessity of a positive mental attitude, which would eventually manifest in an increased birth rate. In addition to restoring faith in the nation, Trapl suggested that 'the whole nation should be re-educated' and indoctrinated with the principles of family life. However, this was impossible without the state's participation, which, in his view, should provide cheaper housing for families, loans to families with instalments waived according to the number of children born, tax breaks for fathers and other benefits, or 'insurance for parenthood'. In contrast, the unmarried and childless were to bear a more significant economic burden through tax surcharges. Trapl regarded the participation of doctors and their expertise in the whole process as essential to 'prevent the rampant breeding of inferiors', as he put it in 1938.<sup>159</sup> Trapl, still considered an important figure in Czechoslovak gynaecology, continued his career after the war. In the early 1950s, he became the first director of the Institute for Mother and Child Care in Prague-Podolí.

In contrast to the rationalisation of labour and eugenic expertise, Czech demography developed in parallel to German population science. Its proponents used similar language and arguments, but their impact was negligible. The goal to increase the natality of the 'Czech nation' did not appeal to the occupation officials, who thus prevented the adoption of legislative steps that would bring improvements in this area. Nevertheless, political leaders eventually began to listen to the experts, as can be observed with regard to several pieces of legislation. Population experts, however, had to wait until after liberation for clear political decisions to be made. Many advocated for these steps even after the war.

<sup>158</sup> Trapl, 'Matka zdrojem národního života', 125.

<sup>159</sup> Trapl, 'Matka zdrojem národního života', 127.

## Conclusion

At the very end of the war, Hanns Blaschek, an inspector of the German State Ministry in Bohemia and Moravia, wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Heart of Europe* (Herzraum Europas). He opened it with a bitter reflection on how, at a time when the front was approaching both from the east and the west, the people became acutely aware of their position at the heart of Europe. According to Blaschek, this heart was Bohemia, just as the memorial stone he mentioned, located a few kilometres west of Pilsen, reminded him.<sup>1</sup> Being a territory at the very core of Europe was said to be what had always determined the fate of the 'Czech nation'. The fatefulness of this land had always been stronger than any man's will and stronger than any political concept, Blaschek stressed. However, he was not referring to the Protectorate, but to the project of the First Czechoslovak Republic and President-in-exile Edvard Beneš's efforts to lead the Bohemian lands into the embrace of 'Moscow's tentacles'. However, something had happened in the meantime. With reference to the events following 16 March 1939, Blaschek observed:

There has been a fundamental change in the Czech nation since then. Under German leadership, the political atmosphere, which had been artificially fomented and expensively maintained earlier, was cleared and gave way to a renewed hunger for work and building.<sup>2</sup>

Given the martial law declared in September 1941 and again in May 1942, the latter of which was followed by reprisals for the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, the self-centredness of Nazi officials certainly knew no bounds. However, 'work and building' was not an exclusively Nazi slogan, nor was it exclusively self-serving in terms of public social policy. The Autumn Revolution of 1938 certainly set out to 'clean up' the political scene, but it was not initiated by the Germans, but

<sup>1</sup> Blaschek probably meant the Dyleň Mountain, which was believed to be the centre of Europe since the days of Austria-Hungary. A memorial stone with the inscription 'Mittlepunkt Europas' was placed there in 1865.

<sup>2</sup> NA, NSM Coll., Sign. 110-2/137, Carton 106, Folio 6: Herzraum Europas, von Dr. Hanns Blaschek, Inspekteur des Deutschen Staasministers für Böhmen und Mähren.

demonstrably by the Czechs. In the context of social policy, the building ethos had already asserted itself in the post-Munich republic and had its staunch supporters inside Czech political and expert circles. While, even later during the occupation, the stabilisation efforts and the strengthening of social protection were mainly intended to provide labour for the German war industry, the effects of the social policy, supervised by the Nazis, were not exclusively destructive in the long run, but rather, and much more often, socially protective.

