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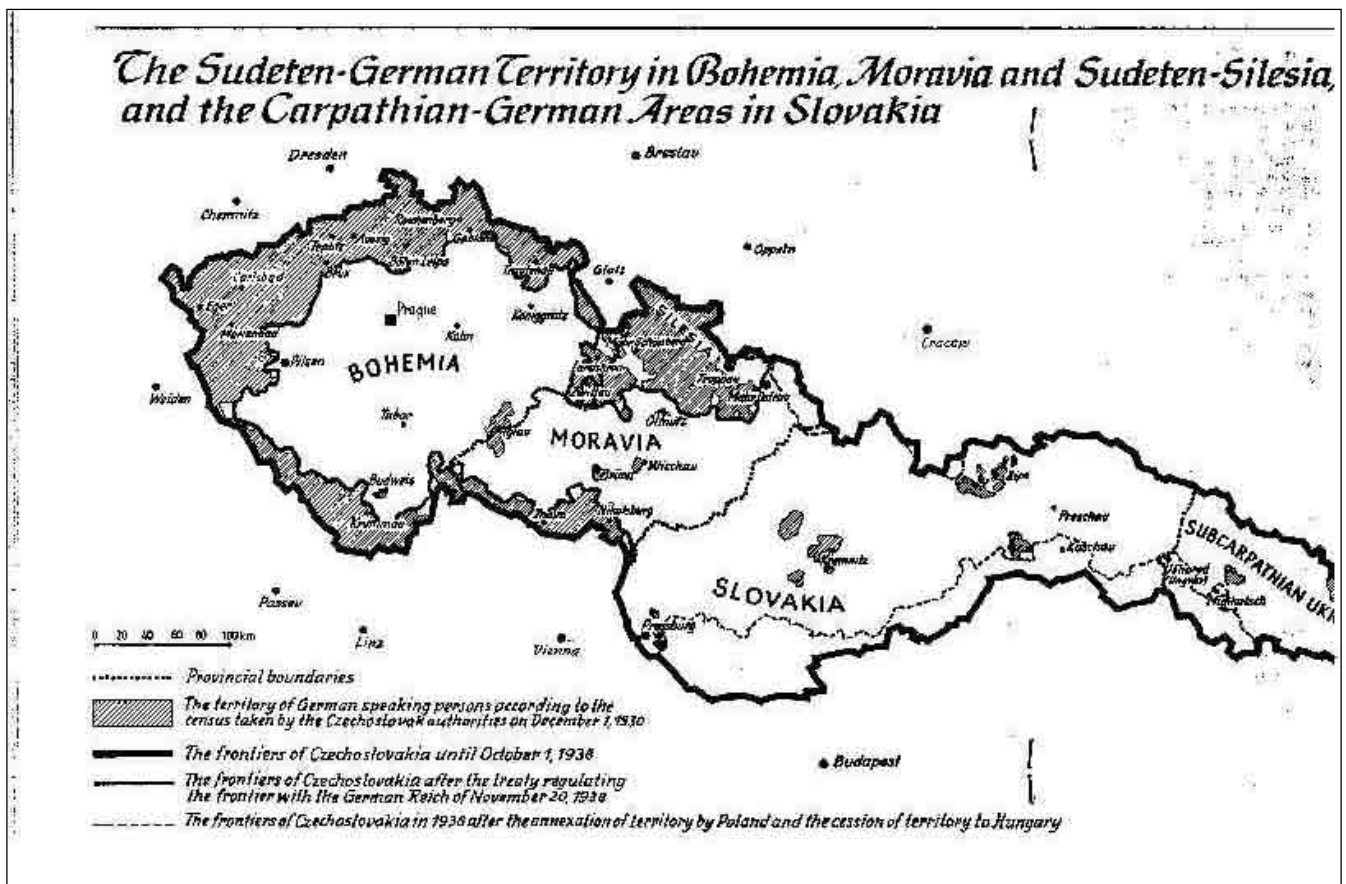
A Photo at a Museum in Taus (Domazlice) of residents in their tracht

“How I got involved with Hostau (Sudetenland)”

by Stefan Stippler, Ortsbetreuer of Hostau

[Editor's note: This is the 1st half of the story. The 2nd half will appear in the next issue]

It is a great fortune that around Corpus Christi in 2003 my father had the idea to go on a trip to see his mother's hometown. Hostau, which is in the present Czech Republic, had changed its name into Hostouň. My grandmother came to Nuremberg in 1939, where she married my Grandfather in 1940. Briefly, she was part of a German-speaking ethnic group, which belonged for centuries to the multi-ethnic Austrian-Hungarian empire as did the Czechs.



Map of Sudeten Territory

After 1918 the Austrian empire was divided into several countries and grandma's homeland, the former Kingdom of Bohemia and Moravia, became part of the newly found Czechoslovakia (CSR). The Czechs broke their promise to make their newly established country multinational, modeled after Switzerland. Instead they set out on a policy of czechization. Its climax was from April to August 1946. The German population was displaced and thrown out of the country. Czech people from the interior resettled their homes and towns immediately. The German-hater and main expeller President Eduard Beneš said about the expulsion: "Have them living in a different surrounding for two years, and they will not know anymore, where they came from." In contrast the Sudeten-German historian Kleo Pleyer summarized the Sudeten-German identity as follows: "The colonization of the Sudeten-area is an era of heroism in the Sudeten-German history."

