
Germany and the Germans in the Attitudes of People Living on the Czech-German Border

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Abstract: The article deals with the attitude of the population living along the Czech-German borders to Germany and Germans. It is based on a series of empirical sociological surveys conducted since 1990. Improvement of good neighbourly relations is a condition necessary for the inclusion of the former socialist countries into European integration processes. The relationship between Czechs and Germans has been historically affected primarily by World War Two and its consequences. In addition, the present attitude of Czech people to Germans is affected by the different level of economic development reflected mainly in different purchasing power, and by communication difficulties resulting from poor knowledge of language and other factors. The results of the survey show the prevalence of positive stances to Germans and Germany as such. Germany is perceived as a country with which it is worth all-round co-operation. Besides openness and confidence, the analysis has also revealed the existence of relatively strong vigilance toward the German neighbour. The 'image' of a German in the minds of the population of the Czech borderlands is generally more positive than the 'image' of their own compatriots. At the same time the results show that these 'images' are gradually converging. The attitude to so-called 'Sudeten Germans' is also generally positive but the majority reject all claims raised by certain Sudeten-German organisations for settlement or revision of their transfer from Czechoslovakia after World War Two.

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The success of integration processes and the stability of large multi-national regions presupposes good relations between neighbouring states and nations. This is of course particularly important in the case of European integration, where these processes must overcome a series of conflicts, real and imagined wrongs and misunderstandings over history. Even if many of these points of past conflict have been resolved or at least settled, particularly in Western Europe during the building and working of the European Union, nothing has been forgotten and the relatively satisfactory situation that exists between nations in this multi-nation space cannot be taken as settled once and for all. This is borne out not only by the problems arising with the integration of further European countries into the structures of the European community, or conflicts over joint undertakings (e.g. the single currency, the degree of integration, the power of centralised institutions, problems of subsidiarity, etc.), but also by the existence and indeed from recent indications the growth of various extremist and nationalist movements and organisations in different countries. On the other hand, there is a general will to make these joint undertakings a success, and a rational approach based on experience to finding a way for various nations and cultures to live together in this European space.

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Without effective collaboration, and a certain level of organisational and executive integrity, it would be very difficult to create the necessary conditions for the continuing resolution of possible national and ethnic tensions in Europe (not to speak of their social and economic causes and results). It is entirely natural that the Czech Republic has tried to join the European Union and other supra-national organisations and to use the processes of integration to resolve its own problems and pursue its own interest in this relatively new situation.

In the light of Czech participation in the processes of European integration, it is necessary to clarify and resolve various problems relating to (among other things) its relations with its neighbour, Germany. This is due not only to the length of the common border, the number of inhabitants and the fact that Germany is clearly the economically strongest and most politically influential country in the EU, but also to the continuing tensions in relations between the two countries.

A number of questions were re-opened following the fall of the Iron Curtain, including various problems relating to the coexistence of different national groupings in the first Czechoslovak Republic, the guilt for its collapse, and the course of the German occupation and its consequences (particularly the transfer of the ethnic Germans) after the defeat of fascist Germany. It is impossible to ignore the attempts of the homeland organisations of the displaced Germans (*Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft*) to review the very act of their transfer and the documents forming the legislative foundation for the post-war transfer of Germans from the then Czechoslovakia (international agreements between the victorious powers and particularly the so-called Beneš decrees). They have reopened old wounds in relations with Germans and Austrians and these are having a strong influence on the state of Czech-German and Czech-Austrian relations today.

The historical and political aspects of these events are being widely discussed and this has led to a deeper understanding of the various positions and thrown light on some taboos (particularly among the Czechs) relating to the actual course of the expulsions. Many questions, particularly of changing attitudes, are still open and require further steps, contacts and moves to resolve them (if, of course, they are in fact soluble). The so-called Sudeten German question has received considerable attention in the media. Questions of the justice or injustice of the transfer and the coverage of the Sudeten Germans' demands for "compensation" are discussed with various attitudes and intensities, as are the questions of cause and guilt. An evaluation of this debate would require a separate study, but it can be said that, despite a certain attempt at objectivity and neutrality, the nature of the debate is strongly influenced by the general stance of the newspaper or magazine. The media is strongly influenced by public opinion and attitudes, and any lack of balance can distort attitudes and aggravate both internal and cross-border relations.¹ For example, the fact that they place too great an emphasis on the excesses committed by the Czechs during the transfer without trying to explain the origins of these excesses, which lie deep in the wrongs done to Czechs by the Germans (including and sometimes principally by the

¹) As, for example, *Lidové noviny* frequently presents the opinions of supporters of the Sudeten German *Landsmannschaft*, including the views of their representatives [see Neubauer 1997]. The dailies *Mladá fronta Dnes* and particularly *Právo* are more neutral towards the representatives and tend to reject the views of the Sudeten Germans. Party newspapers such as *Haló noviny* (Communist) and *Republika* (Republican) adopt strongly negative positions towards the demands of the Sudeten Germans.

Sudeten Germans) arouses a defensive reaction which reinforces the position of those adopting a nationalist standpoint.² Among those groups of people who do not suffer from a priori nationalistic prejudices this is more likely to arouse a sense of guilt, which is another obstacle hindering the formation of a rational national consciousness.

