

Lernen aus der Geschichte e.V.

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Das mehrsprachige Webportal publiziert fortlaufend Informationen zur historisch-politischen Bildung in Schulen, Gedenkstätten und anderen Einrichtungen zur Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts. Schwerpunkte bilden der Nationalsozialismus, der Zweite Weltkrieg sowie die Folgegeschichte in den Ländern Europas bis zu den politischen Umbrüchen 1989.

Dabei nimmt es Bildungsangebote in den Fokus, die einen Gegenwartsbezug der Geschichte herausstellen und bietet einen Erfahrungsaustausch über historisch-politische Bildung in Europa an.

Who Lived in Sudetenland After the War?

Ludmila Dudková, born Cerná, was born in Horní Berkovice in Central Bohemia three years before the war broke out. She and her family moved several times, and thus she experienced many things in different places. Although she was still a small child then, many of those experiences made a deep impression on her. I am very grateful to her for allowing me to share her memories. This is what Mrs Ludmila told me:

"My father, Jaroslav Cerný, was born in Usti nad Labem in 1902. Although the town was situated on Czech territory, there were only German schools. My father spoke excellent German, but German children also understood Czech as they often played with the Czech children. My father married my mother in 1925. When the Henleins Party seized power in 1938, some Germans started to look down on the Czechs. There was a public poll, and those who did not want to join the Germans had to leave the border area. Thus, most Czech people left the border area. At that time, my family already lived in Horní Berkovice, probably because our father had suspected that such a situation would develop.

During the war we moved to Liblice. There my father found a job as a tractor driver for a rich German gentleman. The count had a big castle and vast premises that needed to be looked after. The job of a tractor driver was something special at that time, because only few people had tractors. The count was a good man. During the winter, his family lived in Italy and in summer they came to the Czech premises. When they were away, I could have a look at the inside of the castle because I was friend with the castellan's daughter. Only the rooms of the countess were always locked. The rich couple had two sons, and in their rooms I saw toys for the first time. Until today, I see those walls full of toys before my eyes.

I started school in 1942. At that time, we already had to learn German and the German hymn, on every house there were announcement in Czech and in German. Our teacher taught us the Czech hymn secretly. We lived on a large farm, and once I went across the farm yard singing "Where is my home". The neighbours rebuked me because

they could all have been arrested because of me.

During the war, all our food was rationed. Each person received, for example, 2 kilograms of butter and one pound of meat per month. But we were not so bad off. Every now and then, my father happened to hit a hare while driving in the fields. My mother worked on a pig farm, and there she got some flour every now and then. Partisans were hiding in the nearby woods, and my mother, together with the head of the pig farm and friend, brought them a pig from time to time. They would tell the owner that the pig had died.

The Czechs had to work as forced labourers in the German factories. The Germans needed more and more technicians, and they also took male youths for the jobs. My brother had to work in an aeroplane factory at Semily when he was eighteen. When the Americans bombed that factory, he managed to escape and hid at home. Later he joined the partisans hiding in the nearby woods. When the war was over, he guarded an ammunition store, and a friend shot him in the stomach by accident while cleaning a weapon. My brother died from the injury on June 6th. He was the bravest of my brothers.

In April 1945, the Americans bombarded the Skoda factory. As Liblice is not far from Pilsen, some of the bombs hit our village. At first, we hid in a cellar, but then our father brought us to a stable, because there it would have been easier for him to dig us out. Starting from April, there was no school any more. The school had to accommodate the "*Volksgäste*" (people's guests). Those were women and children from Germany who were supposed to find a new home in Bohemia. Later, they were nevertheless expelled from Bohemia.

Shortly before the end of the war, the Germans fled from the Russians. They did not want to become prisoners of war of the Russians. They rather wanted to be caught by the Americans. I was a small child then, sitting in the street with other children, and without any fear we looked after the departing Germans who aimed their weapons at everybody. Only later I understood how stupid we had been. When the Russians liberated our region, all the children got presents – a necklace, a watch... Only I had not got anything. A Russian came to me and said, "You haven't got anything?" He went to the car and brought me a golden necklace. You could see that it was real gold, because the impressions of his teeth were still on it.

When the Germans were ordered to leave Sudetenland, somebody had to move into the empty buildings. We got a special offer – a house in Medonosice. It was to take us 50 years to pay the instalments for it. It took about two months until all Germans had left. Those remaining were only Germans of mixed marriages and anti-fascists.

Until today, I have good relationships with Germans. After I married my husband, we lived in Pilsen, but after some time we wanted to have a small house in the countryside. Therefore we moved to Tremesna pod Primbou, a village in the border region. We did not know that our house had once belonged to Germans. When the borders were opened, they came to see their former home. They were glad that the building was well looked after. They are nice people, and they pass by our house quite often.

Milena Jirincová