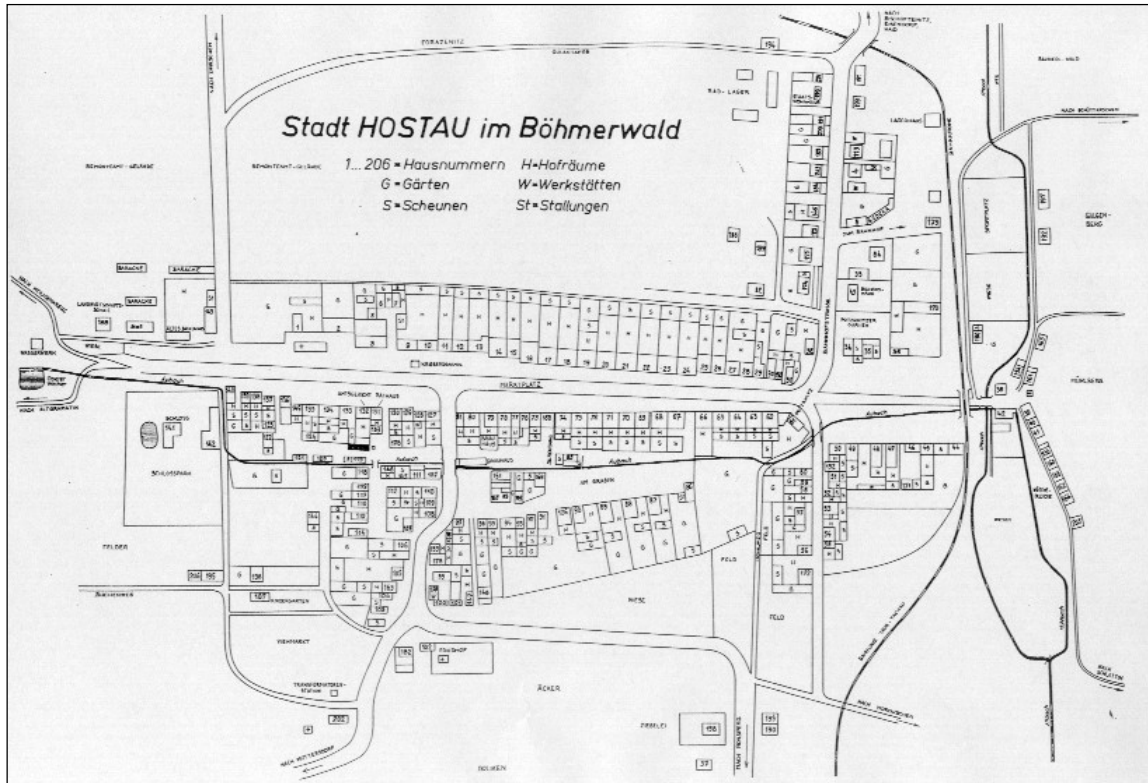


Map of Habsburg Empire

In the ancestral portrait gallery of the Sudeten-Germans there are only a few men with a shining armor and uniform, however, there are millions of furrowed faces, and millions of callous hands. They seem to be poor ancestors. Yet a shining had derived from these faces and hands for centuries, and this shining was called the luminescent brilliance of the Bohemian crown.” It was a great fortune that the peaceful November Revolution of 1989, starting in the Hungarian Budapest by East Germans, replaced the communistic regime in Prague. This allowed free travel for Germans to the Czechoslovakia. Since May 2004 the Czech Republic is now a full member of the European Union. Hopefully it will be possible in this union to heal old wounds and smooth the way for a better future for all nations in Europe. In the past we were enemies, but now we are friends and equal partners.



Now back to our trip to Hostau. After an hour drive from the Bavarian boarder we finally reached Hostau in a wooden hilly environment. The place was already settled in prehistoric times. In 1228 Gumpert of Hostau founded a village. Hostau became town in 1587 by a royal decree of Emperor Rudolf II. The town received its own crest and the right to seal with red wax. Furthermore craftsmen were allowed to settle down. In 1877 a disastrous fire destroyed half of the inner city including the church and the school. In 1945 Hostau had around 1,000 inhabitants, living in 206 homes. These expellees mostly found new homes in Germany and Austria after 1946.



Map of Hostau

Remembering my grandmother, her name was Sofie Dietrich, married in 1940 Karl Stippler from Nördlingen in Nuremberg. Even with the beginning of 1945 my grandfather was called to military service. My grandmother stayed with the two kids in Nuremberg. Unfortunately during one night their house in Nuremberg was bombed to pieces. So she took everything she was able to save before and traveled with her kids by train to her parents, - to Hostau. They lived at number 20. When the war was over in May 1945 my grandmother was forced to leave Hostau at once, as she was married to a German of the "Reich". She and her kids found a new home at her husband's hometown Nördlingen in Bavaria. As a consequence my grandmother's parents came to Nördlingen after the expulsion in 1946 and remained there until their deaths.



Sofie Dietrich - Karl Stippler



Haus #20 in 1900



City of Nördlingen



Path of St. James

Additionally it is worth mentioning, that Hostau is on the “Path of St. James”. These systems of paths are long-distance pilgrim’s hikes through whole Europe to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. Therefore it is not astonishing that the St. James’ Church was mentioned firstly in written records in 1360. Hostau was a seat of a deanery with 14 parishes and 25,000 Catholics. At present the whole church needs an urgent correction maintenance. Unfortunately the Diocese of Pilsen has not the money to do so, but the Bishop is willing to support all efforts to preserve the church.



Hostau Church Front



Hostau Church Inside

End of 1st half
[Editor’s note: The 2nd half will appear in the September issue]