One specific example of people's reactions to pressure from Sudeten German organisations is the founding of the Czech Borderlands Clubs. While these do not have any great force (surveys in the border areas showed that slightly less than 38% of respondents were aware of the clubs' activities),³ but their platform is directed at a consistent defence of national interests and could become a ground for developing Czech nationalism, against the background of a strong and influential Germany and the activities of the displaced Germans' organisations. At present, Czech nationalism is primarily represented by the Republican Party (SPR-RSČ). The continuing sensitivity of this matter is borne out by the 62% of people living in border areas who see historical links between Czechs and Germans as important for the development of collaboration. Even if people see the different economic levels of the two countries as a stronger factor in determining current relations with Germany, the events of the countries' common past should not be disregarded.

In the political sphere, a document was drawn up and accepted by both parliaments with the aim of providing an acceptable basis for overcoming past conflicts and misunderstandings and so creating a ground for optimising future coexistence. The Czech-German Declaration [Češi... 1997: 221] was undoubtedly drawn up with the best of wills and lays down the preconditions for resolving conflicts, or at least preventing them from intensifying, but as will be shown, it is controversial and has not met with unqualified acceptance on either side of the border. The opinions and experiences of the people living near the Czech-German border indicate that this document will not resolve problems between the two countries. Fewer than 13% of respondents consider that the declaration has resolved the points of conflict from the past. Moreover, 33% consider that it has little significance and the rest (54%) think that it has none at all. The lack of enthusiasm with which this document has been received in some quarters is due not only to its inherent shortcomings, but is rather proof that the roots of the problems in relations between the two countries are too complex to be resolved by a single document. Nonetheless, despite the various complications, the moves that have been made on the basis of the Czech-German Declaration (the founding of the Czech-German Future Fund, the Czech-German discussion forum) aim to increase deeper mutual understanding and collaboration.

²) Nationalism is understood here as going beyond the level of 'reasonable patriotism'. It is linked with a feeling or judgement that the principle of political and national unity underlying the social system has been disturbed. As Gellner [1993: 12] said, nationalism is an original political principle which proclaims that the political and the national units must be one and the same.

³) "The attitudes of people living in the border areas toward Germany and to questions of European integration" – empirical sociological research carried out by a research group of the Sociological Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Ústí nad Labem 1997. The research was carried out in all districts bordering on Germany. Respondents were selected by the quota method and questioning was conducted by specially-trained secondary school students from the border areas. The sample included 929 completed questionnaires, which represent about 1.5 per thousand of the adult population of the area. All variables considered indicated that the sample was representative of the adult population of the border areas. Unless otherwise stated, all data used is taken from this study.

Alongside the weight of history there are a number of other facts which have a considerable influence on Czech-German relations today and also influence opinions about and attitudes to Germans and Germany and are therefore important for the future development of good relations. The first of these is the different economic strength of the two countries, which people living in border areas see mainly in terms of the differing purchasing power of the currencies, and of the differences in the prices of goods and services. In repeated surveys in these areas, people saw these as by far the most important factors in the development of cross-border collaboration, with 82% expressing this opinion [Houžvička et al. 1997: 21]. It is clear that people view these economic differences primarily from the point of view of their everyday interests, where the strong German mark and weak Czech crown put them in an unbalanced and more or less subordinate position which is damaging to their self confidence and behaviour. Here the roots of the ambivalent attitudes of Czechs to Germans, often referred to in the media, are clear. On the one hand, there is a growing national pride and patriotism, while on the other people are grasping for marks and hanging out signs saying '*Zimmer frei*'. A sociological analysis shows that this ambivalence is in some degree a confirmation of the level of this inner personal (socially psychological) inconsistency in attitudes adopted and on the other hand is evidence of people's pragmatism. This analysis does, however, also show the important social differentiation between people holding these attitudes. There are groups of people who see these differences simply as a fact and do not try to make use of this situation for any reason, while others very intentionally and pragmatically take advantage of the economic differences and certainly do not see these as factors influencing the negative development of collaboration. These groups will be discussed in more detail later.

Some problems in the development of relations can lie in what is interpreted as the national character as it appears in different ways of life, ideas, cultural features, and so forth. The difference between the national characters of Czechs and Germans was noted by about half the respondents in the Czech border areas and almost three quarters of them felt that this difference had a strong influence on developments.

By no means last is the role of communications in relations, largely due to the low level of knowledge of each other's language. People living in the border areas place considerable importance on this factor (43% seeing it as major).⁴

For Czechs and particularly for those living near the German border there is a constant supply of difficult questions, which influence their actual attitudes towards Germans and to Germany as a neighbour and future partner in European structures. There is a range of influences shaping these attitudes. In order to understand the possible means of contact between people and the probable development of cross-border relations in the area it is important to understand people's attitudes. This is also important for the maintenance of good relations on the political and inter-state levels.

⁴) In the 1994 survey, in answer to the question: "How well do you know German?", 6% of respondents said they could speak it very well, even on abstract subjects, 25% said they could speak well enough to talk about everyday matters, 26% said they had only a passive knowledge, and 36% said they knew only a few words. 7% said they did not know any German at all. Knowledge of German corresponds closely to the age of the respondents. This survey showed that a majority of respondents in the youngest age group claimed to speak German well or very well ["Názory..." 1994].

This article takes the results of empirical sociological research in order to try and throw light on the attitudes of people living on the Czech side of the Czech-German border towards Germany and Germans. The surveys were carried out by a detached team of the Sociological Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Ústí nad Labem, with the support of the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic, and have been carried out each year since 1990. The pool was a representative sample of 1000-1500 people living in the border area. The results also make it possible to study changes in attitudes over time.⁵ The results of other nation-wide surveys were also used in order to sketch out people's attitudes to Germany.