Writing a history of the social policy of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia is like approaching a dug-up street and trying to lay planks and nailed-together footbridges over the trenches of flowing and scattered sentences, words and numbers. These were the words once used by the famous Czech writer Bohumil Hrabal to describe his own experience with the process of trying to piece together his memories of a good friend.<sup>3</sup> In my work, the process is not as associative and subjective as the writer's recollection was, but it is similarly difficult. Social policy and Nazism can make for an explosive mix, bringing together two seemingly incompatible subjects – the policy of care and the policy of destruction. In Czech historiography, too, Czechs are much more often associated with democracy and displays of heroism than with racism and collaboration. Research on social policy during the Nazi era should be seen as more than simply correcting this superficial ignorance. Its purpose is to search for contemporary sources of thinking and action at a time that was distinctly unfavourable to large parts of society and to consider the 20th-century history of Czechoslovakia in a broader context. It is symptomatic that the period of the Nazi occupation holds a marginal position in the 20th-century national narrative. This is an era to which Czech historians find it difficult to assign adjectives such as 'Czech' and 'national'. This is in part because many of them believe there was nothing in the Nazi Protectorate for which the Czechs could be held responsible. Other European historiographies face a similar dilemma. There are assumptions here that the period of occupation does not belong to the Czech national story because the Protectorate was 'German'. It is true that the Protectorate was incorporated into the Reich and the Nazi occupation apparatus had executive powers over it. However, social policy in the Protectorate was oriented primarily towards the Czech population, its organisation was based mainly on the Czech administrative apparatus, it was carried out by officials from Czech political and expert circles, and the creative steps of the Czech political representation are also in evidence.

This book has pursued three lines of argument. Firstly, the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia became a playground where Czech and German nationalism competed directly. But instead of a duel, we can see creative cooperation over social policy. Thanks to the undeniable active Czech participation in the

<sup>3</sup> Bohumil Hrabal, *Něžný barbar* (Prague 1990), 12.

running of the Protectorate from the local to the national level of public administration, one can speak of a Czech contribution to legitimising the Czech national socialist regime established in the Bohemian lands. The rule in the Protectorate not only demonstrably embraced the *national* component, especially in the form of segregation of national communities, the building of the Czech *národní* *pospolitost* and the German *Volksgemeinschaft*, but also, in its welfare efforts, it placed a great deal of emphasis on the *social* aspects of its rule.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, the rise of Czech nationalism contributed to intensive work on social welfare reform. It brought about significant changes that – despite the highly racist nature of the measures – extended social protection to the majority of the population through the authoritarian welfare state. This result can hardly be regarded as the intention of Nazi officials. Still, wartime conditions and the command economy provided significant impetus towards achieving a certain degree of social redistribution and thus egalitarianism. However, the deliberate goals were, on the one hand, to maximise the stabilising function of social protection in order to keep as many workers as possible in key war industries and, on the other hand, to serve the racist policy that explicitly and consistently excluded and murdered Jews and Roma.

Thirdly, the dynamics and extent of social reforms across various branches of social policy are striking. A certain modernisation, which historians cautiously attribute to the Nazi regime, is visible in the Protectorate social legislation. It cannot be overlooked that they were heading in the same direction as that later advocated by the Czechoslovak government after liberation. As it is called in the law, the ‘National Insurance’, issued in 1948, became one of the primary goals of post-war Czechoslovakia, following Beveridge’s vision of public welfare characterised by comprehensiveness, universalism, wage contributions, availability to all and obligation for all workers.<sup>5</sup>

In this book, I have discussed the intellectual background and social and political practice of public social policy. The three main themes – labour, health and family – were all linked by distinctive features. Leaving aside the stabilising function of social policy and the intention to keep the workers of the Reich’s industrial plants healthy and productive, it was particularly the organisational practices and shared mental horizons that defined the boundaries within which Protectorate social policy was actually implemented. Its main feature was its racial construction, which constituted the strongest discontinuous feature of Czech or Czechoslovak social policy on the timeline ranging from the interwar republic to the post-war ‘people’s democratic’ regime. Racism was as uncompromising and destructive in social policy as it was elsewhere. If we were to take a look around

<sup>4</sup> In this case, the attribute *social* did not mean the same as *socialist*; Protectorate propaganda did not even use the latter word.

<sup>5</sup> Collection of Law and Regulations of Czechoslovak state, Act No. 99/1948 Coll. on National Insurance.

Nazi Europe, we would see that racism took root in all areas of occupation policy. In its most overt form, it manifested itself not only in the withdrawal of entitlements to benefits but also in the total loss of the purpose and function of social policy consisting in preventing and minimising the impact of social risks. Thus, social policy became an instrument of exclusion and destruction – similar to laws preventing Jews from participating in ordinary civic life. Jews, Roma and Poles, all formerly Czechoslovak citizens, were directly affected by those policies in the preparatory stage of their ultimate destruction as humans in the gas chambers of Nazi Europe's various concentration camps.

