



## **Impact of external factors upon the formation of ethnicity - the case of German community living in the region of Zips (Slovak Republic).**

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In whole ethnic structure of Spiš population German minority plays traditionally important role. Majority of German immigrants settled in Spiš in second half of XII. century. "Spiš Germans" contributed considerably to development of region's economy and formed original culture they were able to maintain for centuries. Economic imperatives led to growth of relations with German population - Slovaks and Germans and consequently majority of German inhabitants of Spiš continuously communicated in languages of these ethnic groups. In multiracial Ugrian German community of Spiš like other ethnic groups did not have the feeling of necessity of definite ethnic shaping. From the first half of XIX. century Ugrian like other European countries started to undergo changes in economic, but also in political and cultural sphere. Feudal particularism was not suitable for needs of economic development and remodeling of Ugrian state. One of the main tasks which was evaluated through prism of Ugrian community leaders, was transformation of ethnically heterogeneous Ugrian to nationally consolidated state organ with high degree of language uniformity. This aim should be achieved through Hungarization and culture integration of non-Hungarian nations in Ugrian. Chain of circumstances caused that German of Spiš responded to Hungarization effort with minimal resistance and by contrast considered Hungarization as a way to common emancipation within Ugrian. In relatively short time period from Austria-Ugrian settlement till the end of First World War were Spiš Germans almost completely Hungarized. Establishment of Czechoslovak Republic and following changes in economy, politics and culture was perceived negatively by majority of German inhabitants of Spiš region. Particularly the loss of Ugrian market, rise in unemployment and poverty invoked bitterness. Paradoxically not even changes in the sphere of culture, mainly in educational system which led to development of German language, were not evaluated positively by Spiš Germans. The growth of pro-Hungarian attitudes was obvious only in last years of existence of Czechoslovakia when influence of Nazis enormously grew also in Spiš region. In the period of Slovak Republic Spiš Germans followed Nazi ideology. The only representative of German community was German party organized along the lines of Hitler's NSDAP. In the first period of war when Nazi Germany occupied major part of Europe also majority of Germans in Spiš region supported ideology of Nazism. Young German generation which grew in Czechoslovakia espoused big German ideals in particular. Failures of Germany at the fronts, misery and fear of revenge however led many Spiš Germans to rethink their attitudes. Attempts for nationality change whether Slovak or Hungarian increased. In the last phase of war drastic changes in position of German minority occurred. Spiš Germans were evacuated by Nazis from their houses into Germany or the abandoned their houses and majority never came back. Those who came back were interned in labor camps by state power bodies of renewed Czechoslovakia and in 1946 over 30 000 members of German minority were transported to Germany.

Ethnic structure of Spiš. Germans of Spiš.

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Ethnic community can be characterized as one of the most durable form of human organization in existence. Despite of number of ambiguities, which preclude the precise definition of ethnicity, this type of collectivity had, and still has, a significant place in human history. It would be therefore suitable, at least in illustrative mode, to map main features of this powerful social phenomenon. The bonds, which form a fabric of ethnicity can be traced to time immemorial. In existential sense ethnic community can be an instrument preserving the very existence of its members. Ethnic groups can be perceived as associations formed for protection of their members from danger of internal dissensions, but, more importantly, units geared to provide a collective defense against possible attacks from hostile outside environment.<sup>1</sup> An outside unwelcome interference could be not only a physical violence, it could be any form of intrusion, such as technological or spiritual interference coming from outside, threatening to undermine or transform traditions contributing to formation of ethnic community, which were hallowed by time and held in high esteem. In that sense, paradoxically, ethnic ties tend to deepen in times of danger and growing pressures. Protracted periods of warfare can energize endeavors to preserve ethnic bonds in their existing form and protect „heritage of ancestors“ from desecration.

If ethnic organization can be perceived as an „instrument for survival“, practical value of such a function depends upon ability of ethnic community to offer to its members physical protection and also a place in its social fabric. However, despite of unquestionably practical value of protection offered by ethnic community, the identification with it is only rarely based on rational analysis and calculation. Spiritual and ideological bonds play far more important role. The powerful generator of ethnic ties is „shared“ past. The deeds of predecessors, real or imagined, are bestowing upon each member of given ethnic community „extended“ existence, a sense of continuity, which is an obligation and source of pride at the same time. These „histories“ have strong mythological tinge and are influenced by will of supernatural forces. In pre-industrial societies these stories were conveyed from generation to generation, orally, with the emphasis upon more symbolic than factual value. In periods of transition, when ethnic communities are aspiring to achieve a higher status and became nations, the accent upon „romantic“ aspect of history is preserved and accentuated. J. Hutchinson speaks about „myth making“, because only through this process can members of group to „rediscover their authentic purpose.“<sup>2</sup> In his characterization: „These histories typically form a set of repetitive ‘mythic’ patterns, containing a migration story, a founding myth, a golden age of cultural splendor, a period of inner decay and a promise of regeneration.“<sup>3</sup> The vague and factually questionable content of „myth making“ constructs is laboriously supported by archeological excavations and other evidence (real or alleged), which should lend these stories a historical veracity.

