

# Borders and Emotions

## Hope and Fear in the Bohemian-Bavarian Frontier Zone<sup>1</sup>

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The paper argues that the emotional aspects of identity construction at international borders, and the ways in which different feelings and sentiments affect border people's perceptions and actions, have in the main remained an underexplored field of research. The analyses focuses on the Bohemian-Bavarian frontier zone, and shows that the inhabitants' perceptions of 'those on the other side' have been strongly affected by memories of the horrors of the Second World War and the post-war Sudeten German expulsion. Emotional displays and discourses of emotions have been actively used in the negation of social reality in the first post-Cold War decade. Introducing an analytical distinction between 'evoked', 'remembered', and 're-experienced' emotions, the paper outlines how emotionally complex memories can become a political force, weakening or strengthening both national and transnational identities.

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"While [emotions] are subjectively felt and interpreted, it is socialized human beings – that is, thinking human bodies – who are feeling them in specific social contexts" (Leavitt 1996: 531).

### Introduction

In the past six years, Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson have sketched the outline of an anthropology of frontiers that perceives borders as 'domains of contested power, in which local, national, and international groups negotiate relations of subordination and control' (Wilson and Donnan 1998: 10). This perspective focuses on the problematic relations of power and identity at international borders, and examines the ways in which border inhabitants deal with state power, and face transnational economic, environmental, political, and social problems (cf. Donnan and Wilson 1999: 156).

An important theme in the anthropology of frontiers is the construction of multiple identities in changing socio-economic and political contexts. Numerous scholars have convincingly

shown that border peoples in different parts of the world demonstrate ambiguous identities because they are pulled in different directions by political, economic, cultural, and linguistic factors (see, for example, Cheater 1998; Kearney 1998; Douglass 1998). Other scholars have examined the ways in which political processes such as cross-border migration, the creation of new state boundaries, and the end of the Cold War have partly shaped border inhabitants' perceptions of themselves and others (see, for example, Borneman 1998; Driessen 1992, 1998; Green 1998).

Even though much valuable work has been done that has provided a better understanding of identity construction at international borders, the emotional aspects of this process, and the ways in which different feelings and sentiments may affect border people's perceptions and actions, have in the main remained an underexplored field of research.<sup>2</sup> In my view, a focus on emotions is essential because 'emotions are, in many societies, a critical link in cultural interpretations of action' (Lutz and White 1986: 420). One should however, not limit

the study of emotions by simply regarding emotions as cultural constructions. As Margot Lyon (1995: 258) noted, emotions have 'social consequences', and 'social relations themselves may generate emotions', and it is therefore necessary to acknowledge 'the importance of social relations in the genesis of emotions' (ibid. 249). John Leavitt similarly argued that it is necessary to recognize the social nature of emotions.<sup>3</sup>

Inspired by writings by Spinoza and the Russian psychologist L.S. Vygotsky, he noted that emotions should be regarded as: 'experiences learned and expressed in the body in social interactions through the mediation of systems of signs, verbal and non-verbal' (Leavitt 1996: 526).

In my view, an anthropological approach to emotions must also deal with the way in which emotions are embedded in contexts of changing power relations (Svašek 1995: 115–116; Svašek 1999: 45–47). After all, power struggles are inherent to social life, and instances of emotional 'navigation' are part and parcel of political processes (Reddy 1999: 271; cf. Wikan 1990). This article will demonstrate that, in post-Cold War border areas, emotions have helped to shape political identification processes in particular ways.

In general, it is interesting to examine the dynamics of politics and emotion in frontier zones. In these areas, people's social life is at least partly affected by the proximity of the state border, and problems specific to border regions may stir up people's emotions and force them to take specific political actions. Emotional discourses may, for example, empower particular border communities to challenge the power of state centres or to make political demands that increase or decrease regional autonomy. Furthermore, particular shared sentiments may both reinforce and undermine national, regional, or transnational identification processes.

This article will argue that emotional displays and discourses of emotion have been actively used in the negotiation of social and political reality in the first post-Cold War decade in areas that used to be the outer territories of the Capitalist West and the Communist East. The analysis particularly focuses on the emotional reactions of the inhabitants of the Bohe-

mian-Bavarian border area to the disappearance of the Iron Curtain in 1990, and on the ways in which local politicians, priests, and interest groups have tried to evoke and control emotions in an attempt to influence border inhabitants' perceptions of 'those on the other side'.

## Initial Euphoria

On the 23rd December 1989, the West German Minister of Foreign Affairs Hans-Dietrich Genscher and his Czech counterpart Jiří Dienstbier symbolically ended the Cold War relations between their countries. Just outside the village of Nové Domky, not far from the border crossing Waidhaus-Rozvadov, they ritually cut through a fence of barbed wire that, for a period of over forty years, had formed part of the heavily defended Eastern bloc frontier. To increase the festive mood, the German *Musikverein Waidhaus* played brass band music, and the cheering public waved with flags and shouted 'Bravo!' and 'Freedom, freedom!'. Responding to their enthusiasm, the ministers handed out pieces of 'Iron Curtain', an act reminiscent of the transformation of the Berlin Wall into chopped off pieces of history<sup>4</sup> (cf. Sporrer 1990). During the political ritual, different symbols were used to represent and engender emotion. The wire symbolised four decades of mutual enmity and fear, and by destroying it, the politicians symbolically transformed a symbol of fear into a symbol of hope. At the same time, the music and the act of cutting and distributing the 'actual borderline' stirred up feelings of trust in the post-Cold War political situation.

It took another six months before the compulsory visa requirements were abolished, and before the heavily defended Cold War border was transformed into a less forbidding borderline. Especially in the light of Czechoslovakia's intention to apply for NATO and EU-membership, the Czechoslovak and German governments now regarded the Bohemian-Bavarian border as 356 kilometres of potential contact. This shift in perception did not just take place on the level of governmental state policy. Many people who lived in communities close to the border welcomed the changes, and were curious

about life on “the other side”. Their optimistic feelings had social consequences. Quite a few people, especially those who lived in communities close to the state border, began to look for opportunities to establish cross-border contacts (cf. Svašek 1999).