The racist character of social policy in the Nazi Protectorate is not surprising given the extent to which anti-Semitism was embedded in the ideology of National Socialism. Nazi racism and Czech society's anti-Semitism, which critical historiography had already demonstrated in connection with the period preceding the Nazi occupation, combined in some ways into a single machine driven by several different powerful engines after the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939. The close involvement of Czech institutions from the highest to the lowest levels of public administration contributed to the formation of enclosed national communities that were defined based on nationality and race. The *národní pospolitost*, which was the central object of the Protectorate's social policy, was an exclusive community of non-Jewish Czechs who benefited from and largely participated in the organisation of the Protectorate's social policy.

The process of creating segregated national communities, although intentional on the part of the occupiers, had begun much earlier, at the end of the interwar period and especially after the Munich Agreement was signed in 1938. The situation where the German administration gave priority to social benefits over exclusive segregation with regard to Czechs was not exceptional. It showed the need to maintain the continuity of social mechanisms from the interwar period and also the flexibility of their practical application. Segregated communities as a principle of coexistence persisted, but at the systemic level it was possible, even desirable, to violate the principle of national segregation in some cases for practical reasons. However, the long-term effects of segregation were profound. A fundamental step in this regard was the reduction of the multinational Czechoslovak state into a Czech nation-state, which had occurred already in 1938–9 and which set the stage for the 'National Revolution' of 1945, accompanied by the process of 'national cleansing' and the expulsion of Germans from the Bohemian lands.

One might remark something similar to what the literary historian František Kautman once wrote about the Battle of White Mountain of 1620. It was one of the initial battles of the Thirty Years' War, which Czech national memory associated with defeat, national decline and forced Germanisation. In that engagement, representatives of the rebellious Czech estates suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Catholic Holy Roman Empire's army, which determined the political

and religious life in the Bohemian lands for the next several centuries. According to Kautman, 'it did not mean such a disaster for the Czechs as has been usually emphasised by patriotic writers.'<sup>6</sup> Although the Protestant estates were mainly composed of Czechs, there were Czechs also on the Catholic side. The story of the Battle of White Mountain and what followed is sometimes used in Czech historiography as a parallel to the Nazi occupation because it is etched in Czech consciousness in a similarly fundamental way as the Munich crisis of 1938; this shows how fateful both historical events were for the Czech national story. Here, instead of traditional concern with the extent and intensity of collaboration with the Nazis, we should rather focus on the ideology of the Czech *národní pospolitost*. As we saw in the case of some individual actors, sensitive issues, such as care for the nation, enabled compromise between contradictory emotions and beliefs and perhaps unexpected calculations about the costs and benefits of various strategies. Czech nationalism in the Protectorate formed a safety net for threatened Czech nationhood that helped the Czech population survive and, at the same time, preserve national values. This function of Czech nationalism is generally accepted. However, what is usually missing from the story is the follow-up question: what character did this Czech nationalism have? Living in an enclosed national community with clearly defined social rules and roles for its members, dealing with authorities who absorbed the language of the new legal order, using a language that distinguished between Jews and non-Jews, and constantly receiving national stimuli that 'Czechised' or, on the contrary, 'Germanised' everything around them, certainly left a mark after six years of occupation. We should not assign importance only to the German occupation, but also to the heightened Czech nationalism, which had already since 1938 significantly contributed to the erection of boundaries between the individual national communities; to the exclusion of Jews from Czech society, or rather the 'Czech nation'; and to the creation of the conditions for a decisive rejection of the continued presence of Germans in post-war Czechoslovakia.

The participation of the Czech administrative apparatus in the Protectorate's 'socialism of action', as Robert Ley, the leader of the DAF, described Nazi Germany's social policy, had primarily practical reasons for the occupation authorities. In the broader context of the building of the Nazi New Europe, it was the principle of supervisory administration, which envisaged a maximum use of local capacities. At the local level, the main objective of this collaboration was to create a functional network of welfare institutions that had to enjoy the population's trust to work well. At the same time, the same officials helped to discipline the population whose language they spoke. Discipline here means an idea of what the Protectorate and, by

<sup>6</sup> František Kautman, *Naděje a úskalí českého nacionalismu: Viktor Dyk v českém politickém životě* (Prague 1992), 7.

extension, the German Reich could offer to reliable Czech workers and what Czech workers could provide in return. The involvement of Czech institutions was essential and irreplaceable to maintain the functionality of social policy. A concomitant effect of this system's emergence was the demonstrable adoption of the language of national socialism, which helped to put into practice the principles of racially constructed social policy. Specifically, this involved the assessment of moral and political conditions for the provision of social benefits, for which the necessary information was provided by local organisations and administrative bodies staffed by Czech officials who were best acquainted with local circumstances and social relations.