Instrumental forces active in fostering the ethnic cohesion are also religion and language. Whereas religion define the place of community and its members in the universe and subscribe the behavioral code obligatory for everybody, language create a „communication perimeter“ which divide inner „comprehensible“ and outside „incomprehensible“ world. There are instances when religion and language extend original ethnic lines and became „property“ of wide, cosmopolitan collectivities. However, adoption of imported religious practices or language are rarely able to suppress original religion or language utterly. More frequently these „novelties“ are either refused (applying varying degrees of violence) or the old and new is fused, eventually coexist together. Ethnic communities are detectable also by their specific „way of life“, which is manifested by customs, particular diet, dress, architecture, music, etc. The members of any given community can be attached to the mode of their community life in two ways. Firstly, they were „molded“ by them and are familiarized with them, and, as a result, unprepared to accept new impulses from outside. Secondly, the mode of life created and stabilized by preceding generations can not be disconnected without feelings of ambiguity and moral guilt. The reluctance to leave original way of life can be observable especially in communities living in diaspora. In some cases such communities were capable of preserving their distinguished mode of life for centuries, even millennia.

Mystical importance for majority of ethnic communities have a territory perceived to be inherently their own. A sizeable share of ethnic mythology can be devoted to establishment of unique role which particular region meant and still means for community. In some cases it is a „promised land“ given by God as a reward, but also as an obligation to preserve and celebrate it. The association with a „homeland“ can be further cemented by concrete localities connected to heroic deeds of predecessors (for example Kosovo for Serbs) or marks of paramount religious importance (Kaaba in Mecca). Territory also physically define the extent of ethnic community and, in majority cases, secure its sustenance. In extreme circumstances, the geographical and climatic conditions of territory permeate every aspect of life of community. The claim to a specific territory can be, and frequently is, a source of conflict with other ethnic communities. In some cases such conflicts can span over generations, especially when they are enhanced by cultural and religious controversies. The connection between „land and its people“ can persist even in case of physical removal of ethnic community from territory occupied by this community

for extended period of time. The sanctity of lost homeland is maintained in collective memory of exiled group, no matter how fragmented and dispersed into various locations. The memories of lost homeland are maintained either by oral tradition, or can be enshrined into scriptures venerated with religious esteem. Preponderance of circumstantial evidence points to the fact, that ethnic bonds are lasting and durable. However, in the „era of nationalism“ which started in Western Europe approximately in the second half of XVIII century and in many parts of the globe is formative geo-political force even today, ethnic communities faced (and are facing) a challenge of transition from ethnicity to nationhood. And because a number of exiting ethnic groups is considerably greater than can be a number of full fledged nations, some of the ethnic communities inevitably must succumb to emerging nationalities.

On this place only few remarks to conditions and mechanics of transformation of ethnicity to nationhood. The starting of the nation forming processes can be traced, with a degree of inevitable simplification, to beginning of industrial revolution. The birth of industrial production impacted involved societies in a number of ways. Among other factors, it was a growing need for standardization and precision. Mass manufacturing is conditioned on achieving of a high degree of precision, which allows interchangeability of individual parts and this, further, depends upon the utilization of standard methods of production and technologies. To achieve this type of production, similarly a standard and precise mode of communication is needed. Local dialects, no matter how intimate and picturesque, are no more satisfactory. They lacking ability to convey complex information necessary for realization of industrial production. The need for suitable type of language is evident. Instrumental for an industrial society, is also a need for a certain degree of literacy. In E. Gellner definition, industrial society requires „...sustained, frequent and precise communication between strangers involving a sharing of explicit meaning, transmitted in a standard idiom and in writing when required.“<sup>4</sup> Abundant historical evidence points to importance of language for emerging nations. However, a need for standardized medium of communication, though postulated by an industrial imperative, was carried out more on romantic than rational basis. This is true primarily in communities, where ethnic principle in transition to nationhood was more pervasive, for example in cases of emerging nations of Central Europe. It is also illustrative of ruthless fight of individual dialects, and their respective proponents, for „place under sun“ and victorious entry into „Olympus“ of codified languages.<sup>5</sup> Once the process of codification of language is accomplished, its insemination, regardless of its rational utility, is usually carried out with almost a religious zeal, and frequently, by members of sacerdotal class. The ancient ethnic mythologies found new expressions in a fabric of construction of nationalistic ideologies acquiring a written form. In this caldron of nationalistic upheaval, some ethnic communities are inevitably bent to loose their *raison d'etre*, are fused, superseded or sacked by aggressive Moloch of industrial nationalism.