1. The Image of Germany in the Minds of People Living in the Border Areas

The survey in 1997 showed that the majority of people living in the Czech border area see Germany as the main partner with which the Czech Republic should collaborate in economic and political matters. Orientation towards other developed Western countries (Great Britain, France, USA, etc.) is definitely in second place. The 'traditional' links with the countries of the former 'Eastern bloc', which were formerly determined by COMECON and the Warsaw Pact, are not now seen as important. Russia is, in fact, the country that is most often seen as a threat.

In this respect the position of Germany is often ambivalent, as while more than 60% of respondents in the border area see it as a country with which it is necessary to work economically and politically, more than a third of respondents tend to see Germany as a possible threat.

Fewer respondents see Slovakia as a useful partner than the long-term coexistence between the two countries would indicate. Slovakia is also in fourth place among countries which could pose a threat. The position of the Czech Republic's other neighbours, Poland and Austria, is more or less the same as that of the developed countries of Western Europe (France and Great Britain). Respondents did not see these countries as posing any potential threat.⁶

The same questions were asked in a nation-wide survey in 1995,⁷ which was concerned with the question of national identity. As the following graph shows, the first five positions are almost identical.

⁵) The results of this survey were processed and published in various works listed in the bibliography. It is an empirical survey carried out every year since 1990 in all districts bordering on Germany. The sample was approximately 1000 persons.

⁶) Data used is from the 1997 survey "The attitudes of people living in the border areas toward Germany and to questions of European integration", see note 3.

⁷) Results of the nation-wide ISSP survey in 1995 [Nedomová and Kosteleccký 1996].

Figure 1. *What countries could pose a threat to the Czech Republic?*

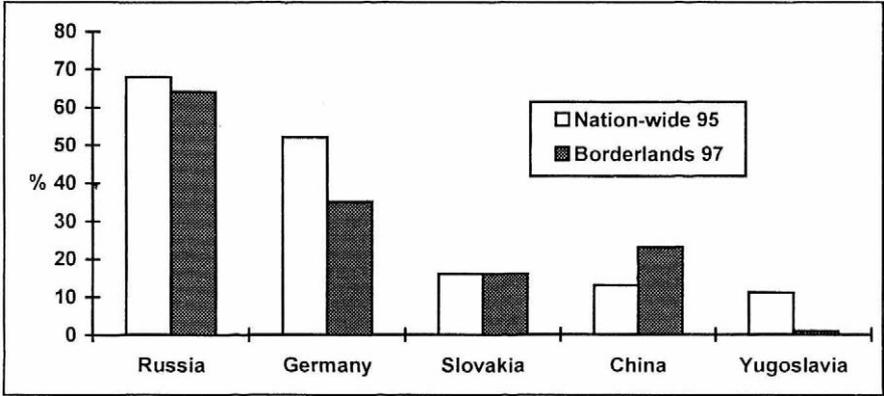
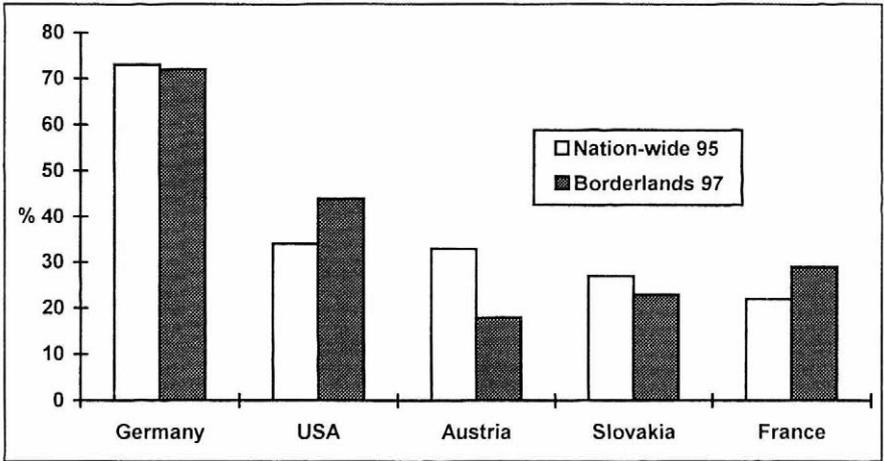


Figure 2. *Who should the CR collaborate with most closely in the economic sphere?*



As was shown above, the majority of people living in the border areas see Germany as a valuable economic and political partner with whom it is desirable to collaborate. A not negligible percentage of respondents, however, also saw Germany as a potential threat to the Czech Republic.

This was further investigated in the 1997 Borderlands survey with the question: *What do you feel about the following statements?* Each statement was then assessed according to the number agreeing with it. In Table 1, these statements are ranked according to the percentage of “totally agree” replies.

The statements were varied and dealt with various areas of relations between the two peoples. They do however provide a relatively objective picture of the attitudes that respondents from the border area hold towards Germany.

Table 1. Responses to Statements Characterising Relations with Germany (in percentages)

Statement	totally	Agree		don't know
		partly	not at all	
We can live together				
with Germans peacefully and quietly	67	24	5	4
Germans buy property here cheaply	58	21	5	16
We should show greater pride				
in our dealings with Germans	68	16	10	5
Germany is the European country				
which has the greatest influence over us	44	40	7	8
The expulsion of the Sudeten Germans				
was justified	41	41	10	9
We must never forget what				
the Germans did to us after Munich	47	31	15	7
We should make a greater effort				
to work together (with Germany)	38	47	7	7
It is in the interests of the whole country to				
work closely with Germans at every level	36	44	8	11
Fascism and nationalism				
can always reappear in Germany	34	32	13	21
It is an economic advantage for us				
to have Germany as a neighbour	28	60	7	5
We must always be on our guard				
against Germany	32	45	13	21
Germans are our friends	13	68	12	8
We can always learn something				
from Germans	14	53	27	6
German culture is very close to us	11	41	37	11
Germany is a potential threat				
to the Czech Republic	12	30	42	16
We will always be powerless				
in the face of Germany	8	28	56	8

Note: Totals not equalling 100% are the result of rounding up or down.