Czechs were motivated to participate in the implementation of social policy by several issues. In addition to pressure from the occupation authorities and each person's attitude to individual freedom and their health as well as that of their family, appeals to help the nation, which had fallen on hard times, were frequently heard. Somewhere in between, motivations related to the desire 'to build' or even 'modernise' were born. To rebuild the existing social and political system in a way that had not been possible under liberal democracy a decade earlier was one of the typical motivations emerging during the reconstruction phase. It manifested itself not only in ideas for a dramatic cheapening and streamlining of public social policy but also in various measures reflecting scientific progress. It was symptomatic of the times that – as a result of the high pace of work, frequent accidents and the introduction of all sorts of benefits – no actual cheapening materialised. The Nazis' desire to achieve the final victory and the associated mobilisation of war production caused a general rationalisation of industry and of people's everyday lives. This state of affairs allowed Czech experts to enact far-reaching changes. In various areas of human activity – from industrial production to the systematisation of job selection procedures and recording the health of the population – elements of modern state paternalism, which is mainly associated with the post-war period, gradually emerged.

Modernising aspects are also found in the regulations concerning social insurance, particularly accident insurance, occupational safety and the emphasis on preventive medicine. Although the Protectorate's social insurance never achieved – and, due to its racist character, could not achieve – the comprehensiveness of the post-war 'national insurance' introduced in 1948, its modifications followed an egalitarian logic and helped to expand the number of insured people. More people covered by insurance, improvements in benefits, pension bonuses and allowing pensioners to work for supplementary earnings, even if these were steps necessitated by rising inflation and labour mobilisation, were all things that the interwar liberal democracy had failed to implement. The programme of the democratic left was demonstrably pilfered by the far right to offer the impoverished classes a more palatable social alternative to their lived reality.



This fate was undoubtedly not exclusive to the social democrats in Germany. The extremely effective populism of right-wing political movements, which exploited racial and national motifs, also resonated strongly in the Czech environment during the time of reconstruction. Many Czech social democrats tried to continue their work, often in new and important positions in the public administration of the Nazi Protectorate.

At some point a 'consensus' formed between the Czechs and Germans on the arrangement of the reforms to be introduced. The will and motivations that were the basis for taking specific steps naturally differed between the Czechs and Germans. In particular, the demands of the war industry, which forced German officials to implement measures to increase labour capacity and, at the same time, enable adjustments to the social and political system along Reich lines, must be recalled. This was done primarily for practical reasons, so that the occupation administration could gain a good insight into the structures of the system and its institutions and strengthen its supervision. However, it also wanted to increase the effectiveness of social policy – to fulfil protective and welfare functions in relation to the community and to minimise the impact of the war. This intention suited Czech politicians and experts: it was understandably difficult to achieve everyone's ideal condition of 'content workers' during wartime. First and foremost, the levelling tendencies, wage advantages, recreational holidays and other measures did indicate that the public authorities had no intention of achieving the opposite, that is, destroying the population. The Czech sociologist Jaroslav Hanáček went even further. In a study that he conceived during the Nazi occupation and published in 1946, he emphasised the gradual reduction of workers' social inferiority complex and the substantial contribution of socio-political reforms to their social liberation and integration into the majority (national) society.<sup>7</sup> Social insurance was particularly instrumental in maintaining a solid standard of living in the Nazi-occupied Bohemian lands. One must not forget that making an overall assessment of the population's standard of living during the Second World War, with the Holocaust taking place concurrently, is highly problematic. The only valid comparison can be made with the situation during the First World War, when conditions were much more difficult in terms of providing the population with essential needs.

It is not easy to cleanly separate the influence of the German and Protectorate officials on the direction of social policy. The will to introduce measures along the lines of the Third Reich existed on both sides, but the decisive factor was their effect in terms of national policy. The drafting of a government regulation for the introduction of marriage loans for Czech couples in 1940 and the reaction on the part of German officials demonstrates this very well. Although the mental horizon of Volkstumspolitik was receding into the background in

<sup>7</sup> Jaroslav Hanáček, 'K otázce dělníkova sociálního vědomí', *Sociologická revue* (1946), Nos 2–3, 33.

the second half of the war, when the Protectorate government played a rather marginal role in the preparatory legislative work, it nevertheless remained ever-present. It was not, however, decisive in any way for social insurance adjustments. This is indicated, for example, by the following quotation from a document intended for internal circulation inside the occupation administration: 'Here [in the area of benefits], improvements were already necessary before the Protectorate was established, but are only now being prepared at the initiative of the Reich Protector. The degree of improvement will be determined, inter alia, by changes in living conditions,' as officials in the Reich Protector's Office concluded in November 1939.<sup>8</sup> However, it was above all the late Protectorate, when Germans had achieved complete dominance in the making of social policy in the Bohemian lands, which brought about major reforms, especially of accident, disability and old-age insurance.

