

Budweisers Into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948

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✓ Verified Book of Budweisers Into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948

Summary:

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This history of a single town in Bohemia casts new light on nationalism in Central Europe between the Springtime of Nations in 1848 and the Cold War. Jeremy King tells the story of both German and Czech-speaking Budweis/Budějovice, which belonged to the Habsburg Monarchy until 1918, and then to Czechoslovakia, Hitler's Third Reich, and Czechoslovakia again. Residents, at first simply "Budweisers," or Habsburg subjects with mostly local loyalties, gradually became Czechs or Germans. Who became Czech, though, and who German? What did it mean to be one or the other?

In answering these questions, King shows how an epochal, region-wide contest for power found expression in Budweis/Budějovice not only through elections but through clubs, schools, boycotts, breweries, a remarkable constitutional experiment, a couple of riots, and much more. In tracing the nationalization of politics from small and sometimes comic beginnings to the genocide and mass expulsions of the 1940s, he also rejects traditional interpretive frameworks. Writing not a national history but a history of nationhood, both Czech and German, King recovers a nonnational dimension to the past. Embodied locally by Budweisers and more generally by the Habsburg state, that dimension has long been blocked from view by a national rhetoric of race and ethnicity. King's Czech-Habsburg-German narrative, in addition to capturing the dynamism and complexity of Bohemian politics, participates in broader scholarly discussions concerning the nature of nationalism.

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