

A Sudeten German Refugee Writes to the Resettlers Department of the State Government of Saxony (January 8, 1949)

Abstract

The official policy of the SED in the Soviet occupation zone was to integrate resettlers into East German society as quickly as possible. The official line was that the state was providing them with all the help they needed to achieve that goal. But this Sudeten German refugee felt that the official measures were inadequate and paid too little attention to the needs of different groups.

Source

Permit me the following lines:

As a Sudeten German refugee I received letters from many acquaintances at Christmas, including letters from Bavaria and Hesse. They say that expellees [*Vertriebene*] there – not resettlers [*Umsiedler*] – have joined together to claim damages.

I want to know whether that is also the case in the Soviet zone. Expelled from our homeland with only 30 kg of luggage, and having finally landed here after weeks of being driven about aimlessly, we were unable, despite the utmost exertions, to get back on our feet. The little savings left to us were devalued, as they were for all those who still call all their possessions their own, so we stand here as naked beggars a second time.

The action “New Home – New Life” was a great failure or merely propaganda. We don’t need silk gloves, suspenders, and so on, but beds, shoes, coats, dresses, linen, and dishes. If anyone got anything of the sort, then he surely had a job in the bureaucracy.

Who is looking after the older people who, on the basis of their age, are no longer obligated to work – that is, those who are having a hard time finding well-compensated employment, but whose health is not poor enough to get them welfare support. Or what about elderly, former shop owners who were not insured by any social insurance? None of these homeless, jobless, and moneyless older people are finding help or support anywhere. Where is the solidarity of the people here?

They say we are supposed to work together with the Czechs. Quite apart from the fact that they gave us no opportunity, every honest, non-partisan German would have to understand that we cannot continue to live, free from anger, alongside people who deprived us of the possessions we gained through hard work, who kicked us physically and emotionally. So much is written and said about crimes against humanity. What we, without fault, especially children, women, and old people, had to suffer from the Czech people – that also should be heard before an international court. That the wartime suffering and damages so loudly decried by the Czechs is not true to the extent they suggest can be judged by anyone who saw the land and the people. The Czechs have to blame themselves for the minor destruction and loss of people that occurred because of their haste; they could not await the end for a few more days.

Therefore, I speak not only for all Sudeten Germans, but for all Eastern expellees as well, in expressing our request for help in obtaining at least an acceptable share of any equalization of burdens.

With the greatest interest, we so-called resettlers now await your statements on the radio or in the daily press, and we have hope for a response to our request.

One unhappy wretch among many hundreds of thousands.

Source: Sächs HStA, LRS, Mdl 303; reprinted in Udo Wengst, *Geschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland*, Bd. 2/2: 1945–1949: *Die Zeit der Besatzungszonen. Sozialpolitik zwischen Kriegsende und der Gründung zweier deutscher Staaten. Dokumente*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001, no. 245b, pp. 558–59.

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