Contrary to the Czechs' national ideology, the Protectorate was not a negative historical turning point as far as the development of social policy is concerned. What is more, it enabled a fairly smooth transition from the interwar liberal democratic system to the post-war socialist one. For the first time in history, public social policy came to encompass the whole nation (even though it was a nation that was racially defined and the centralisation of social policy institutions was not complete) and ways were sought to improve its delivery to the Czech population. Tim B. Müller has mentioned participation and recognition as Hitler's main promises to disaffected Germans.<sup>9</sup> Voices in Czechoslovakia also called for them, most loudly during the Great Depression, when social inequalities rose sharply. In the end, it was not the established democratic elites who offered them, but an authoritarian regime: the National Partnership gave this nation-mobilising promise, and the re-evaluation of labour and the working professions was a satisfactory answer for large sections of the population.

The preservation of a functional structure of social welfare mechanisms in the Bohemian lands and the relatively stable conditions in the Protectorate contributed significantly to the rapid provision of basic social needs after liberation in May 1945. In Europe as a whole, the rise of the welfare state is most clearly linked to post-Second World War developments.<sup>10</sup> However, it now appears that the period of Nazi occupation was not a kind of intermezzo in terms of building up social security in Czechoslovakia. On the contrary, it was an essential part – a period in which we find the roots of the welfare state, and which gave the impetus to the fundamental reform of public social insurance into truly national insurance.

<sup>8</sup> NA, ÚŘP Coll., Carton 971: Reichsprotector für Böhmen und Mähren and den Herrn Gruppenleiter, Betr. Unterlagen über die Sozialpolitik im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren – hier – Sozialversicherung, 20 November 1939.

<sup>9</sup> Müller, *Nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg*, 122.

<sup>10</sup> See Harmut Kaelble, *Kalter Krieg und Wohlfahrtsstaat. Europa 1945–1989* (Bonn 2011).

Looking at the period of the Czech authoritarian government after the Munich crisis in 1938 and the seven years of Nazi occupation with hindsight, it is clear that these were not a mere historical interlude of the 20th century. We know the events that unambiguously place these periods on a timeline and determine their place in the Czech collective memory, but their associated meanings and effects transcend them. The period of building the *národní pospolitost* shifted the perception of the meaning of the nation and of belonging to it, provided an opportunity to focus exclusively on domestic political issues, tested the flexibility of political affiliation and national ideology, and gave a taste of what it was like to push through reforms without a parliament standing in the way. Czech collective memory of the war, however, does not recall these aspects. I am reminded of Tony Judt's notions of the collective amnesia as a voluntary mechanism through which post-war European societies dealt with the legacy of fascism and Nazism.<sup>11</sup> It seemed appropriate to forget entirely about the difficult moments occurring in everyday interaction with the occupying power and the associated personal and moral failures and compromised values. In Czechoslovakia, too, this 'amnesia' cleared the stage for the national heroes, made it possible to forget about the collaboration with the Nazis at various levels of individual and collective conduct, emphasised the democratic nature of the state and the nation, and cut the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia out of the Czechoslovak story and – after the Velvet Revolution of 1989 – the Czech story as well. The task before contemporary historians is not to fall into romanticism but instead to critically illuminate the legacy of local and national initiatives in occupied Europe.

<sup>11</sup> Tony Judt, 'The Past Is Another Country: Myth and Memory in Postwar Europe', *Daedalus* 121 (1992), No. 4, 95.

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# Index

- Adolf, Bernard 76, 132, 186  
Agrarian Party (Czechoslovak) 25, 49, 51, 64, 81, 148  
agriculture 27, 130, 177, 190, 197–8, 206–7, 230  
allowance 39, 142–3, 150, 152, 158, 161, 180–1, 183–4, 191, 241, 279, 286–7, 297, 298–9, 300, 303  
Anthropoid parachute unit 96  
anti-Semitism (*see also* racism) 20, 46, 62, 72, 87, 158, 165, 276, 316  
Austria 17–18, 20–1, 25, 37, 42, 47, 53, 59, 66, 101, 113, 177, 184, 195, 200, 221, 225, 269, 289–91, 294, 310, 313  
  