One of the reasons why eastern Bohemian and western Bavarian border inhabitants were interested in ‘the other side’ was that for a period of over forty years, they had lived in the peripheries of two hostile ideological entities, the capitalist West and the communist East. The disadvantageous conditions that ‘normally’ characterise frontier zones, such as economic underdevelopment and political marginalisation (cf. Donnan and Wilson 1999) had been intensified in the Cold War context. The governments in Prague and Bonn simply regarded the regions as peripheral zones of defence, and did not invest much in their development. The Germans were of course much better off than the Czechs because of the advantageous economic conditions in former West Germany, and because of the policy of political decentralisation.<sup>5</sup> On the Czech side, the dramatic results of economic mismanagement, overcentralisation, and strict military control were clearly visible. People lived in run down houses, and to deter them from fleeing the country, a wide strip of land was only accessible with a special military pass. With the disappearance of the Iron Curtain, both Czech and German border inhabitants hoped that their situation would improve.

## Meeting at the Border

In the Spring of 1990, Czechs and Germans from the Bohemian village of Broumov and the small Bavarian town of Mähring, began meeting each other at the Broumov-Mähring border-crossing. The people who had been officially expected to see each other as ideological Others for a period of forty-one years, now talked and drank beer while hanging over the barrier. After several friendly exchanges, the idea was born to organise a communal party to celebrate the ending of the Cold War (cf. *Der Neue Tag* 1989; Zrenner 1990). The party would function as a social and emotional context in which the friendly relations could be further developed.

On the first of May 1990, two months before the official abolition of the compulsory visa requirement, the border crossing opened its barriers for one day. On the Czech side, a banner welcomed the Germans, saying: “Broumov vítá Mähring” (Broumov welcomes Mähring). A banner saying: “Herzlich Willkommen” (Welcome indeed!) on the German side expressed similar intentions. The transformation of the physical border into ‘an open door’, inviting people in and making them feel welcome instead of shutting them out, was obviously highly significant.

During the day, more than fifteen thousand Czechs took the opportunity to visit Mähring, and many Germans crossed the border to Broumov. The German newspapers described the event as a dramatic restoration of friendship. *Der Neue Tag* reported that Czech and German priests ‘fell into each others arms and prayed’, and quoted a German representative who had stated that this was “the beginning of reconciliation and friendship”. The speeches by Czech and German representatives were highly optimistic about future co-operation. A Czech Mayor was reported to have declared: “We will build a new house without weapons, so that we can live in peace” (Sporrer 1990).<sup>6</sup> The local power-holders clearly used emotional rhetoric and performance to create an atmosphere of mutual trust, and to open up possibilities to co-operate on various levels.

If we should believe the local press, the optimistic mood in the Bohemian-Bavarian frontier zone was shared by all inhabitants. On the 1st July 1990, when the compulsory visa requirements were officially abolished, and six new border-crossings were ceremonially opened, the German local newspapers talked of “ein riesiges Volksfest”, “ein Festival der Lebensfreude” (*Der Neue Tag* 1990).<sup>7</sup>

The opening of the border, however, did not only evoke positive, optimistic feelings of hope and trust in a better and peaceful future, as the press suggested. On the contrary, large groups of Czechs and Germans were reminded of the Second World War and of the Sudeten German expulsion, when they had been each other’s fierce opponents. Their distrust and fear highlights an important area of research in the study of emotions: the impact of past experienc-

es and social memories on people's emotional life. As Ilona Irwin-Zarecka noted, as people first articulate and share the sense they make of *their* past, it is their experience, in all its emotional complexity, that serves as a key reference point. If their interpretive strategies are indeed products of culture, the plausibility of resulting accounts depends on the fit with the individuals' emotional reality. Someone who suffered great physical pain is not likely to define what happened as a pleasant diversion' (Irwin-Zarecka 1994: 17, emphasis in original).

This article will focus on German and Czech expressions of old and new fears, as well as on attempts by local politicians and priests to create a mood of mutual trust through reconciliation. It will demonstrate that conflicting discourses and practices, expressing and reinforcing feelings of both hope and fear, influenced post-Cold War identification processes.

## Old Fears: Remembered and Re-experienced

When the Broumov-Mähring border crossing was officially opened, thousands of people participated in the celebrations.<sup>8</sup> Mathilde, one of the German visitors, told me about the event when I met her in 1997. Her account shows how the event evoked memories of a fearful past, as well as generated a feeling that things could be changed for the better.

It is necessary to make a theoretical distinction between *evoked* emotions, *remembered* emotions and *re-experienced* emotions. I define 'evoked' emotions as emotional reactions to specific events or incidents. By contrast, 'remembered emotions' are *memories* of past emotions that do not cause a (similar) emotional reaction in the person recalling them. 'Remember how angry I was?', somebody might say with a smile on his face, clearly being emotionally detached from the earlier experience of anger. By contrast, 're-experienced emotions' are past feelings that are remembered *and* re-experienced in the present, and that possibly empower a person to take certain actions, or, on the contrary, force him into a state of social paralysis. It is important to note that in this context, 're-experience' does not mean that the person

experiences and interprets his or her feelings in exactly the same way as he or she did in the past. Instead, as Mathilde's case will show, their meanings and social consequences may be quite different.

The following case will show that Mathilde both remembered *and* experienced fear after she had crossed the Bohemian-Bavarian border. Since 1947, she had lived in Tirschenreuth, a small Bavarian town situated only 12 kilometres from Mähring. She had been born in 1940 in the Bohemian village of Brand (today mainly known by the Czech name of Milf), less than 20 kilometres from her adopted Bavarian home. In 1946, at the age of six, she had been expelled from Czechoslovakia, together with over 3 million other Sudeten Germans.<sup>9</sup> To her, the opening of the border and a visit to Bohemia meant far more than to indigenous Bavarians: it not only evoked nostalgic memories of life in her old *Heimat*, but also confronted her with a dark side of her family history and personal past.

The Sudeten German expulsion had begun immediately after the liberation, two months before the signing of the Potsdam Agreements. Between May and October 1945, the Sudeten Germans had lost their citizenship rights, and the confiscation of their property had been given legal basis by a number of presidential decrees. During the first chaotic post war months, numerous Czechs had taken the opportunity to take revenge on the German population. From May till November 1945, during a period known as the "wild expulsion" (*wilde Austreibung*), many Sudeten Germans, in particular those who lived in ethnically mixed areas, had been terrorised, maltreated, and brutally killed.<sup>10</sup> In 1946, during the "organised expulsion" (*geregelt Vertreibung*), the Germans were generally treated in a more humane manner (cf. Hamperl 1996; Staněk 1991).