Over two thirds of respondents consider that we can live peacefully together with Germans and only 8% are convinced that we will always be powerless in the face of Germany (with 55% of respondents disagreeing with the latter statement). Very few people totally agreed with the statements that German culture is very close to Czechs, that we can always learn something from Germany, and that Germans are our friends. This corresponds to the strong agreement with the statement that we should show more pride in our dealings with Germans and that we must always be on our guard against Germans. On the basis of these examples it is possible to draw up a hypothesis *of the relatively strong national consciousness (or at least a sense of being different) of people living in the Czech border areas, and of their feeling that the Czech Republic is sufficiently strong (witness the disagreement with the statement that we are powerless in the face of Germany). At the same time they confirm the finding that most respondents see Germany as having an important role in Europe and so see it as important to develop collaboration with Germany.*

Some of the statements were previously included in the 1996 survey. A comparison of the responses shows no fundamental difference, implying that there was no significant shift in opinions in this area in the following year.

After rotation, the factor analysis of the responses to the statements revealed the existence of three relatively strong factors, which accounted for 42.2% of the total variance of all responses. These factors make it possible to better identify the structure of attitudes along three basic axes, each of which accounts for approximately the same percentage of variance.

The first factor may be termed '*vigilance*'. It covers 17% of the variance and is characterised primarily by the following statements: We must never forget what the Germans did to us after Munich, the transfer of the Sudeten Germans was justified, fascism and nationalism can always reappear in Germany, we must always be on our guard against Germany, Germans buy property here cheaply, and we should show greater pride in our dealings with Germans.

The second factor may be termed '*openness*' and willingness to work together. It accounts for 14.1% of variance of responses and is characterised by the statements that it is an economic advantage for us to have Germany as a neighbour, Germany is the European country which has the greatest influence over us, we can always learn something from Germans, it is in the interest of the whole country to work closely with Germans at every level, and that we should make a greater effort to work together (with Germany). Disagreement with the statement that we must always be careful about Germany is also characteristic here.

The third factor may be termed '*trust*'. It covers 15.5% of variation and corresponds to the following statements: Germans are our friends, we can live together with Germans peacefully and quietly, German culture is very close to us, and we should work more closely together. It also includes disagreement with the opinion that Germany is a potential threat to Czech independence.

The assessment of Germany's significance for this country differs according to certain socio-demographic and other features of respondents.

In the case of *age*, the difference between older and younger people who consider that "We must always be on our guard against Germany" is statistically significant (level of significance of 0.05). Younger respondents show greater tolerance relating to such statements as "we must never forget what the Germans did to us after Munich," or "fascism and nationalism can always reappear in Germany," and more often agree that "Germans are our friends". They are also less likely than older respondents to disagree with the opinions that "we will always be powerless in the face of Germany", "we should show greater pride in our dealings with Germans," and, somewhat surprisingly, "German culture is very close to us". (The level of significance for all these factors was 0.05).

Statistically significant differences in opinions according to the respondent's *level of education* were only found for the statements "We will always be powerless in the face of Germany" and "We should show greater pride in our dealings with Germans," where respondents with a higher level of education were more likely to disagree. For the other statements there was a higher percentage of responses indicating openness and tolerance towards Germans among people with higher or tertiary education (although the differences are not generally statistically significant).

It can be presumed that opinions of Germany's significance for the Czech Republic are also influenced by the respondents' *political orientation*. For all statements with the exception of "German culture is very close to us" and "Germany is the European country which has the greatest influence over us" there was a statistically significant correlation with declared political orientation on the left-right spectrum.⁸ The differences are shown in the following graph.