Industrial society, unlike agricultural and pastoral communities, is vitally depended on existence of an internal market of certain minimal size, firmly imbedded in delineated territorial area and protected by a some form of political superstructure. Unlike ethnic group, there can not be a nation without territory. Also an inadequacy of responding political roofing is a source of constant tensions and ongoing struggle. In contrast to multi-ethnic empires of pre-industrial age, national states are pursuing their territorial aspirations on completely different basis. Nationalistic ideologists are perceiving territory as an internal, inherently homogenous part of their nation, as a homeland with supernatural value. The monarchs of the old could exchange provinces, gain new land by means of marriage or dynastic alliances, but these changes had very little impact upon ethnic composure of involved communities. Empires were, politically and ideologically, expressions of their sovereigns. In nationalistic ideology the majesty of sovereign is replaced by sanctity of nation as an aggregate of its physical and spiritual characteristics.

However, despite its strength and devotion of its adherents, nationalism is predominantly a result of necessary adjustment to imperatives of industrial age a process in which a selection plays its role. In this sense, the general part of this paper can be concluded with expression of E. Gellner, endeavoring to grasp an essence of nationalism: „...nationalism is not awakening of an old, latent, dormant force, though that is how it does indeed present itself. It is in reality the consequence of a new form of social organization, based on deeply internalized, education-dependent high culture, each protected by its own state.“<sup>6</sup> Seen through a prism of above formulated thoughts, the recent history of a relatively small community of Zipser<sup>7</sup> Germans, living in Eastern Slovakia, can be characterized as an endeavor to define its place in the environment of contesting nationalistic ideologies. It also offers an illustrative example of vicissitudes investing an ethnic group on its quest for nationhood.

The origins of this ethnic community can be traced to the period of the first significant wave of German colonization of Hungarian Kingdom in the second half of XIII century. The arrival of German immigrants was induced and facilitated by intention of Hungarian king Bela IV to repopulate country, including a territory of present Slovakia, devastated by Mongolian invasion. Following waves of German immigration,

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spanning several centuries, were induced by religious and economic causes. Unlike other ethnic communities, ethnic German in Slovakia are characterized by uncommonly high degree of heterogeneity. German immigrants were coming in different time periods, settled in Slovakia for various reasons, migrated from different regions of Germany. This, in decisive measure, conditioned their disparate cultural and religious background. Geographically, three principal localities with concentration of German immigrants exists in Slovakia: - Bratislava and its surroundings, - region of Central Slovakia (so called Hauerland) and region of Zips. It is important to state, that contacts among individual German enclaves were minimal, these communities cultivated relations primarily with surrounding ethnic communities.

The community of Zipser Germans was formed already during the first wave of German colonization in XIII century. The region of Zips (Slovak name - Spiš)<sup>8</sup> offered various opportunities for economic activities. Historically, two sub-divisions were formed in dependence upon the type of economy. Upper Zips was characterized primarily by agricultural production and mercantile activities (long distance trade). The main centers of Upper Zips were cities Leutschau (Levoča), Käsmark (Kežmarok). The sub-region of Lower Zips became an important center of mining and metal working industries. The industrial production in Lower Zips concentrated in cities like Gollnitz (Gelnica), Schmollnitz (Smolník), Dobschau (Dobšiná), Metzenseifen (Medzev), and Stoos (Štós). Despite of their relatively small numbers, ethnic Germans living in Zips - Zipsers, as they called themselves, created an autonomous, sharply defined culture. The urban communities, like for example city of Leutschau, were administered by a complex institutions and legal systems adopted after municipal systems used in German cities. Economically and culturally advanced community of Zipsers exhibited also a high degree of ethnic awareness. However, traditionally this awareness had strongly local orientation. Due to the fact, that Zipser Germans had extensive economic and social relations with the non-German communities living in this region, majority of them spoke Slovak and Hungarian - the languages of their major ethnic neighbors. The ability to communicate in Hungarian and Slovak languages had a significant impact upon the formation of attitudes of Zipser Germans toward geopolitical developments affecting also region of Zips.

Centuries of pre-industrial history of Hungarian kingdom, from the ethnic and national aspect, can be described as the period of „low ethnic intensity“. In the feudal society the cleavages among privileged and non-privileged groups were substantial and the role of „state-forming“ and „state-representing“ position was reserved for aristocracy, without regard to ethnic background. Especially a high strata of aristocracy was profoundly cosmopolitan, frequently multilingual and adherent to „international“ aristocratic value system. The decisive majority of peasants lived in autonomous, economically self-sufficient world, in which the local cultural traditions become only rarely a subject of interference from outside. A special position in the social structure of Hungarian feudal society occupied cities. A majority of them enjoyed a web of privileges guaranteeing to the moneyed city burghers besides personal freedom also a number of rights in the economic sphere. A peculiar factor in the social fabric of cities was their ethnic diversity. A majority of Zips urban centers was composed of at least three ethnic groups - Germans, Slovaks and Hungarians. A number of these cities hosted also a sizeable Jewish population, but also Ruthenians, Poles etc. Occasionally, conflicts, which can be judges as ethnically motivated, erupted.<sup>9</sup> However, these dissensions had local and topical character and were not motivated by any form of ethnically consistent ideology. On the contrary, Hungary on the whole, was ruled by strictly feudal legal code - „Opus Tripartitum“ of Stephen Verboc, which functioned as a basic legal arrangement in Hungary till year 1848.