The village where Mathilde came from had been situated in the almost purely German district of Tachau<sup>11</sup>, and the terror had been less severe than in other districts. Nevertheless, the experience of the sudden expulsion and the loss of *Heimat* had traumatised many, if not all expellees (cf. Hamperl 1996). Many of them had settled in Bavaria, often in areas not far from

the Czech border, and it is not surprising that they experienced the opening of the borders with mixed feelings.

On the one hand, the expellees shared feelings of nostalgia and curiosity: how would their former homeland look after forty years? It was this mixture of feelings that made Mathilde decide to cycle past Broumov further into Bohemia, and that eventually drew her like a magnet to her old *Heimatdorf* (home village).<sup>12</sup> As she recalled:

“In 1990 the border crossing Mähring-Promenhof [Promenhof is the old German name for Broumov] was opened, and this had been officially announced to the inhabitants from Tirschenreuth (...). We read about it, my husband and I, and we said to each other: ‘we should actually go, and have a look on the Czech side’. My husband said ‘you know what we’ll do? We’ll take the bicycles with us’. So we put the roof rack on the car and we put the bicycles on top and we drove to Mähring, where we left the car and cycled to the border. There were so many people! Thousands! Thousands of people, and all walking, they must have thought ‘the next village is Promenhof, that’s not far (...)’. We recognised many people from Tirschenreuth, and they said: ‘Aaah, you got your bicycles with you! My God, how far is it then still to Promenhof?’ It was a lovely, warm day.”

Cycling between the two border towns, surrounded by large crowds of Germans and Czechs, Mathilde felt light-hearted and experienced the event as a real celebration. When I asked her about the Czech visitors she answered: “Yes, there were Czechs as well. People ate sausages, it was a real celebration”.

Judging from the tone of her voice, cycling the first few kilometres into Bohemia, she had still felt carefree and excited about the fact that she was back in her old Heimat.

“We had our bicycles and it was nice weather, so we, my husband and I, we cycled, and cycled, and cycled, further and further, the sun was shining brightly. We were already far inside the Czech Republic, and saw a sign that said ‘direction Tachau’ (the old German name for the city

of Tachov). So we said to each other ‘let’s ride a bit further in the direction of Tachau’.

The tone in her voice changed, however, when she remarked:

“We no longer saw any Germans, because they did not go that far, they were all on foot”. Unconsciously, she began to be haunted by memories and stories of the expulsion, and to perceive the Czechs as a potential danger. Nevertheless, her desire to get closer to home was strong enough to suppress her anxiety and to cycle on. She continued: “Well, and then we saw Tachau in the distance, [so we said]: ‘we should go there’. We were curious. When we actually arrived in Tachau it was half past three in the afternoon... It could not be that far any more to Brand. We did not speak a word of Czech and nobody understood us, because, until 1990, nobody went to Czechoslovakia. In Tachau there were no Germans, and there was nothing. Today it is different, today they understand a bit of German. [But then] we asked everybody: ‘Brand, Brand, Brand, where is Brand, how do we get to Brand? [Finally] a woman understood us, and directed us. So we cycled and cycled...’”

The experiences that people did not speak any German, and that they did not recognise the German name of Brand made Mathilde suddenly feel like a stranger. She was back home but she wasn’t. She recognised the landscape, but things were different. It was like a nightmare.

“We saw the church [of Brand] all the time [on the hill], but there was a new road, leading around a reservoir that had not been there before so we had to go around the reservoir, it was much further than I thought. It was late, almost evening, and we were there alone in the Czech Republic, my husband and I. I cried and we were tired as well. My husband said ‘it cannot be far any more, it cannot be far’. So finally we cycled up the Church Hill (Kirchenberg) ...”

Mathilde was physically and mentally exhausted. The sight of the familiar church, the shock

when she noticed that a whole village had disappeared and made way for a reservoir, the frustration when she needed to find a new road, and the fact that it was getting later and later confused her. When I remarked that “it must have been hard, such a long trip”, she repeated that they “had been all alone” (as Germans on Czech territory), and when I asked her whether she had been afraid (which was obvious from the tone of her voice), she almost screamed: “I was so afraid, my heart was pounding!”<sup>13</sup>

When they had finally reached the village, and Mathilde had entered the church, she had been overwhelmed by emotions. She recounted:

“Well, and then we stopped near the church to have a look. My husband said ‘down here is a pub, I think they’ll sell lemonade and beer. Sit down in the church, I’ll get us something’. And I sat down in the church, and my husband gave the sexton twenty Deutschmarks. ‘For the church, it’s a donation’, he said. The sexton lit a few candles, and he went up and rang the bells. I was alone in the church, I cried!”

When I suggested that she remembered things, she replied.

“Yes, I remembered, I remembered a lot. The church, and how I used to sit in the church, and the candles, and how they used to take photographs, and the annual festival that used to be held in the area in front of the church, on the *Festplatz*. It was rather moving.”

In the church, Mathilde’s memories of the pre-expulsion past (in Sudeten German texts often referred to as a timeless, mythical paradise), pushed away her anxiety caused by the trauma of the expulsion itself.<sup>14</sup> Once outside the safe church walls however, her fears returned. Yet being so close to the place where her old family house had stood (she knew from her father who had visited the place that it had been knocked down), she cycled on to see the spot. In her account she emphasised that she had been afraid: “By now it was already evening, and we were all alone in the Czech Republic! It was frightening! (*es war ganz schlimm*)”.

Mathilde and her husband approached the

house that used to be her neighbours’, and saw American flags behind all the windows. She recalled: “‘Look!’, I said, ‘thank God, everything [i.e. Western civilisation] is not so far away!’ (*es ist doch nicht so weit weg, alles*). To me they were like a ray of hope.”