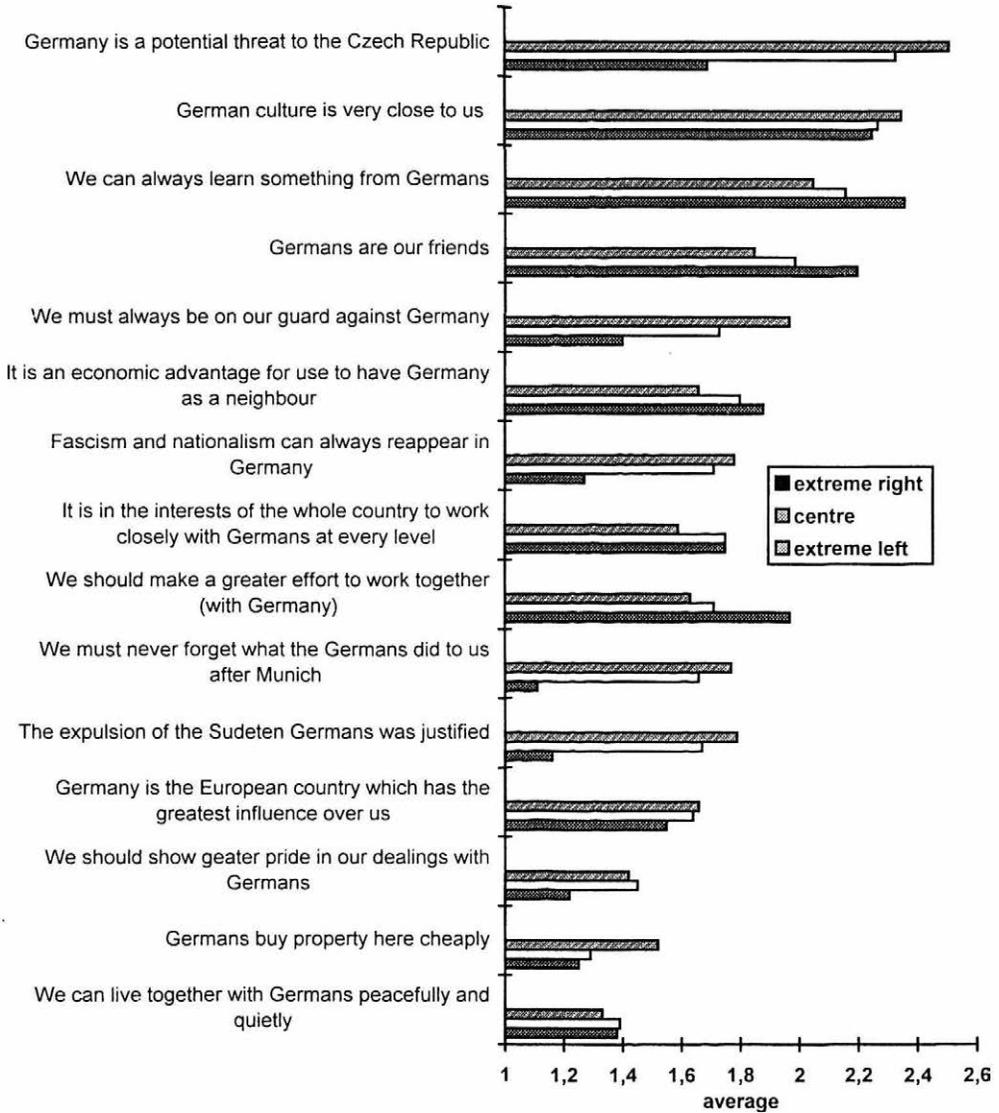
⁸) Left-right orientation was determined by answers to the question: *The terms 'left' and 'right' are frequently used in politics. Where would you place yourself?* Respondents then decided their position on a scale from 1 = definitely left, ... 3 = centre, ... 5 = definitely right.

The political spectrum that this determined for people living in the border areas should be borne in mind. 3.9% included themselves in the category of 'definitely left', 14.5% in 'left of centre', 43.0% into 'centre', 25.4% into 'tend to the right', and 13.2% into 'definitely right'. There is a clear shift of declared political orientation towards the centre and right and this is stronger than that indicated by various nation-wide surveys. Comparison with socio-demographic indicators shows the usual characteristics: right-wing respondents are more common in all age groups except the over-60s and the 31-45 age group, where a position in the centre is predominant. Left-wing respondents are rarest among the under-30s and increasingly common among older age groups.

In terms of education, the percentage of right-wing respondents increases with the level of education, while the number placing themselves on the left is approximately the same in all age groups.

There is a higher proportion of right-wing respondents in cities than in small communities. Left-wing orientation is more or less the same whatever the size of the community where the respondent lives.

Figure 3. Average agreement with statements according to respondents' political orientation. Graph shows the average value of agreements with the statement, where 1 = totally agree, 2 = agree in part, 3 = totally disagree. The lower the average value, the greater is the level of agreement with the statement.



The statements given make it possible to show how evaluation of Germany's significance for this country differ according to the political orientation of respondents.

With the exception of two statements ("German culture is very close to us" and "Germany is the European country which has the greatest influence over us") the differences in agreement with the statements between left- and right-wing respondents are statistically significant. People tending towards the left are more critical of Germany than

are those further right on the political spectrum, and also expect less of Germany and trust it less.

Those on the right of the political spectrum are more positive about Germany's significance for the Czech Republic. From the characteristics given for those placing themselves on the right (see note 8) it can be said that this positive attitude is linked with the respondents' age and level of education, with younger people and those with higher or tertiary education being more positive. Left-wing orientation is generally linked with a certain sense of caution towards Germany, with a stress on bad experiences with Germans and with a higher level of expectations (in some respects an overestimation) of Germany's role in Europe. Left-wing tendencies are more common among older respondents (level of significance of 0.05%). Differences according to education are not significant.

2. The Image of Germans and Attitudes towards Germans

The process of forming people's attitudes towards people of other nationalities is complex and subject to many influences. Attitudes are influenced by historical experience, both within the family and more general collective experience, education, state policy in shaping and pursuing national interests and a series of other factors. People's attitudes towards individuals from other countries also differ internally according to various largely socio-cultural factors which carry varying weights. Despite this differentiation, there is a certain basis which brings together opinions shaping the modal image of a person of another nationality and attitudes towards him.

Various traditional projectional questions were used to investigate attitudes in this survey, so as to determine supposed (or manifested) behaviour in certain situations. The results of the 1997 survey are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *How would you react if the following happened near you?*
(in percentages)

	fairly positively	I wouldn't mind	fairly negatively	average*
a German family moved in	11	80	9	2.01
a Sudeten German family moved in	7	71	23	1.85
a German firm opened up	24	59	16	2.08
your new boss was a German	9	47	44	1.64
your son/daughter married a German	15	57	27	1.87

*) The average is calculated according to the scale: fairly positively = 3, I wouldn't care = 2, fairly negatively = 1, so the higher the value the more positive the reaction.