Bargel, Richard 42, 168  
Baťa shoes enterprise 133, 243  
Belgium 6–9, 53, 102, 174, 246, 261  
Beneš, Edvard 45, 48, 50, 53, 96, 100, 101, 106, 107, 313  
Beran, Rudolf 49, 55, 65, 88, 112, 179, 267  
Berlin 4, 44, 82, 85, 87, 117–18, 120–2, 126, 127, 281, 305–6  
Bertsch, Walter 132, 188, 196  
Best, Werner 7, 71, 128  
Bismarck, Otto von 18, 25, 37, 165  
Bratislava 26, 117, 120, 123, 124–6  
Břeský, Eduard 34, 237  
Brožek, Artur 262  
Burgdörfer, Friedrich 309, 312  
  
Carpathian Ruthenia 17–18, 26, 30, 35, 43, 99, 119, 267, 283  
Catholicism 50–2, 64–6, 125, 180, 272–3, 316–17  
Central Social Insurance Company 22, 25, 28, 32, 41, 116–18, 122, 124, 133–4, 153, 158, 228, 231, 236, 240, 249–51  
Central Union of Industry (Protectorate) 132, 146  
charity (*see also* voluntary organisations) 10, 32, 34, 62, 135–7, 300  
citizenship 2, 7, 20, 47, 55–6, 87, 117, 146, 157, 159, 233, 242, 277, 287, 288, 298  
Colijn, Hendrik 99, 102, 108  
  
Communist party (Czechoslovak) 20, 30, 43, 49, 54, 84, 169–70, 216, 263  
corporatism 51–2, 81, 93–4, 148–9  
counselling 35, 136–7, 211, 214, 218, 220, 223, 225, 237–8, 249, 256, 260, 264, 289, 291, 294–6, 298, 311  
Czech, Ludwig 35  
Czech Radio 3, 106  
Czechoslovak Red Cross 19  
Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party 11, 28, 35, 53, 88, 103, 118, 169, 180–1  
  
democracy 5, 14, 18, 20–1, 34, 45–6, 49–51, 53–4, 56–7, 61, 69, 98, 106, 108, 112, 115, 149, 166, 209, 221, 232, 263, 271, 308, 314–15, 318, 320–1  
Denmark 6–8, 102  
Dennler, Wilhelm 131  
Drtnina, Prokop 50  
Dubický, Jan 25, 26  
  
Eliáš, Alois 105, 127  
Enabling Act 49, 179  
Engliš, Karel 283  
eugenics 13, 223, 259–60, 262–5, 272, 276, 306  
  
Fascists (Czechoslovak, Czech) 6, 47, 56–7, 64, 67, 78, 82, 87, 89, 93, 102  
First World War 18, 20, 25, 27, 29, 33, 53, 59, 60–1, 72, 105, 129, 166, 184, 200, 235, 239, 242, 262, 266, 271, 286, 304, 307, 319  
France 7–9, 28, 43, 47, 50, 71, 99–100, 102, 174, 178, 245–6, 261, 271, 307, 310  
Frank, Karl Hermann 73, 74, 77, 95, 100, 132, 146, 157, 177, 210, 281  
Frick, Wilhelm 304  
  
General Government 13, 62, 72, 159, 246  
Germanisation 4, 12, 14–16, 44, 54, 60, 64, 70–1, 72–7, 79, 242, 255, 260, 279, 316  
German Labour Front 11, 13, 39–40, 42, 53, 140, 142, 144, 146–7, 154, 163, 168, 176, 189, 195, 199, 211, 220–1, 243, 247, 258, 261, 317  
German Medical Chamber (Protectorate) 143–4, 231, 256–8, 287, 294  
German Security Service 60, 249, 274, 306