As in a fairy tale, the story had a happy ending. The present Czech owner of the house came out and invited Mathilde and her husband in. Even though the memory of fear remained, her actual fear disappeared. The owner’s wife spoke a few words of German, and offered them schnitzels with bread and a glass of beer. When the German couple decided to leave because it was getting late, and they still needed to cycle all the way back to Mähring, their Czech host protested and offered to take them and their bicycles by car and trailer.

Mathilde’s account makes clear that the sudden disappearance of the Iron Curtain evoked contradictory feelings on the Bavarian side of the border. On the one hand, the inhabitants were happy that the Cold War had ended, and that Oberpfalz no longer formed the outer belt of a political, economic and military unit. They would be able to travel without restrictions to West Bohemia to go shopping and visit tourist attractions such as Karlovy Vary and Marianské Lázně. The expelled Sudeten German inhabitants in particular, were interested in visiting their former homeland. On the other hand, however, the disappearance of the Iron Curtain also aroused feelings of distrust and fear, stirred up by memories of anti-Sudeten German aggression and for anxieties about the collapse of what some perceived as the outer boundaries of Europe. On the one hand, remembered emotions could easily transform into re-experienced emotions, and, as such, they could reinforce the perception of those on the other side of the border as ‘dangerous others’, and discourage cross-border co-operation. Re-experienced emotions could, however, also transform into emotionally detached memories, and loose their direct impact on social and political life.

## Distrust and Fear on the Czech Side

After I began visiting the Czech-German border area regularly from 1991 onwards, several peo-

ple told me on different occasions that on the night before the official opening of the border, the inhabitants from the Czech village of Lesná had armed themselves with guns, sticks and pitchforks, in an attempt to defend the forest roads leading to the border in case the Sudeten Germans would attack. Lesná, also known by the German name of Schönwald, had been inhabited by Sudeten Germans until their expulsion in 1946, and was situated only a few kilometres from German territory. The current inhabitants, so the story went, had feared a Sudeten German invasion, and had prepared a 'military defence'.

The story, described by some of Lesná's inhabitant as sheer nonsense, was told to me on both sides of the border. Some narrators (Germans and Czech townspeople) presented it as an example of the 'simplistic, rural mentality' of Czech village people. Others hinted at the fact that Lesná's inhabitants were 'backward' Ruthenians, emigrants who had moved from northern Romania to Czechoslovakia in 1947 as part of Czechoslovakia's post-war immigration policy. One German argued that the story proved how brainwashed the Czechs were after forty years of Communism. *All* narrators, however, *also* argued that the story indicated just how deeply rooted were the Czech feelings of distrust and fear. Referring to (but not necessarily feeling) these emotions, they expressed their doubts in the optimistic image the media had presented of future Czech-German co-operation.

The dramatic political change, however, did allow Czechs to travel back and forth to Germany, and to replace the stereotypical view of Germans as 'dangerous invaders' with more realistic expectations. Many Czechs, especially those who lived close to the border, began to learn German, and a considerable number of them found jobs in the Oberpfalz district. Temporarily living in Bavaria, or commuting daily to their German jobs, they profited from the much higher wages.

## Cross-Border Politics: Other Fears and Concerns

Local politicians, mayors, and teachers began to look for ways to co-operate with their German counterparts. Many Czech and German cities and schools formalised their contacts through community-links and partnerships (cf. Giegold and Otto 1994), and in the Czech border city of Cheb, a number of active intellectuals began to search for possibilities to co-operate on a larger, regional scale. Gradually, more local Czech and German politicians became interested in the formation of a larger framework of euregional co-operation.<sup>16</sup> Especially the Czechs regarded it as a way to increase regional autonomy. An idea to join together four Czech and two German districts, and call it *Euregion Egrensis*, was proposed in 1992 (cf. Houžvička 1993, 1994; Svašek 1999).<sup>16</sup>

The propagation of cross-border, euregional co-operation rested heavily on standard discourses, common in other European frontier zones. Transnational problems such as environmental pollution and illegal cross-border movements of people, goods, and money were central issues. To find support for euregional policy, the adherents defined these problems as major causes of fear, and argued that they could not be tackled by individual state governments or local authorities alone.<sup>17</sup>

Many people I spoke with indeed identified ecological problems and illegal cross-border movements as worrying developments. They regarded refugees, smugglers, and prostitutes as unwelcome people who socially and morally polluting the area. Cross-border co-operation was presented as a way to 'purify' the frontier zone (cf. Douglas 1966).

Another cause of fear euregional policy makers promised to deal with was the problem of social, political and economic marginality. As noted before, border peoples often have a peripheral existence within their own countries, and receive less financial support for the development of their region than the state centres. Cross-border co-operation, implying the strengthening of cross-border loyalties and identities, was presented as a solution.

As citizens of two autonomous political states

that had been divided by the Iron Curtain for more than forty years, however, the Bohemian and Bavarian border inhabitants were used to seeing the frontier as a highly significant symbolic marker of cultural, political, and economic difference. Evidently, the politicians and regional representatives who supported euregional co-operation thought it necessary to change the border inhabitants' spatial and territorial perception. A colourful symbol was designed as a visual emblem for the new Euregion, and a new map was printed outlining the territory of Egrensis. In the new geographic scheme, the Iron Curtain was transformed into a much less important, intra-regional boundary. The tourist guide *Museums in Euregion Egrensis: A Journey through Time and History* even printed a map of Egrensis in which the Czech-German state border had totally disappeared. The map suggested that the heavily guarded outer border of the European Union (also known as "the electronic curtain") that split the new Euregion into two political and economic spheres, was non-existent. The spatial reclassification reflected the plans to include the Czech Republic in the European Union, and can be regarded as a sign of Brussels' policy of decentralisation, expressed by the slogan "Europe of the Regions" (cf. Cooke, Christiansen and Schienstock 1997; Preston 1997: 195–209).