The table shows that for the majority of attitudinal indicators used the position is neutral. Most respondents would have no objections to a German firm working in their area or to a German family moving in, but they would be rather less happy if their new boss was a German. (Further questioning showed that 17% more respondents would welcome an English person as their new boss than would welcome a German.) In fact, like most Czechs, the respondents have very little experience of working with people of other nationalities in positions of authority and their responses depend rather on their feelings towards the nationalities. It is obvious that attitudes are based on hypothetical and mostly indirect knowledge and experience of people of other nationalities. These attitudes are modified in concrete social contacts (see the comparison of results of semantic differen-

tials in 1991 and 1994) and only gradually come to express the actual state of mutual relations.

The existence of socio-cultural differences is reflected by the finding that only 15% of people living in border areas would be happy if one of their children married a German. In comparison with 1994 there is only a slight change towards a more positive attitude (not, however, statistically significant).

More than one fifth of respondents would be unhappy if a Sudeten German family moved into their area, although the majority of respondents were neutral on this question, showing that an a priori rejection of the idea is not prevalent. It is clearly largely determined by the hypothetical nature of the questions used, as such rejection is always due to actual everyday experience. It should be recalled that since relations with Germany were limited and abnormal for some decades (even where the border was not closed, relations between individuals were largely controlled by the state), the attitudes of Czechs towards Germans (and indeed the reverse) are not yet fully mature, and as mutual contacts increase, attitudes will change.

The Image of a German

Each new generation forms its own 'generational image of the world', its values, opinions and attitudes on the basis of its own experiences and does not just take these wholesale from the previous generation. This is definitely the case with the 'image' of the country's neighbours. While for elderly people the 'image of a German' was influenced by the events of the 1930s, the emergence of fascism and nationalism, the struggle for survival and liberation from the German occupation, and was usually associated with the idea of an enemy, middle-aged and younger people have a very different 'image' of a German. There have, however, also been distinct changes in this 'image' among elderly people, as the relatively calm, even if not entirely problem-free, coexistence of the last decades has led to much greater tolerance and understanding than in the immediate post-war period. It can be seen that people in the Czech Republic today do not see a German as first and foremost an enemy, but rather as a modern person, a citizen of a developed state and as a generally educated and cultured neighbour.

These conclusions can be drawn from a survey of the 'image' of a German which was conducted using semantic differentials.⁹ The findings¹⁰ are given in the following table. Figures given are averages for the whole sample, calculated from individual respondents' evaluations on a five-point scale. The tables have been drawn up along the positive poles of a continuum, regardless of whether the average was over 2.5 or not, and in this case it is basically a negative assessment of the given characteristic. The lower the

⁹) The method of semantic differentials for research in border areas was based on twelve selected characteristics which were placed on a scale of 1-5 using extreme concepts (e.g. good-bad). Using this scale, the content of the concepts of a German, a Czech and an Austrian was measured and attitude was assessed from the 'image' gained [Osgood, Suci, Tannenbaum 1957].

¹⁰) The data is taken from surveys in 1991 and 1994. The 1991 survey was carried out in all districts bordering on Germany and Austria. Respondents were selected by the quota method and the sample included 1430 respondents. The 1994 survey was also carried out using the quota method but was limited to districts bordering on Germany. The sample size here was 1236. Figures given in the table apply only to districts bordering on Germany in both cases (1991 and 1994).

value of the average evaluation, the more positive is the assessment of the characteristic in question.

Table 3. Average Evaluations of the Characteristics of a German in surveys in 1991 and 1994*

Survey Characteristic – continuum (1 ... 5)	1991		1994	
	Ranking	Average	Ranking	Average
confident-shy	1	1.56	1	1.55
hard-working-lazy	2	1.70	3	2.20***
rich-poor	3	2.03	2	2.10*
educated-uneducated	4	2.11	4	2.47***
intelligent-stupid	5	2.13	5	2.52***
obliging-disobliging	6	2.34	7	2.65***
honest-dishonest	7-8	2.40	8	2.66***
reliable-unreliable	7-8	2.40	6	2.53**
friendly-unfriendly	9	2.51	9	2.68***
good-bad	10	2.63	10	2.83***
sincere-insincere	11	2.79	11	2.92***
generous-avaricious	12	3.03	12	3.35***
Overall average		2.30		2.54

*) In the table the limit of statistical significance of the difference of the average evaluation of characteristics between 1991 and 1994 is marked as follows: * means a statistical significance of up to 5%, ** of up to 1%, and *** lower than 0.01%.

From the table it is clear that the views of these characteristics of Germans are changing with clear shift between the results from 1991 and 1994. The difference in the overall average is 0.24 points and for most of the characteristics investigated the difference is statistically significant. The comparison shows an overall decline in the average evaluation of all characteristics, meaning that evaluation of Germans has shifted towards the negative pole in all cases. The difference between 1991 and 1994 is greatest in the characteristics hard-working (a fall of 0.50), intelligent (0.49), educated (0.36), obliging (0.3) and generous (0.33). While in 1991 only four characteristics fell into the negative side of the continuum (unfriendly, bad, insincere and avaricious – but hardly significantly), in 1994 the number had increased to 8. According to the 1994 survey, a German is confident, rich, hard-working and educated, but tends to be disobliging, insincere, unfriendly, bad, dishonest and very avaricious).

The Image of a Czech

A comparison of the results of the 1991 and 1994 surveys, shows changes in both the image of a German and that of a Czech, when measured by the same scale. The changes in the latter are clear at first glance from Table 4.