- Ghent system 25, 29–31, 172, 230  
 Great Depression 1, 6, 18, 20–1, 27, 29, 32, 35–7,  
 41, 51, 102, 135, 139, 162, 166, 204, 207, 222,  
 228, 320
- Hácha, Emil 49, 75, 85, 86, 93, 99, 105  
 Hais, Arno 141  
 Hampl, Antonín 88, 103  
 Haškovec, Ladislav 262  
 Hencke, Andor 82  
 Hess, Rudolf 85  
 Heydrich, Reinhard 3, 4, 8, 44, 72–5, 86, 89, 90,  
 91, 93, 94, 95, 96, 104, 128, 130, 134, 138,  
 157, 178, 223, 246, 247, 278, 313  
 Himmler, Heinrich 8  
 Hitler, Adolf 21, 44, 74–5, 111, 165, 309  
 Hitler Youth 12, 84, 144, 220, 233, 273, 302  
 holidays (*see also* recreation) 3, 12, 39, 136,  
 246–9, 319  
 Hrubý, Adolf 81, 177, 197–8, 230, 231  
 Hungary 43, 48, 55, 116, 119–20, 122, 124–6
- International Labour Organization 19, 69, 103,  
 114–15, 118  
 Italy 28, 43, 246, 268
- Jesenská, Milena 71  
 Jews 4, 9, 10–11, 13, 40–1, 45, 47, 50, 52, 55, 57,  
 59, 62–3, 65, 72–3, 81, 83–4, 87–8, 90, 99,  
 107, 110–11, 113–14, 125, 153–61, 181, 233,  
 277, 283, 299, 302, 304, 315–17  
 Ježek, František 191–2  
 Jury, Hugo 177
- Kant, Immanuel 216  
 Kašpar, Karel 65–6  
 Kinderlandverschickung 12, 144  
 Kleinschnittz, Eduard 227–8  
 Klumpar, Vladislav 28, 115, 119, 130, 137, 198,  
 223, 228, 287  
 Koch, Robert 216  
 Korčák, Jaromír 308–9  
 Korčák, Jaroslav 309  
 Koreis, Franz 196  
 Kuba, Oldřich 91, 96–9, 181  
 Kundt, Ernst 73
- League Against Bolshevism (Protectorate) 95  
 legionnaires (Czechoslovak, Czech)  
 129, 138  
 legitimacy 45, 82, 95, 102–5, 108, 128–9  
 Ley, Robert 40, 146–7, 199, 221–2, 317  
 Ležáky 75, 94  
 Lidice 75, 94, 157  
 Ljubljana 107  
 Łódź 159–60  
 London 70, 91, 94, 96, 100, 106–7
- Macek, Josef 11, 53–4, 169  
 Malthusianism 309–10  
 marriage 38–9, 84, 152, 158, 223, 225, 248, 262,  
 264, 268–71, 273, 275–89, 296, 298–9, 307,  
 309, 319  
 martial law 4, 44, 91, 160, 313  
 Marxism 53, 88  
 Masaryk Academy of Labour 28, 180, 209,  
 211, 261  
 Masaryk, Tomáš Garrigue 19, 21, 98, 163,  
 166, 307  
 maternity (*see also* pregnancy) 34–5, 115, 229,  
 294, 296, 298  
 midwives 291–4, 289–94, 296–8  
 Ministry of Labour (Reich, in Germany) 8, 40,  
 117–18, 120–1, 124, 126–7, 132, 159–60,  
 222, 240  
 Moravec, Emanuel 95, 138  
 Munich Agreement 14–15, 43, 47–8, 63, 100,  
 112, 115, 117–18, 133, 173, 182, 271, 296, 316
- národní pospolitost 10–11, 15, 45–8, 51, 54–5,  
 57, 59, 60–1, 63, 68–9, 71–2, 78–9, 80, 84,  
 87–8, 91, 93–9, 101, 103, 109, 114, 118, 136,  
 139, 149, 153, 160–1, 163, 167–8, 173, 181,  
 202, 216, 221, 228, 242–3, 282, 308,  
 315–17, 321  
 National Aid (Protectorate) (*see also* Social Aid)  
 136–9, 237, 285, 300  
 national community (*see* národní pospolitost  
 and Volksgemeinschaft)  
 National Socialist People's Welfare 42, 139,  
 144–6, 220, 298  
 National Trade Union Headquarters of  
 Employees 119, 140–2, 154, 168, 174, 181,  
 189, 195, 212  
 Nečas, Jaromír 29, 30–1, 106–7, 181  
 Netherlands, the 6–8, 47, 78, 99, 102–3,  
 107–8, 174, 245–6, 261  
 Neurath, Konstantin von 3, 74, 125–6, 146, 154,  
 210, 280  
 newlywed loans (marriage loans) 38, 280, 284–8,  
 299, 307, 309, 319  
 Nietzsche, Friedrich 216  
 Norway 6–8, 18, 102–3  
 NSDAP 11, 53, 83, 85, 93, 195–6, 219, 258, 281  
 Nuremberg Laws 113, 277
- occupational safety 3, 27, 163–4, 170, 190–2, 318
- patriotism 79, 98–9, 102–3, 169  
 pensions 23–7, 31, 40–1, 116–17, 123, 129, 152,  
 158–60, 170, 179, 182, 194, 198–208, 272  
 Peroutka, Ferdinand 17, 71, 271  
 Pétain, Philippe 50, 99, 102  
 Pfitzner, Josef 303  
 Pharmacopoeia 231–2