However, Hungary, though ruled by a conservative aristocratic elite, could not avoid penetration of industrial revolution and its consequences. One of significant imperatives was a necessity of rearrangement of social make-up of the country on the general scale. The ethnically heterogeneous Hungary was thrown into a vortex of emerging political and cultural aspirations, expressed with growing intensity by individual ethnic groups. A dominant ethnic community - Hungarians - took-up this challenge and struggle for transformation of Hungary into ethnically unified country begun. The process of „Magyarization“ became a formative political theme throughout nineteenth and beginning of twentieth century. The advent of „era of nationalism“ transmuted ethnically „placid“ Hungary into a caldron of contending ethnic communities which, with various degree of success, resisted magyarization and fought for their ethnic emancipation.

This new state of affairs placed ethnic Germans living in Zips into a dilemma. The possibility to transform their enclave into some kind of territorially and politically independent unit was remote. The only alternatives were to join the march to ethnically homogenous Hungary and succumb to magyarization, or support Slovaks in their struggle for national and political independence. The second option, however, was for Zips Germans hardly attractive. On the other side, there was a number reasons to actively

participate on the process of magyarization. The majority of Zipsers was vitally dependent on Hungarian market in their live-hood. The agricultural provinces of Lower Hungary offered a fertile ground for export of industrial articles manufactured in Zips. Consequently, German population of Zips region perceived the territorial and political unity of Hungary as a necessity and supported struggle to unified her also ethnically. An important, already mentioned factor was ability of Zipsers to communicate, besides German, in Hungarian and Slovak languages. Many of them spoke by all three languages from their early childhood and an emotionally dividing line of „mother tongue“ was in their case blurred. The large segment of German intelligentsia in Zips was educated in schools in Budapest and judged service in state apparatus to be an attractive career. If to became a „Magyar“ was only condition for such a career, many of them complied. Unlike closed caste of aristocracy, inclusion into national community was open practically to everyone and still offered tangible privileges. Considering the powerful set of motives, it is explainable that in a relatively short time period the community of Zips Germans was practically completely magyarized.

The basis for realization of assimilative policies is a school system. In this regard were Hungarian authorities superbly effective. Already in 1880 all middle schools in Zips region were using Hungarian language as a medium of instruction. Also implementation of Hungarian language into the elementary schools was progressing rapidly.<sup>10</sup> As a consequence of successfully realized assimilative policies of state, the demographic composure in many Zips localities changed. An illustrative example of this development is the change in the demographic structure of city of Spišská Sobota monitored during the period 1880-1910. Whereas during the stated period the total number of inhabitants moderately increased (y. 1881 - 823 persons, y. 1910 - 977 persons), the number of persons reporting German nationality decreased from 538 to 319 persons. In contrast, the number of persons reporting Hungarian nationality increased almost four-fold from 45 to 218.<sup>11</sup> Also the administration was almost completely dominated by persons, who, at least officially, proclaimed to be „Magyars“ For example, according to statistic from 1910, 82 % of public notaries reported Hungarian language as their „mother tongue“. Only 15,7 % notaries classified German and 2,2 % (sic!) notaries Slovak as their mother tongue.<sup>12</sup> Thus, at the time of demise of Austro-Hungarian Empire, the process of magyarization of German community living in Zips was practically accomplished. One of the few German activists, who tried to organize German movement in Hungary, summarized this state of affairs, when characterized Zipsers as „fierce Hungarian compatriots“.<sup>13</sup>

The „shift“ to the positions of Hungarian nationalism motivated political activities of Zips Germans during the dramatic period of end of First World War. By decision of victorious Allies, the geopolitical situation in Central Europe was about to undergo a substantial change. One of these changes was a creation of Czechoslovak Republic (CSR) to which territorial orbit was also included a region of Zips. Among staunchly pro-Hungarian German Zipsers this decision aroused a wave of resentment. The whole administration in Zips, proclaimed a loyalty to Hungarian government of M. Karolyi in Budapest. The emissaries of Hungarian government were coming to Zips with aim to organize local „National Councils“. The central political authority in Zips became „National Council of Zips District“ (Szepesvármegye Nemzeti Tanácsa)<sup>14</sup>, which organized a protest declaration against inclusion of Zips region into CSR. This coincided with a feverish activities of Hungarian government aimed at preservation of Zips as an integral part of Hungary. A High Commissioner of Hungarian government, V. Muller, arrived in Zips with task to organize a „National Guards“ and „National Committees“, which should secure the Zips region as a Hungarian territory. The pro-Hungarian activities of Zips Germans concentrated in city of Kezmarkt. There, on 18 November 1918, representatives of German population of Zips region gathered and founded so called Upper-Hungarian national Committee of Hungarian Germans (Oberungarischer Volksrat der Deutschungarn). This body aspired to control political activities in the Zips region with intention, in case that Zips will be not included into Hungary, to proclaim independent „Zipser Republic“ (Scepusia kóztársaság). The Zips region, with its natural beauty, was compared to Switzerland and similarly like Switzerland, allegedly, could grow rich from tourism. The activities of German political representatives in Zips culminated in declaration of independence of Zips on 19 December 1918 and in establishing of „Independent Zips Republic“ (Selbstundige Zipser Republik).