## Memory, Mistrust, and Political Scepticism

Czechs who had experienced the Second World War, and who continued to distrust their former enemies, did not welcome the developments. "You can't trust Germans", I was told frequently by Czech border inhabitants. Communists and Republicans especially were sceptical of policies that created close cross-border co-operative ties, and found the high number of expelled Sudeten Germans who actively supported euregional co-operation disturbing. Continuously reminding people of Nazi terror, they attempted to stir up and strengthen anti-German and anti-Sudeten German feelings. Various articles appeared in the newspapers, warning readers that Germany was still a nation to be feared, and that the Sudeten Germans had serious

aspirations to resettle in the Sudetenland. The journalist Karel Čtvrtek stated in the communist newspaper *Hálo noviny*: Transferred Germans do not hide their aim of taking back land, because without their own land, the Sudeten Germans are threatened with extinction as a national group, in as much as they are threatened by integration with the population among whom they live. They do not want to return to a Czech national state, they do not even want minority rights at a European level. They want land. It is of secondary importance to them whether that land will be 'Freistaat Sudetenland', or another federal land of Germany (Čtvrtek 1992).

*Hálo noviny* interpreted the creation of a new Czech-German geographical unit as an act of anti-Czech territoriality, an act that strongly reminded them of the assimilation of the Sudetenland by the Third Reich in 1938. Jiří Frajdl, who worked for the same newspaper, stated in 1994 that Euregion Egrensis was 'an old Nazi plan', a conspiracy between pro-German Czechs and anti-Czech Germans, meant to undermine the autonomy of the Czech Republic (Frajdl 1994).

The idea of a conspiracy was unintentionally reinforced by Cheb's Mayor, František Linda, when he attempted to prohibit a planned demonstration by the *Club of the Czech Border Area* (Klub českého pohraničí), an association established by Czechs who were afraid that the Germans would attempt to increase their power in the Bohemian border area. The official goal of the 1994 demonstration was 'to remind people of the Munich dictate and to commemorate its victims' (Tachovský deník 1994). According to Linda, an adherent of Czech-German euregional co-operation, the demonstrators' (mainly communists and republicans) true goal was to increase Czech-German tension, and to 'in-flame national hatred'. The *Club* went to court, however, and appealed against Linda's decision to prohibit the commemoration. The High Court in Prague ruled in their favour, and the ban on the protest was repealed. On 24 September 1994 a few hundred people gathered on Cheb's main square, carrying banners with the slogan 'Never again Munich', 'Cheb must stay Czech', and 'People beware of the Sudeten Germans'.



The above demonstrates that the painful memories of German terror and oppression were easily evoked in the post-Cold War political arena. Politicians and interest groups reminded people of their past fears, and attempted to use emotional force to gain political power. The dynamics of politics and emotions hampered reconciliation and the construction of shared euregional and European identities. The following section will show how priests and local politicians attempted to turn the tide by creating emotional contexts in which Czechs and Germans would be willing to co-operate.

## Controlling Emotions through Divine Power

In the first few years after the border opened, Czech and German representatives of different churches<sup>18</sup> made particular efforts to establish cross-border contacts. Living and working in an area where large groups of people feared and distrusted each other, they regarded it as their Christian duty to convince the border inhabitants of the necessity of reconciliation.

'Reconciliation' is a common Christian theme, and both Czech and German clergy used the bible as a source of inspiration to connect notions of religious and political reconciliation. Father Götz, a young German priest who headed a Catholic parish in the border town of Bärnau, told me in 1996 that people needed to reconcile with God before they could reconcile with each other: "It is our task to retain peace. I mean, Christ says '(...) the peace given by Christ comes from the heart through the reconciliation with God [and] the forgiving of sins'".

In the same year, the Orthodox Father Hausar from the Czech village of Lesná noted: "Up to the present day, the hatred against the Germans, against the [German] nation, is deeply rooted in some people. I always take the Christian viewpoint, [and there is] a fundamental difference between the approach taken by such people and the Christian approach. I now talk from a Christian viewpoint: there is a proverb saying that 'Christians must hate sins but love sinners'. If a German commits an offence against somebody I will condemn his deed but [at the same time] I will love that person because

through love and forgiveness, the relations can be restored."

Both priests conceptualised negative emotions such as jealousy and hatred as powerful forces that should be controlled by divine power and faith. In this view, feelings of hate and fear could be transformed into love and trust through personal reconciliation with God. Priests and ministers who worked in the border area used the ritual context of the sermon and their own religious authority to convince people of the necessity to reconcile. As David Kertzer noted:

"The dramatic quality of ritual does more than define roles (...), it also provokes emotional response. Just as emotions are manipulated in the theatre through the varied stimuli of light, colour, gesture, movement, voice, so too these elements and others give rituals a means of generating powerful feelings" (Kertzer 1988: 11).

To get their message across, some priests were quite inventive performers. 'Where is Hitler? ... Where is Stalin? ... and where is Jesus?!', shouted a German Protestant minister in Milře's Orthodox Church during the Easter ceremonies in 1998. He had been invited to this Czech village (Mathilde's place of birth) by the local priest, Father Hausar, who had asked him to deliver a short sermon on Easter Sunday to the Orthodox congregation.<sup>19</sup> The metaphorical construction in the sermon was based on three properties of symbols that are especially important in ritual symbolism: 'condensation', the embodiment and connection of diverse ideas; 'multivocality', the variety of different meanings attached to the same symbol, and 'ambiguity', the fact that symbols do not necessarily have single precise meanings (cf. Kertzer).

The reference to Hitler, Stalin, and Jesus undermined the image of Germans as 'the fearful arch-enemy'. First, by referring not simply to Hitler but also to Stalin, the minister emphasised that the Germans had not been the only enemy of the Czechs. Second, by classifying Hitler as an evil German *individual* he deconstructed the totalising image of The German Danger, and created a semantic space for more positive images of Germans.

The sermon sketched the image of Christianity as a transnational, pacifying force. By contrasting 'Hitler and Stalin' with 'Jesus', the minister stressed that although the former two had enjoyed political power and had terrified people during their lives, they had lacked the latter's divine, eternal authority. In other words, in comparison with God's almighty power, human force was limited, and only God could use His powers to restore damaged relationships, and to undermine national hatred. If the border inhabitants remained faithful, they would find the strength to continue living together in peace and harmony.