Table 4. Average Evaluations of the Characteristics of a Czech in surveys in 1991 and 1994*

Survey Characteristic – continuum (1 ... 5)	1991		1994	
	Ranking	Average	Ranking	Average
friendly-unfriendly	1	2.27	1	2.2*
intelligent-stupid	2	2.37	2	2.26**
educated-uneducated	3	2.43	3	2.27***
good-bad	4	2.53	4	2.48
honest-dishonest	5	2.86	7	2.79*
confident-shy	6	2.88	11	3.12***
obliging-disobliging	7	2.91	5	2.70***
generous-avaricious	8	2.99	8	2.85**
hard-working-lazy	9	3.01	6	2.70***
reliable-unreliable	10	3.04	9	2.91*
sincere-insincere	11	3.13	10	3.06*
rich-poor	12	3.47	12	3.39*
Overall average		2.82		2.73

*) In the table the limit of statistical significance of the difference of the average evaluation of characteristics between 1991 and 1994 is marked as follows: * means a statistical significance of up to 5%, ** of up to 1%, and *** lower than 0.01%.

Self-evaluation (since the majority of respondents in the border areas are Czechs) was included in the 1991 survey. In that year respondents saw Czechs as friendly, intelligent and educated, but all the other characteristics investigated fell on to the negative side of the scale. Thus Czechs tend to be bad (only just above 2.5), dishonest, shy, disobliging, avaricious, unreliable, insincere and poor. A comparison with 1994 shows that assessment of individual characteristics improved. The sum of the averages of the characteristics in 1994 is 1.25 points further towards a positive evaluation. The differences are statistically significant at 1% level.

The only characteristic for which position on the continuum worsened was confident-shy, where it was by a relatively marked 0.24 of a point. Even if there was an overall shift to the better (see Table 4), the good-bad continuum was the only one where the shift was to the positive side. This means that on average Czechs still view themselves critically in most respects.

Assessment of Characteristics in Relation to the Age of the Respondent

The following tables show the average evaluation of the characteristics of the nationalities investigated, as included in the used semantic differentials, according to the age of the respondents.

Table 5. Average Evaluation of all Characteristics Employed, by Age Group – Germans

Survey	Age Group					
	under 21	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60+
1991	2.25	2.29	2.27	2.32	2.24	2.33
1994	2.64	2.67	2.45	2.52	2.41	2.50
Difference (1991-1994)	-0.39	-0.38	-0.18	-0.20	-0.17	0.17

The above indicates that it was the youngest respondents whose views of the image of a German changed most radically. In age groups above 30 the change is slight and moreover is virtually the same for all age groups. It is worth asking what has caused this change in the assessments of the youngest age groups. One possible hypothesis is that the change is partly due to the every-day experience that young people now have with Germans (at home or in Germany).

Table 6. Average Evaluation of all Characteristics Employed, by Age Group – Czechs

Survey	Age Group					
	under 21	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	60+
1991	2.80	2.92	2.84	2.88	2.79	2.68
1994	2.72	2.76	2.65	2.78	2.63	2.76
Difference (1991-1994)	0.08	0.16	0.19	0.10	0.16	-0.08

In comparison with 1991, almost all age groups show a slight shift towards a more positive assessment, except the oldest. For the latter, however, the overall decline was influenced primarily by a fall in the characteristics of “rich” and “confident”. The greatest positive shift in evaluation of Czechs’ nature was found in the 31-40 age group, but unlike with the evaluation of Germans, the differences between the age groups were not great.

The differences in evaluation of the characteristics making up the images of a German and a Czech were also compared by education, but generally the differences were not statistically significant.

The differences found in the overall assessment of the images of a Czech and a German after a period of three years raise the inevitable question of what led to this. There are several hypotheses to explain the change.¹¹

The causes of the change should be sought in the processes of perception of new everyday experiences and contacts between Czechs and Germans in normal life. Possible hypotheses for the change in the characteristics attributed to Germans could be formulated as follows:

As a result of increasingly close relations (there is a demonstrable growth in the number of contacts on both sides of the border) has meant that the ‘image’ of a German has become more realistic. During the period of closed borders and partial, rather formal, contacts, the lack of contact meant that this ‘image’ was somewhat idealised. After 1989 this idealised image was also influenced by the post-revolutionary euphoria and the generally uncritical view of the West.

Another cause of the worsening in the evaluation of Germans’ characteristics may be the activities and repeated demands of the so-called Sudeten Germans and the unresolved problems of the past, particularly in relation to the results of the Munich Agreement, the post-war transfer of Germans from the border areas and the postponement of compensation for Czech victims of Nazism.

¹¹) For the moment the methodological aspects of using semantic differentials in quantitative sociological surveys can be left aside. The method used allows us to compare surveys carried out at different times.

There may of course be many more factors which have influenced the change in characteristics attributed to Germans. The above two hypotheses, however, seem to be the most important, although confirmation of this would of course require further research.

The shift in the assessment of Germans' characteristics was also identified nationwide, as is shown by the findings of the IVVM survey on relations ["Jaký..." 1995] with nationalities living in this country. Respondents country-wide were most positive about their relations with Germans in 1991 (46%), while in 1995 this had fallen to only 33%. It therefore seems that the increasing realism in view of other nationalities is not limited to the border areas and cross-border relations, but also affects the interior of the country. It is probably also linked to the gradual rationalisation of life and to the passing of post-revolutionary euphoria. Hand in hand with a more rational view of Germans goes an improvement in the way that Czechs view themselves.