All this, however, came to no avail. The destiny of Zips was irreversibly decided by Trianon Agreement, according to which the Zips became an integral part of CSR. Already on <sup>15</sup> December 1918 Czechoslovakian Army entered city of Poprad and till end of year 1918 was the whole territory of Zips firmly in hands of Czechoslovakian authorities. The German population of Zips accepted this development with resignation. The Czechoslovakian soldiers were not greeted, but neither violent incidents occurred. The inclusion of Zips into CSR impacted this region in several ways. The process of magyarization, which was so successful in Zips was stopped and reversed. The Czechoslovak government, which consented to uphold the protection of rights of national minorities, became active in establishing a network of schools

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with the German language of instruction in regions inhabited by ethnic Germans (including region of Zips). So, the young ethnic Germans received their education in German language. This unquestionably contributed to strengthening of their German ethnic awareness and to weakening of pro-Hungarian sentiments. The developments of following years confirmed the growing gap between staunch Hungarian orientation of older generation in contrast to rising proclivities to pan-German ideology among Zipser Germans. Another important factor, fostering the German orientation, was arrival of Sudeten Germans into Zips. After establishment of CSR large Sudeten German community found itself in the same state with German enclaves scattered throughout Slovakia. These „forgotten“ Germans became a subject of intensive interests of Sudeten German activist, who exhibited almost a „missionary“ zeal in studying their traditions, folklore and culture. Many of them became teachers in newly established German schools. Sudeten activists worked also as newspapers editors and organizers of various associations.

The most negative consequence, which precluded easier acceptance of a new geo-political situation, was economic devastation of Zips region. There were several causes for this negative development. Since beginning of industrial revolution, the infrastructure of Hungary, especially railroads, was oriented from provinces to center – a capital city of Budapest. All commerce, including the exports of industrial goods from Zips, utilized these communications. After creation of CSR the possibility of export to Hungary practically ceased. Devastating effect upon the industrial production of Zips had also a dearth of coal. The coal mines situated in Hungary stopped shipments of coal to Slovakia and substitution from Czech part of Republic was utterly insufficient. Another blow to Zips industry was dealt by competition from powerful Czech industry. The political elite in Prague adhered to the economic policies of laissez-faire. These liberal policies were conducive to penetration of Czech industrial goods into Slovakia, which had a negative impact upon a local production. Consequences of this development were high unemployment and a wave of bankruptcies. The Zips region was hit exceptionally hard. Zips Germans were resentful of worsened economic conditions and perceived the old Hungary as a „paradise lost“. The pro-Hungarian sentiments persisted and found expression in policies of Zipser Deutsche Partei (ZdP) – a political party which had a dominant influence among the members of German minority living in Zips region. ZdP, during its whole existence cooperated tightly with political parties representing Hungarian minorities, namely with Country Christian and Social Party (Országos keresztény-socialista Párt – OKSP).

In the processes of fostering identity of ethnic Germans in Zips an important place had versatile activities of various associations, namely Deutscher Kulturverband (DKV) - German Cultural Association and Deutscher Turnverein (DTV) - German Fitness Association. In both above mentioned association played an important role German activist from region of Sudeten. In the sphere of culture it was a „discovery“ of traditional „volk“ culture, manifested by songs, dances, folk tales and ways to celebrate important holidays. The Sudeten Germans participated on revitalization of these activities and viewed the DKV as a crucial instrument in enticing the German minority life in Zips. Similar goals were in forefront of DTV. This association, under the slogan „frisch, fromm, frei, fröhlich“ (fresh, religious, free, marry), tried to enhance German ethnic awareness among the young members of German minority and to create a lasting relations formed during exercises, trips and other activities. With the slogan - „No German community without DTV“, DTV commenced after year 1922 a drive to organize a network of local associations in Zips. This aim was met with success and in year 1938 there were 18 branches of DTV functioning in all relevant Zips localities.<sup>16</sup> German minority associations influenced especially members of young generation, who participated on various activities. The Sudeten Germans working in DKV and DTV brought a new element into the life of young Zipsers – a broader, German based ethnic awareness, which stayed in conflict with strictly pro-Hungarian orientation of older generation. The tug-of-war between pan-German and pro-Hungarian ideology found its expression also in a political level. As was already said, the main political representative in Zips was ZdP, led by A. Nitsch. ZdP was basically always a political party operating in frame of Hungarian minority parties in Slovakia. Since its inception in March 1922, ZdP was a part of OKSP. However, because confessional differences (members of ZdP were predominantly protestants and OKSP was a catholic party), since 1925 ZdP became an ally of Hungarian National Party (Magyar Nemzeti Párt - MNP). In year 1936, as a result of pressures generated by Hungarian government, the OKSP and MNP fused.<sup>17</sup>