## Religious and Political Reconciliation

After the opening of the borders in 1990, an increasing number of local Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox priests established contacts with colleagues from the other side of the border, and actively propagated political reconciliation.<sup>20</sup> By May 1997 thirty-five of the forty-nine cross-border links between Bavaria and Bohemia were between religious communities.<sup>21</sup>

In the Bavarian town of Vohenstrauß, for example, the Protestant parish began to cooperate with the Bohemian Brethren in the Czech city of Cernošín in 1991. Their co-operation involved, amongst other things, occasional joint church services, mutual visits, and godparenthood relations between German godparents and Czech godchildren.<sup>22</sup> The Catholics from Vohenstrauß established connections with the Catholic community in the city of Stříbro. They organised joint pilgrimages, visited each others' churches, and the Germans helped the Czechs by offering financial support for the restoration of Stříbro's Catholic church. The priests hoped that people would be able to get to know each other through these mutual visits and shared experiences, and thereby, break down negative nationalist stereotypical images.

In many cases, religious connections were also stimulated by newly-established official citylinks. These cross-border links formalised contacts between mayors and town representatives, and stimulated activities in many different areas of life, such as education, sport, culture, and religion. Vohenstrauß, for example,

established a citylink with Stříbro in 1992, and the Catholic and Protestant parishes from both cities were involved.

The religious connections were also advocated on a higher, euregional level. From 1993 onwards, Euregion Egrensis subsidised *Euregional Church Day*, an ecumenical annual event that combined political and religious discourses of reconciliation.<sup>23</sup> In 1996, the slogan was 'Under one heaven, we will find ways to each other'. A Czech-German booklet, published for the occasion, referred to the feelings of fear and mistrust people had in the region: 'Six years after the change, Czech-German relations show that the wounds of the past are far from healed' (Beyhl and Libal 1996). The introductory text also claimed that the ecumenical co-operation (between Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox) during the *Euregional Church Day* should be an example for political co-operation across national borders. However, the main inspiration was religious, and not political, as the booklet made clear: We invite you to find ways to one another. They should be ways of reconciliation, reconciliation through faith. The Bible recounts how prejudices and seemingly unbridgeable gaps can be overcome. This is what we will talk about during the Church days – about the Gospel – the Happy Message of God.

The organisers of the Euregional Church Day directly confronted the negative emotions that hampered reconciliation, arguing that they did not want to 'conceal our worries. When I know the thoughts, worries, fears, but also the hope of others, a common ground can be developed – under the heaven of God's promises'. The booklet also included a chapter entitled 'Reconciliation of Czechs and Germans: Excerpts from Church Reports', with fragments from an open letter written by Wilfried Beyhl, a member of the Church Assembly in Bayreuth, in which the author tried to dispel Czech fear about a German invasion: "As Germans we did not come with property claims, but as messengers of reconciliation, and we ask forgiveness for the crimes and damages that have been done in the name of the German nation. Let us live as reconciled sisters and brothers and as good neighbours." The chapter also included an announcement by the Synod of the Protestant

Bohemian Brethren which denounced the post-war Czechoslovak policy of collective expulsion, and stated that “we realize that the way to the future cannot be opened by never-ending accusations, but instead by sincere repentance, mutual efforts and understanding, and a longing for reconciliation”.

It is hard to judge to what extent the discourses of reconciliation have generated an actual change in border peoples’ feelings. I realized this when an expelled Sudeten German, who had attended a religious service in Bohemia, where the priest had emphasised the need for reconciliation, returned to Germany, and sat down in a *Biergarten*. After a few pints, he suddenly shouted: “The Czech nation is an evil nation!”

## Emotional Connections and Political Claims to the Old *Heimat*

The Sudeten German expellees in particular showed a keen interest in attending specially organised religious services on former Sudeten German territory.<sup>21</sup> Their main motivation was not reconciliation, even though numerous Sudeten Germans I spoke with emphasised that it was highly necessary to establish peaceful relations with the Czechs. Instead, most of them were motivated mainly by nostalgia, and simply wanted to visit their beloved homeland. They still felt an emotional attachment to their *Heimat*, and enjoyed spending some time in the villages or towns of their youth.

An expellee from the village of Labant who was twenty years old at the time of the expulsion, and who had settled in the Bavarian city of Bayreuth, explained:

“Of course we have a strong *emotional connection* with our homeland. Labant was a village in the Bohemian Forest, nicely situated, a *terrific environment*. The life of the farmers was tough, but somehow, *communal* life in the village was *harmonious*, and it still *lives inside us*, the *connection with our homeland*” (italics mine).

It is important to note that similar idealised accounts of ‘life before the expulsion’ and expressions of unconditional love for the home-

land<sup>25</sup> have been reproduced endlessly in hundreds of *Heimat* books, *Heimat* exhibitions, and *Heimat* paintings. Evidently, the image of ‘harmonious life in a beautiful world’ is highly selective, and avoids accounts of Sudeten German involvement with the Nazi regime. As such, it offers a safe conceptual space in which expellees can engage with their pre-expulsion past without having to deal with the dark side of German history.

The end of the Cold War gave the Sudeten Germans the opportunity to visit their old homeland regularly. The generation that could still vividly remember the Sudetenland was slowly dying out, and the older people in particular were interested in trips to the country of their youth. During the first post-1990 years especially, individual Sudeten Germans crossed the border, and many attempted to make contact with the current inhabitants of their former homes. Some were heartily welcomed and were invited for a cup of coffee by the present owners of their houses, whereas others encountered suspicion. Whatever the reaction was, they were, unavoidably, at some point confronted with anti-German feelings.

Most Sudeten Germans were members of *Heimatvereine*, post-expulsion associations that connected people who had lived in the same Sudeten German villages, towns, cities or districts. Through various Sudeten German newsletters and newspapers they received news about post-Communist Czechoslovakia and exchanged experiences about recent trips to the old *Heimat*. The organisational networks were also used to organise communal trips, and to collect money for the restoration of their former churches, graveyards, and war memorials.

The expellees often felt a strong emotional attachment to the church they had attended before the expulsion. Commemorating the deceased in the actual churches and visiting the graves of close kin, they symbolically appropriated time and space, and strengthened the feeling that they were strongly rooted in former Sudeten German soil. The Sudeten Germans from Brand (Milře), for example, held their first annual service in 1993. When I asked Mathilde how she and her relatives had experienced the ceremony, she replied:

"It was nice, yes, nice. I also have cousins; they are from Augsburg. They contact us every year, and stay with us [in Tirschenreuth] the night before. They always have *tears in their eyes*. They were older than me, they were fourteen and fifteen years old, and I was only six [at the time of the expulsion], so it was ... I did not experience it like them ... although ... it is somehow ... *where one is born, that is simply one's homeland*" (italics mine).