Conclusions

The findings of the surveys show that despite a somewhat increased criticism of the 'image' of a German, the overall attitude towards Germans on the part of people living in the Czech border areas is positive. Most of the features which make up the 'picture of their nature' are positive. At present, a German is usually taken to be a German citizen and distinctions between people from the different German states (e.g. Bavarians, Saxons, or Sudetens) are secondary. If people do make any distinction between Germans, their attitudes towards the different groups tend not to differ greatly. Surveys produced no evidence to support the generalisation often found in the German media that Czechs are nationalists (most recently during the discussions on the composition of the Board of the Discussion Forum set up following the Czech-German Declaration).¹²

There is also evidence of a generally positive relation with the so-called Sudeten Germans, although surveys also show a clear rejection of the Sudeten Germans' demands. These demands and the continuing debate of the justice or injustice of the transfer are today the main factors which distinguish the Sudetens from other Germans in the minds of Czechs.¹³ The inconsistent results of the debate, have led not only to positive results in terms of Czech-German conciliation, but also to a greater distinction in the minds of Czechs (and indeed of Germans) between 'Sudetens' and other Germans. This is likely to lead to a strengthening of the position of nationalists on both sides of the border, and in the Czech Republic to a general worsening of attitudes towards Germans.

Alongside this process of largely verbal confrontation which has had a generally negative effect on relations between the nations, there are also cross-border contacts in everyday life. These include institutional links (collaboration in administrative bodies, the Euroregions and other local organisations) and of trade and production links. There has also been a significant growth of everyday contacts between individuals. Even if the comparative economic advantage is on the side of the Germans, these relations represent a very important element in the creation of normal cross-border attitudes and relations between people.

¹²) See, e.g., the article by E. Mandler in *Lidové noviny* on 28. 1. 1998, in which he claims that a large percentage of Czechs are anti-German.

¹³) The concept of 'Sudeten German' is today used as a somewhat imprecise abstraction, since it has changed from the original topological term to mean all Germans transferred from the Czechoslovak Republic [See Kastner 1996].

The research results confirm that the critical attitudes and stereotypes of Germans are changing. The historical experience of the older generation, which meant that in the post-war period the image of a German was synonymous with that of a fascist, has not automatically been passed on to following generations. For middle-aged and young people today, the image of a German is not comparable with that of a German (or Austrian) of the last century and of the entire period of national revival, when Czechs saw Germans and Austrians as the enemies of all Slavs and of Czechs in particular [see e.g. Rak 1990: 34]. This research did not set out to provide a historical analysis of the image of a German, but it is clear that such a historical view would be somewhat simplified. It is a simple fact that in some periods Austrians and Germans were seen almost exclusively as enemies. This was related both to the attitudes of these nations towards the Czechs and with the pragmatic interests of the latter, as well as with the contradictory historical and practical experience of long-term coexistence. On the other hand, it should be recognised that this coexistence was accompanied by cooperation, communication between individuals, intermixing and the mutual influence of the cultures. A more detailed historical-sociological examination reveals existing social links, intermixing and the existence of local mixed groups, families, and so on. It also shows the existence and spread of nationalism and its counterweight in society [see e.g. Křen 1990, *Češi...* 1990, Kural 1993].

The periods in which the view of Germans and Austrians as enemies was prevalent generally coincided with global political changes. The collapse of Austria-Hungary followed a wave of general rising nationalism and dissatisfaction with the way in which the national identity of small nations throughout Europe was being stifled. Against this background in the second half of the last century, the image of the enemy began to be linked also to the Germans living in the Czech Lands. This negative view of Germans was widespread and survived up to the end of the Second World War, and only the transfer and the building of nation states of two ethnic majorities (or indeed three – Czechs, Slovaks and Germans), and the post-war developments in Europe in general, led to a change in attitudes towards Germans and their 'image' in the minds of Czechs. Somewhat paradoxically, the transfer, the limitations on contacts due to the split of cold-war Europe, and the relatively ethnically homogeneous nature of the state all contributed to the positive change in attitudes towards Germans and their 'image' throughout much of society.

As was seen above, the surveys of people living in the Czech border areas in 1991 revealed an almost surprisingly positive picture of Germans, but a relatively critical view of Czechs themselves. Comparison of the results of surveys carried out at different intervals then showed a certain change of attitudes towards Germans and a positive change in people's assessments of their own nation. This shift (rapprochement of assessments) is probably a result of greater experience of normal contacts. It can be said that the originally rather euphoric view of Germans has become more realistic, without any fundamental change in the positive attitudes towards them and the positive expectations of future developments in relations between the two nations.

On the other hand, it should be recalled that the negative picture of a German in the minds of some Czechs is influenced by the socio-demographic composition of the population. A sociological study reveals the existence of certain groups which do not share the positive view of Germans, or at least not completely. These people show a higher level of defensiveness towards German influence. The complexity of relations due to the ends left untied (the lack of a consensus about a break with the past), the results of the Second World War and the present economic strength of Germany all reinforce feelings about the

inequality of relations. The more realistic view of Germans which has emerged in recent years also includes a certain strengthening of negative trends in attitudes. The imbalance in relations between Czechs and Germans and the unfavourable position of the Czechs may have a negative influence on future developments in relations.

There is frequent talk of Czech nationalism, particularly by the displaced Germans, in relation to the formation of a qualitatively new relationship with Germany in the conditions of a democratic and market-based society. Survey results (within the limits of the methods used) do not provide any evidence of such nationalism in relations with Germany. The attitudes of people living in the border areas can be considered to meet all the norms of mutual collaboration, and indeed tend to show considerable openness.

These conclusions based on empirical sources are not intended as definitive, but rather as a contribution to the debate on the process of building Czech-German relations against a background of European integration.

Translated by April Retter

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