The pro-Hungarian orientation of ZdP prevented any meaningful contacts with the other German parties in Slovakia. On the contrary, a bitter political fight developed between ZdP and Carpathian German Party (Karpathendeutsche Partei – KdP). KdP, founded in 1929, openly aspired to be a sole political representative of the all German minority members in Slovakia. Its political goal was to unite all ethnic Germans in Slovakia on the basis of Pan-German ideology. KdP belonged to the group of „activistic“ political parties claimed to be loyal to Czechoslovakian Republic and willing to operate in the frame of Czechoslovak parliamentary political system. However, ideology of Pan-German nationalism eroded orientation upon the cooperation with other ethnic communities and KdP was gradually becoming a

radical nationalistic organization. From the very beginning, the influence of Sudeten Germans was very strong and shortly before elections in 1935 KdP became a part of Sudeten-German Party (Sudetendeutsche Partei - SdP). The official name was changed to Sudeten-German and Carpatho-German Party - Chairman K. Henlein.<sup>18</sup>

The Nazi victory in Germany impacted the status of German minority in Slovakia. Germany became a totalitarian state bent upon territorial expansion. In plans of aggression against neighboring countries played the German minorities an important role. Ethnic Germans were to be used as a spearhead for penetration of Nazi ideology, as a pretext for territorial claims and justification of possible aggression, and, after Germany realize her goals and swallow neighboring countries, as an agent of assimilative policies. To fulfill these tasks, German communities had to be transformed into unified political bodies with a high degree of discipline and obedience. The chairman of SdP, K. Henlein, voluntarily consented to these tasks and SdP became instrument of A. Hitlers policies in CSR. Parallel with political development proceeding inside SdP, changed structure and aims of KdP. These trends accelerated after F. Karmasin took over the leadership of KdP. F. Karmasin, himself a Sudeten German from Olmutz (Olomouc), became fanatical stalwart of Nazism in Slovakia and gradually concentrated in his hands power over the whole German community in Slovakia. The Nazification of ethnic Germans living in Slovakia, though accepted by many of them voluntarily and with a certain degree of enthusiasm, was unquestionably a result of external interferences. Ethnic tensions between Sudeten Germans and Czech majority in Czech part of CSR had no parallel in Slovakia. The growing claims for autonomy proclaimed by Sudeten Germans were an absurdity in Slovak conditions - the relatively small and scattered islands of German settlements in Slovakia utterly eliminated such a possibility. So, the Nazification of German communities in Slovakia (including the young Zipsers) had more character of cultural revival activated mainly by hobby associations. Organizations of DKV included into their activities symbols, greetings and songs which exhibited an uncanny similarity with Nazi symbolic. The fitness activities of DTV were also geared in soldiery fashion, preparing young Germans for possible military duties. Because Czechoslovak security organs kept watchful guard over these activities and did not hesitated to interfere and suppress them when they were judged to be unacceptable, KdP, DKV and DTV formally abstained from openly professing their Nazi inclinations. But political leadership of KdP was inexorably shifting to Nazi positions. The Zips German community, unlike Bratislava and Central Slovakia (Hauerland) German enclaves, was resisting these trends with surprising resilience. ZdP was firmly anti Nazi and anti KdP. A. Nitsch fought feverishly against the incursions made by KdP into Zips. The main argument in political campaign of ZdP against KdP was policy of subordination to SdP and this way sacrificing the interests of German community in Slovakia, namely ethnic Germans living in Zips region. However, the development of political situation was not conducive to ZdP. The SdP concluded an agreement with the Unified Hungarian Party, in which both parties decided to coordinate their political activities. This, however, meant to suppress the anti-German policy of ZdP and acknowledge the right of KdP to broaden its political influence in Zips region.

