

German expulsion leads to Communist coup

In her bestselling new book *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944-1956*, Anne Applebaum writes that the Czechoslovak Communist Party created a paramilitary organization to assist with the expulsion of ethnic Germans from the country after WWII. It was the same paramilitary organization, she says, that helped the Communists carry out their coup d'état in 1948. In a very literal sense, the expulsions laid the institutional ground for the imposition of terror that would follow a year or two later, she argues. Local Communist officials were often in charge of the redistribution of German assets, and the mass seizure of German property prepared the population for the more widespread nationalization that came after the coup. For this reason alone, Applebaum would undoubtedly disagree with Václav Klaus's assertion last week that the expulsion of ethnic Germans was a rather marginal event of WWII.

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