The discourse of nostalgia expressed strong feelings of belonging. It assumed a natural relation between identity and place, and, as such, had compelling political connotations (cf. Malkki 1992).<sup>26</sup>

The *Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft*, the biggest organisation of expelled Sudeten Germans with its seat in Munich<sup>27</sup>, used the discourse of nostalgia in the representation and negotiation of political reality. Representatives of the organisation politicised the emotional claims to the old homeland by demanding the return of Sudeten property to its former owners. The annual *Sudetendeutsche Tag*, a three-day ritual event which included cultural, political, and religious ceremonies, and in which hundreds of thousands expellees participated, formed a focal point for the emotional and political discourse of *Heimatrecht*. The commemoration of the victims of the expulsion, and the political speeches by people such as Franz Neubauer, the leader of the *Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft*, and the Bavarian Prime Minister Edmund Stoiber, created powerful emotional contexts during which the participants remembered and re-experienced strong feelings of grief, loss, and anger. Even though not all participants agreed with the political aims of the *Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft*, the collective ritual experience reinforced their Sudeten German identity. As David I. Kertzer (1999: 5) noted, 'far from always creating solidarity by reinforcing shared values, one of the crucial functions of ritual is to produce solidarity in the absence of any commonality of beliefs'.

The speakers, powerful actors in the Christian-Democratic Party (CSU/CDU) used emotional discourse to increase their political strength by promising to continue their fight for

*Heimatrecht*, and stressing that, to be able to do that, they needed support during the elections. The Sudeten German calls for justice were supported by influential Bavarian politicians, such as Stoiber and Finance Minister Theo Waigel. They put pressure on the German government to accept the Czech Republic as a European Union member state only *after* cancellation of the Beneš decrees (cf. Svašek 1999).<sup>28</sup> The German government, until 1998 led by Helmut Kohl, did not give in to the Sudeten German demands. Instead, it signed the Czech-German Declaration in 1996, in which both governments apologized for the harm done during and after the Second World War. The present German government, led by Gerhard Schröder, is even less likely to take the Sudeten German demands seriously. Like the former government, it stresses the importance of the creation of a shared, European identity.

Understandably, Czech border inhabitants have followed the news with mixed feelings. Numerous Czechs I spoke with felt uncomfortable with the increasing Sudeten German presence on Czech territory. In general, however, Czechs seem to accept the Sudeten German feelings of nostalgia, and believe that the property claims will never be granted.<sup>29</sup> In particular younger people assured me that they did not fear the Germans. In an essay assignment on the theme of ethnicity and nationalism, a fourteen year old female student from the Tachov *Gymnasium* stated:

"Germans. When I pronounce the word I associate it with the Second World War and the concentration camps. I guess that I am not the only Czech with such thoughts. I also think that fifty years have passed since the ending of the Second World War, and that the old generation will be replaced by a young generation which must distance itself from the crimes. They are not responsible, even though they may feel ashamed. We have to try to forget the past and create a new situation."

## Conclusion

Complex identification processes in border regions cannot be understood without a focus on

emotions. People's emotional and social lives take shape in particular cultural, historical, and geo-political contexts. In border regions, these dimensions influence identification processes in particular ways.

The distinct geo-political situation in border areas may have a specific influence on border peoples' social and emotional life. On the one hand, border inhabitants live relatively close to people who are politically linked to potentially hostile neighbouring states. This implies that border inhabitants often feel more vulnerable than those who live in state centres. On the other hand, the proximity of the border may be an incentive for the establishment of close cross-border contacts, which may generate and strengthen mutual feelings of trust and friendship. Long histories of cross-border kinship increase people's cross-border loyalties, and weaken their emotional identification with the national state.

The Bohemian-Bavarian case demonstrated that geo-political aspects alone cannot explain why specific emotional discourses and practices may strengthen or weaken particular identification processes. It showed that it is necessary to take a historical perspective, and to examine how border people remember and re-experience the past, and how emotions influence their perception of 'those on the other side'. Remembered emotions must be analytically distinguished from re-experienced emotions to be able to understand how emotionally complex memories can become a political force. Re-experienced emotions in particular, evoked by memories of traumatic war and post-war experiences, influenced Czech, German, and Sudeten German perceptions, and hindered attempts to develop a sense of a shared interregional, European identity. At the same time, images of centuries of mutual co-operation were used by adherents of euregional co-operation to evoke feelings of trust, and to stimulate interregional identification.

Different interest groups and political actors used emotional display and discourses of emotion in distinct ways to generate social and political change. Numerous Sudeten Germans, as well as Czech republicans and communists tried to stir up past emotions during commem-

orations, annual meetings, and demonstrations. In these ritual contexts, they engaged people emotionally, and incited them to actively support specific political demands.

One of the ways in which both Czech and German priests attempted to create feelings of communal identity and solidarity, was by referring to the dangers caused by national hatred, while presenting ecumenic transnationalism as a way to control the situation and to encourage reconciliation. In the ritual context of the mass, well-known emotionally charged Christian signifiers such as 'Jesus' were connected to contemporary post-Cold War political arguments. Images of fearful political personalities and traumatic historical events, such as Hitler, Nazi oppression, and the expulsion, were transformed into emotionally compelling religious metaphors.

In contrast, euregional discourse focused on other major causes of fear, such as political and economic marginalisation, and environmental and social pollution. The adherents of Euregion Egrensis presented cross-border, euregional policy, and European identification as a political solution, and as a strong source of hope.

## Notes

1. The research referred to in this paper was funded by the University of Utrecht under the aegis of the Grotius grant. Additional funding was awarded by the Catharina van Tussenbroek Fonds. Different versions of this paper were presented in July 1998 at the EASA conference in Frankfurt, and in May 2000 at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of St. Andrews. I would particularly like to thank Hastings Donnan and Kay Milton for their critical remarks.
2. Even though emotional life in border areas has not been examined systematically, some anthropologists have been sensitive to the significance of emotions to border people's perceptions. For example, John Borneman (1998) has discussed Germans' changing expectations and their experiences of liberty and security after the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Stef Jansen (1998) has focused on the emotional confusion experienced by three female writers after the breaking-up of former Yugoslavia. Milena Veenis (1995) has looked at the ways in which desire and fantasy about West German consumer goods shaped East German perceptions of self and other.