The activities of KdP in Slovakia grew proportionally with the growing aggressiveness of SdP in Czech part of CSR. The nationalistic propaganda of both parties culminated on the beginning of 1938. The political representation of KdP commenced an aggressive political campaign also in region of Zips with the aim to recruit a new members into its ranks. An illustrative example of KdP campaigning was a speech of secretary of KdP, K. Biehal, in town of Menhardsdorf (Vrbov), in which he declared: „Local Germans have to stick together and united to fight for autonomy in economic and cultural sphere...The each voter (German) is required to be disciplined and obedient...The Zips leaders are not able to lead Germans anymore, the future belongs to the young generation, only KdP can lead the German folk on the right way“.<sup>19</sup> The chairman of KdP, F. Karmasin, declared in meeting in Bauschendorf (Bušovce), that: „We want to say to ZdP - we are marching and workers and youth goes with us... 'Zipsers' do not want to joint the unified nation and this is only what we want. Every German must go with us“.<sup>20</sup>

Representatives of KdP applied a pressure tactics to recruit new adherents and threatened German minority members who refused to join the ranks of KdP with reprisals after Hitlers victory. The policy of intimidation in combination with rising nationalistic euphoria were successful also among the German inhabitants of Zips, especially among the young Germans. The Police Directory in Leutschau described this development in its report: „The Germans living in Leutschau can be divided into three groups. In the first are the young people, who support KdP. The second group consists of supporters of ZdP...The third group, counting several individuals, is undecided, but is prone to support KdP“.<sup>21</sup>

A. Nitsch tried to stop erosion of ZdP membership. He intervened in Budapest, asking for help. However, the financial support provided by Budapest could not stop the mass conversion of German population to KdP. A fraction of ethnic Germans, mostly elderly, remained loyal to ZdP, but traditional „local“ identity

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of Zipsers with its pro-Hungarian orientation was replaced by ideology of Pan-Germanism.

After destruction of CSR and establishment of Slovak Republic, the KdP, renamed to Deutsche Partei in der Slowakei (DP), became a sole political representative of ethnic Germans in Slovakia. DP also gained a full control upon the all cultural, professional and labor associations organizing the members of German minority. The victories of Nazi Germany during the first years of Second World War helped to transfer Zipsers into German nationalists almost completely. At the start of 1940 the DP registered in its ranks over 60 000 persons, which counted for almost the whole adult German population in Slovakia (including the Zips region). Copying the Nazi practices, F. Karmasin was on 30 march 1940 elected a leader of German „folk group“ for life. F. Karmasin thus became a central figure in DP. In his capacity as a „Führer“ with practically unrestricted power over DP, F. Karmasin enthusiastically labored to build DP after example of Hitlers Nazi Party (NSDAP). Each member of DP was required to participate, to the maximal extent, on struggle of Nazi Germany for the world domination. Nazi ideology, especially ideas imbedded in A. Hitlers book „Mein Kampf“, became obligatory and binding basis for each ethnic German living in Slovakia. Ideological indoctrination was largely successful. However, it is impossible to judge, how deep and lasting this „new German identity“ truly was. At the time of easy victories, when German army effortlessly and with small losses crushed Poland and occupied a number of European countries, Germans in Slovakia exhibited their nationalistic pride with almost theatrical panache. Many Germans voluntarily joined ranks of Schutzstaffel (SS), others were recruited to work in Germany. However, the initial enthusiasm to join SS decreased parallel with worsening of military situation. The tremendous losses which German Army suffered during the battle of Stalingrad and following offensives of Red Army damped initial euphoria. Since 1944, when it was increasingly clear, that Nazi Germany is inexorably approaching to her defeat, many of German minority members lost their devotion to Nazism completely. Despite the threats of reprisals, during the first half of 1944 approximately 1 000 members of DP terminated their membership in the party. The ostentatious displays of Nazi symbolic (greetings with erected arm, utterances „Heil Hitler“, Nazi flags in windows etc.) decreased or ceased totally. According to report of District Office of National Security in Kezmart (Kežmarok), „The great majority of population and many Germans is losing faith in German victory and many leaders - initially enthusiastic - are presently trying to abstain from public life, or criticizing this what they once were exhorting“.<sup>22</sup>

Since summer 1944 German Army, plagued by high losses, struggled to revamp its ranks with soldiers recruited from German ethnic minorities living in Europe, including Slovakia. However, at that time, the interest to fight lost war was negligible. In Slovakia, many ethnic Germans tried to change their nationality to Slovak, or simply shirk service in German military.<sup>23</sup> Even F. Karmasin had to admit, that some ethnic Germans recourse to the radical measures to avoid service in German Army. In his report to H. Himmler, dated 19 August 1944, he wrote: „In some towns Germans...preferred to escape to mountains, then to serve in SS“.<sup>24</sup> The status of German minority in Slovakia was dramatically affected by outbreak of Slovak National Uprising (SNU). In regions where partisans took over (Hauerland and partly Zips), the German population became frequently a victim of violent attacks. The atrocities and murders became a precursor of things what ethnic Germans can expect after Red Army will conquer Slovakia. In last months of war this dispirited community became a passive subject of flow of events. The majority of Germans living in Slovakia was afraid, that their adherence to Nazism will expose them, after war, to acts of revenge and abuse. Thus the plans of Nazi authorities to evacuate the German population out of Slovakia before entry of red Army were met only with weak resistance. In September 1944 F. Karmasin ordered a partial evacuation of German population from region of Zips. A month later (27 October 1944), on the basis of direct order of H. Himmler, the whole German community was ordered to be evacuated from Zips. During the following months were evacuated German from Hauerland and Bratislava. Many Germans refused to be evacuated by Nazis and left their homes individually. Only German anti-fascists and members of Communist Party stayed in their homes.<sup>25</sup>

