

Forced migration, staying minorities, and new societies: Evidence from post-war Czechoslovakia*

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Abstract

Forced migration traumatizes millions displaced from their homes, but little is known about the few who manage to stay and become a minority in a new society. We study the case of German stayers in *Sudetenland*, a region from which Czechoslovakia expelled ethnic Germans after World War Two. The unexpected presence of the US Army in parts of 1945 Czechoslovakia resulted in more anti-fascist Germans avoiding displacement compared to regions liberated by the Red Army. We study the long-run impacts of this local variation in the presence of left-leaning stayers and find that Communist party support and local party cell frequencies, as well as far-left values and social policies are more pronounced today where anti-fascist Germans stayed in larger numbers. Our findings also suggest that political identity supplanted German ethnic identity among anti-fascist stayers. The German staying minority shaped the political identity of newly formed local societies after ethnic cleansing by providing the ‘small seed’ of political development.

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