3. He emphasized that it is necessary to abandon the common theoretical practice of reducing emotion to either meaning or feeling: 'emotions are *felt* in bodily experience, not just known or thought or appraised' (Leavitt 1996: 526).
4. A few days later, the German newspaper *Der Neue Tag* reported that nobody had guessed that "at the end of the dark tunnel, bright light would shine!" (Sporrer 1990). Ironically enough, this optimistic metaphor used to be very common in socialist rhetoric.
5. Munich, the capital of *Freistaat Bayern*, had more affinity with its own eastern border district of *Oberpfalz* than Bonn had.
6. Both Czech and German participants told me that they were relieved because, all of a sudden, they no longer felt as if they lived "at the end of the world". Politicians and journalists also used this image, arguing that what for a long time had seemed the end of the world, had now become the centre of Europe (cf. Zrenner 1990).
7. Local Czech papers did not yet exist at the time in the region. Several Czech participants, however, assured me that they enjoyed the day, and that a mood of optimism prevailed.
8. In particular, inhabitants from the Bavarian districts of Tirschenreuth and Weiden, and the Bohemian district of Tachov.
9. After the liberation of Czechoslovakia in 1945, the government, headed by President Edvard Beneš, declared *all* Germans 'collectively guilty' of German territoriality and the Nazi crimes, and decided that the Sudeten Germans would be expelled to Germany. The population transfer was legally backed up by the signing of the Potsdam Agreements in August 1945, which regarded the presence of ethnic Germans in states outside Germany as a danger to the political stability of Europe (cf. Svašek 1999).
10. Czech and German historians do not agree on the number of people who died during the expulsion. According to Sudeten German sources, around 250,000 people lost their lives. Czechs have argued that the number is much lower, between 20,000 and 40,000.
11. Until the expulsion, Brand had been inhabited exclusively by Roman Catholic Sudeten Germans, but after the expulsion, the village was renamed "Milíř" and re-populated by Orthodox Ruthenians from Romania, and by Czechs and Slovaks from the Czechoslovak interior. Tachau was renamed Tachov.
12. Sudeten Germans often felt a certain nostalgia for their old *Heimat*. Numerous poems that have appeared in Sudeten German newspapers, newsletters, journals, and *Heimatbücher* reveal this.
13. I agree with John Leavitt (1996: 523) that bodily feelings (like a pounding heart) are as much part of emotions as interpretations of these changes.
14. She was not bothered by the fact that the Roman Catholic church had been transformed into an Orthodox church. The village had initially been re-populated by Unionist Ruthenians from Romania, who, after the 1948 Communist coup, were forced to become Orthodox.
15. Euregional policy was introduced in the 1970s by the European Union member states to encourage European integration, and to stimulate economic development in border areas. In 1992, Euregion Egrensis was established in the Czech-German border region, integrating parts of Western Bohemia, Eastern Bavaria, Thuringia, and Saxony (cf. Svašek 1999). Co-operation and integration with the Czechs was supported by the German government as part of European Union politics. Tensions and conflicts in the post-Communist countries caused concern among the European Union member states. In particular, Germany pressed for measures to secure stability in the East. A special subsidiary programme called Phare was established to support the reform process in most post-Communist countries, and plans were made to enlarge further the European Union to the East (cf. Preston 1997: 197).
16. The imagined geographical unit included parts of former West Germany (East Bavaria), former East Germany (Saxony and Thuringia), and the Czech Republic (the West Bohemian districts of Karlovy Vary, Sokolov, Cheb, and Tachov).
17. The inhabitants of border regions, as such, have been confronted with the powerlessness of the nation state to deal with the effects of specific aspects of globalisation.
18. Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox.
19. The latter were mainly Ruthenians from Romania who had moved to the village in 1950. The German minister was a Sudeten German from Silesia, who had been expelled with his family to Germany after the Second World War.
20. Some priests took up important positions in growing cross-border networks. The Protestant Dean Father Lubomír Libal, who lived and worked in the Bohemian border city of Cheb, had connections in Bayreuth, Selb, Schönwald, Regnitzlosau, Wunsiedel, Marktredwitz, and Lautertal-Neukirchen. People like him were very active propagators of Czech-German reconciliation.
21. This information was taken from an unpublished report written by the *Arbeitsgruppe EKD / EKBB* (a German Protestant organisation), which mapped the newly established religious and intercommunal connections in Bavaria, Saxony, and Bohemia. The 35 community links between Saxony and Bohemia included 31 contacts between different parishes.
22. In 1997, the German priest noted that due to 'really existing atheism of post-Communist and neo-capitalist forces', missionary work was highly necessary on both sides.
23. Euregionaler Kirchentag/Euregionalní setkání křesťanů.

24. In the past eight years many have travelled to their *Heimat* to celebrate mass in the churches they used to attend as children or young adults, and in a number of cases they have crossed the border to restore old graves and war memorials. Their activities can be regarded as symbolic acts of re-territorialisation, and as temporary re-appropriations of religious space (cf. Svašek 1999).
25. Benedict Anderson argued that 'nations inspire love, and often profoundly self-sacrificing love. The cultural products of nationalism – poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic arts – show this love very clearly in thousands of different forms and styles' (Anderson 1983:141).
26. Cf. Smith (1998: 83) on the emotional sources of national sentiment.
27. In 1999, the *Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft* had approximately 100,000 members, but its leaders claimed to represent the whole *Volksgruppe*. In 1990, representatives travelled to meet with representatives of the Czechoslovak government and called for the cancellation of the Beneš decrees.
28. The *Sudetendeutsche Landsmannschaft* has been trying to negotiate with the German and the Czech governments on the basis of global human-rights discourses. Their discourse of *Heimatrecht* was based on the image of Europe as a just legal community, protected by the outer boundaries of the European Union.
29. The most serious 'confrontation' took place in 1994, when a combined Czech-German pilgrimage to the Loreta Church in the Bohemian city of Bor had to be delayed because of a bomb scare for which no one took responsibility.

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