It is impossible to determine exactly, how many Germans left. According to records of DP, 120 000 Germans were evacuated.<sup>26</sup> The majority of evacuees never returned to Slovakia. Those who returned and tried settle in their homes, were mostly incarcerated in labor camps. Deprived of their property and civic right, substantial majority of German minority members was compulsory transferred to Germany. During the so called main phase of transfer, 32 450 ethnic Germans were transported out of Slovakia in year 1946. This melancholy event terminated the continuity of German settlement of Slovakia, which lasted almost eight centuries and contributed to economic, cultural and social development of country. For more than four decades the German minority living in Czechoslovakia was not even acknowledged by government authorities as an ethnic group. The revival of this ethnic community become possible only after demise of communist regime on 17 November 1989. In regard to German community living in Zips - this numerically not large and culturally sharply delineated ethnic group was in its identity formation endeavors unquestionably motivated by a need to gain wider space for realization. It is a sad paradox,



that this „quest“ for identity anchorage led to a compulsory exodus from their homes.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Smith, A. D.: The ethnic origins of nations. Blackwell 1995, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Hutchinson, J.: Cultural nationalism and moral regeneration. In: Hutchinson, J. - Smith A. D. (Eds.): Nationalism. Cambridge 1986, p. 123.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Gellner, E.: Nations and nationalism. Cornell University press. New York, Ithaca 1994, p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> The history of codification of Slovak language is a fitting example of fortuitous nature of such processes.

<sup>6</sup> Gellner, E.: Op. c., p. 48.

<sup>7</sup> This is original form of the name of this ethnic community.

<sup>8</sup> Slovak names of localities are stated in parenthesis.

<sup>9</sup> For example Hungarian king Mathias Hunyady threaded to punish persons guilty of enticing quarrels between German and Slovak party in city of Trnava. Holotík, L.: Dejiny Slovenska. Bratislava, SAV 1961, p. 180.

<sup>10</sup> Kováč, D.: Nemecko a nemecká menšina na Slovensku (1871-1945). Bratislava, Veda 1991, p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Jankovič, V.: Z minulosti Spišskej Soboty. Nové obzory, 8, pp. 149-175.

<sup>12</sup> Sulaček, J.: Sociálne premeny na Spiši v prvej polovici 20. storočia. In: Švorc, P. (Ed.): Spiš v kontinuite času. Prešov-Bratislava-Wien, Universum 1995, p. 167.

<sup>13</sup> Kováč, D.: Nemecko...op. c., p. 20.

<sup>14</sup> Tajták, L.: Spiš a vznik Československa. In: Švorc, P. (Ed.): Spiš v kontinuite času. Prešov-Bratislava-Wien, Universum 1995, p. 146.

<sup>15</sup> On 19 September 1922 was in city of Kesmark (Kežmarok) founded first DTV association in Zips region.

<sup>16</sup> For more information in regard to history of DTV in Zips see Bobřík, M.: Nemecké telovýchovné hnutie Deutscher Turnverein na Spiši v rokoch 1918-1938. In: Švorc, P. (Ed.): Spiš v kontinuite času. Prešov-Bratislava-Wien, Universum 1995, pp. 177-186.

<sup>17</sup> Spišskonemecká strana (Zipser Deutsche Partei). In: Lipták, L. (Ed.): Politické strany na Slovensku 1860-1989. Bratislava, Archa 1992, pp. 171-172.

<sup>18</sup> Karpatonemecká strana (Karpathendeutsche Partei). In: Lipták, L.: Politické strany...op. c., pp. 201-204.

<sup>19</sup> State District Archive (SDA) Levoča, f. SZ, NST III. 42/38.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, f. Ž, NST III. 47/38.

<sup>21</sup> State County Archive (SCA) Levoča, F. Okresný úrad (OÚ) v Levoči, box. 48.

<sup>22</sup> Dejiny Slovenského národného povstania 1944. Dokumenty. Bratislava 1984, p. 307.

<sup>23</sup> Kováč, D.: Nemecko...op. c., p. 189.

<sup>24</sup> Dejiny...op. c., p. 328.

<sup>25</sup> Gabzdilová, S.: Situácia nemeckej menšiny na Slovensku pri návrate z evakuácie na jar a v lete 1945. Historický časopis, 49, 2001, 3, pp. 453-454.

<sup>26</sup> Kováč, D.: Nemecko...op. c., p. 15.