- pharmacy, pharmacists 130, 224, 231–2
- Poland 10–11, 13, 25, 28, 48, 55, 62, 116, 122, 154, 163, 246
- pregnancy (*see also* maternity) 34, 152, 274–6, 291, 295, 298, 311
- private insurance 123–4, 126, 147, 197, 199
- propaganda 4, 17, 38–9, 62–4, 75, 92, 95, 99, 115, 139, 152, 163, 166, 176, 230, 243, 245, 247–8, 258, 268, 278, 296, 305–6
- Protestantism 65, 317
- psychotechnics 209, 211, 214
- racism (*see also* anti-Semitism) 4, 13, 40, 57, 177, 276–7, 302, 310–11, 314–16, 318
- refugees 20–1, 50, 52, 55, 57, 110, 113–6, 171–2, 220
- resistance (anti-German) 13, 44, 60, 84–5, 88, 91–2, 100–2, 105–8, 174, 255, 274, 276, 278, 296, 303, 309
- rights (social, human, civil) 1, 3, 5, 10, 15, 18, 21, 34, 41, 46, 48, 89, 110–11, 142, 144, 146, 153, 155, 161–3, 174–5, 176, 208, 215, 222, 228, 230, 232–3, 245, 255, 267, 269–71, 276, 311
- Roma 11, 21, 45, 47, 50, 63, 72–3, 99, 153–5, 161, 299, 315–16
- Romania 113, 126, 309–10
- Russia 18, 278
- salaries (*see also* wages) 129, 170, 174, 179, 181–2, 183–4, 188–9, 206, 284
- Sauckel, Fritz 99, 100, 178
- Schmidt, Otto 309–11
- Schneider, Josef 118–19, 121, 131, 196, 201–2, 204–5, 207–8, 240, 258
- Schönbaum, Emil 19, 24
- Sekla, Bohumil 263–4
- Seldte, Franz 197
- Serbia 174
- Seyss-Inquart, Arthur 78
- Sicherheitsdienst (*see* German Security Service)
- Škoda Works 123, 274
- Slavism 57, 64, 67–8
- Slovakia 10, 17–18, 21, 30, 35, 44, 56, 66, 72, 77–8, 114–16, 118–28, 143, 240, 246, 263, 267
- Slovenia 107
- Social Aid (*see also* National Aid) 136–9, 151, 223, 303
- Spain 261, 268
- Štašek, Bohumil 52
- Stočas, Václav 139, 168–9
- Sudeten German Party 30–1, 73
- Sudetenland 15, 30, 42, 65, 73, 110, 112–13, 116–17, 120, 132, 147, 182, 195, 200
- supply shortages 69, 105, 193
- Talacko, Josef 81, 137, 153, 155, 310–11
- taxes 130, 138–9, 154–5, 176, 178, 312
- Todt, Fritz 210–11
- trade unions (*see* German Labour Front and National Trade Union Headquarters of Employees)
- Trapl, Jiří 311–12
- tuberculosis 32–3, 115, 137–8, 147–8, 216, 224–5, 237–41, 245, 251, 253, 300–1, 305–6
- unemployment (and related benefits) 17, 19, 21, 25, 27–32, 37–41, 54–5, 120, 131, 162–3, 170–3, 175, 207, 212, 229, 266, 283–5, 309
- United Kingdom 9, 43, 47, 49, 71, 100–1, 107, 261, 291
- United States of America 19–20, 67, 218
- University in Prague (*Czech/German*) 44, 147, 234, 257, 260, 293
- vaccination 33, 217–18, 239, 249
- Vajtauer, Emanuel 54, 67–9, 98, 308
- Verunáč, Václav 180–1
- Veselá, Jarmila 264
- Volksgemeinschaft 2, 5, 9–10, 37, 42, 45, 48, 56–7, 60–3, 67–9, 80, 82, 144, 163, 166, 183, 220, 226, 267–8, 278–9, 315
- voluntary organisations (*see also* charity) 19, 34, 111, 114, 135–8, 148, 218, 237, 249, 255, 290, 300
- Vydra, Vladimír 117
- wages (*see also* salaries) 3, 23, 25–7, 38, 71, 119, 128, 140–1, 154–5, 162, 170, 172, 174, 179–84, 188–9, 194, 204–6, 226, 228, 231
- Wehrmacht 73, 120, 171, 234, 239
- Weirich, Marko 52, 180, 272–3, 310
- Winter Relief (*Winterhilfswerk*) 31, 62, 139, 144
- youth 34–5, 51, 83–4, 130, 137, 151, 213–14, 219, 224, 241, 248–9, 251–3, 273, 275, 284–5, 295–6, 300, 302, 311
- Zankl, Anton 77–8
- Zelenka, Antonín 19, 68–9, 103, 108, 118–19, 121, 140, 181, 195

