



## Germans in Slovakia after February 1948 (till the beginning of 1950)

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The communistic party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ) established after February 1948 in Czechoslovak republic monopoly on the power, absolute power over whole society in the state. Also course of action in the reference to German population was exclusively determined by close leaderships of KSČ and state authorities executed decisions. Communistic party in relation to German population did not refused principle of collective guilt that was political, juridical and moral justification of transfer of Germans from Czechoslovakia after Second World War. Members of German minority felt radical reforms of leading party like other inhabitants in the republic. Almost nothing has changed in solving the German question as an ethical problem. Immediately after February there were efforts to act towards Germans "more strictly" and implement in relation to them "order and discipline", like it is in every part of social, political and economic life. New government paid great attention to German population and because of that they were able to obtain relatively exact information. Mandate of the Interior prepared a list of German population according to reports from individual districts from the beginning of the year 1949 that contained 23 863 people of German nationality. According to information from state security numbers of German people were a bit higher - total numbers from March 1949 from individual regional commandships of secret state security is showing 27 324 people. In 1949 only so called voluntary leaving of people of German nationality from Slovakia to Germany happened and mostly it was about bonding the families. Determining factor that influenced attitudes of highest organs of communistic party towards German population were international political aspects. Remodeling soviet occupational zone in Germany to German democratic republic in autumn 1949 was crucial. Government of Czechoslovakia was by this forced to rethink existing movement towards members of German minority. Result of this request was official order n. 252/1949 about returning Czechoslovakian state citizenship to people with German nationality that was accepted on 29<sup>th</sup> of November 1949 and that simultaneously cancelled order n. 76/1948. Mandate of interior published on 9<sup>th</sup> of February 1950 "Instructions to official order n. 252/1949 about returning Czechoslovakian state citizenship". These instructions bring to praxis two important facts - applicant did not have to demonstrate knowledge of Czech language or Slovak language and competent organ (regional people's committee on the proposal of district people's committee) could comply with submitted request immediately without waiting for three years. At the same time condition had to be satisfied that applicant had to have national settlement in Czechoslovakia and among other condition he should be a member of German nationality that is taking part in "constructive effort" of Czechoslovakian working class.

The Communistic party of Czechoslovakia. German question. February 1948.

After February 1948 a communist monopoly of power was imposed in Czechoslovakia, which commenced a radical change of Slovak and Czech society in the all levels. „Transformation“ went in line with the

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tenets of ideology of Czechoslovak Communist Party (CCP) and affected not only political system, economic relations, social structure, but also all other aspects of life of the whole society and each individual. After end of Second World War - till February 1948, the decisive authority empowered to solve the status of German minority in Czechoslovakia was the government of CSR and its ministries. In Slovakia it were the Board of Commissioners and individual Commissions. The political parties could also influence individual aspect of this issue. After the February putsch the highest institutions of CCP concentrated in its hands the absolute power in state. Also the steps taken in regard to German minority were prerogative of the highest circles of CCP and state authorities only executed their decisions. The instructions issued in regard to status of ethnic Germans realized the Ministry of Interior, in Slovakia The Commission of Interior.

In comparison with the radical change, which affected the Czechoslovakian society by communist putsch, the attitude of government authorities to the status of German populations remained almost unchanged. Despite of doctrine of „proletarian internationalism“ as an integral part of Marxist-Leninist ideology, the CCP officially did not refuted the principle so called collective guilt based on the ethnicity, which became the political, legal and moral justification of transfer of German population out of Czechoslovakia. Whereas, on one hand a number of changes was going on, impacting everyone including ethnic Germans, in approach to the „German issue“ practically nothing changed. Immediately after February 1948, an intention to deal with the ethnic Germans „more profoundly“ was formulated and deal with them, in line with the general approach, more „disciplinary“. After February 1948 two basic approaches to German community were formed. The first represented the intention to built CSR as a state without „non-Slavic“ minorities and the aim was to expel as many ethnic Germans as possible. The second aim was to integrate the remaining Germans into society and exploit them as a labor force. This second tactics was gradually bringing moderate results. In concrete steps it was annulment of Decree No. 6/1945 in regard to specific food stamps for Germans. Also 20 % reduction of salaries received by German workers was abolished.<sup>1</sup>

Despite this policy, in employing of ethnic Germans discriminatory measures persisted, especially during the post-February purges. The German nationality itself was a reason for termination of employment. Discriminatory was also Decree in Regard to Welfare adopted by Commission of Welfare after agreement with the Commission of Interior (CI) and Commission of Industry at the end of August 1948. The Decree was dispatched to all District Employment Offices, who were obliged on 1 September 1948 to execute a revision of German labor force and to determine if these persons are not occupying the leading positions in some factories and if they are not replaceable. In positive cases to determine if the factories enacted the training of Slovak workers in reason to replace German employs. The managers of factories were obliged to elaborate lists of German employs, state a percentage of German workers in general and especially on the leading positions. Even though the controlling commissions reported that majority of German employs are non-replaceable specialists with the good working moral, they also stated that in case of finding a replacement from ranks of Slovak workers, German employs will be fired.<sup>2</sup>

In the report submitted by Commission of Interior to Ministry of Interior at the end of December 1948 dealing with the state of transfer of ethnic Germans out of Slovakia is written, that „...this segment of agenda had till February happening a latent development. February happening became a visible break also in this area, because the incoming resolutions dispatched by Resistance organizations<sup>3</sup> and other institutions requested revision of already realized measures and asked for more radical approach to Germans“.<sup>4</sup> The Commission of Interior characterized the steps taken by national committees and selection commissions somewhat apologetically: „to excuse these institutions it is necessary to say, that they must, due to supply and schedule problems and insufficient numbers of personnel, postpone the transfer agenda as a matter of secondary importance“.<sup>5</sup> The changes enacted by February 1948 resulted in interference into composition of selection commissions for the transfer of Germans. The members of Democratic Party and other non-communist members of these commissions became „politically unacceptable“. The Commissioner of Interior, D. Okáli, issued on 23 April 1948 a circular addressed to all respective institutions, in which he annulled the decree of CI No. 37/95-I/1946 from 6 July 1946 in regard to composition of selection commissions. The Commissioner justified this measure by argument, that existing composition of selection commissions is not guaranteeing the execution of future transfer in line with the issued instructions.<sup>6</sup> The newly created commissions were obliged till 31 May to made revisions of activities of existing selection commissions, determine the state of transfer agenda, elaborate plans of further activities and suggest measures for „smooth and punctual enactment of transfer agenda of Germans“.<sup>7</sup>

However, the endeavors of CI were not met with the expected results. Main reason for failure was fact, that numerous district national committees (DNC), district administrative commissions (DAC) and local

national committees (LNC), as PV stated in its circular, did not exhibit „initiative and serious responsibility in performing their duties“.<sup>8</sup> PV further stated: „Many DNC, DAC and LNC commenced their activities with considerable delay and without reason and with the characteristic laxity did not kept schedule. Besides, man many commissions supposed that it is possible to transfer every German without following the requested procedure and this way the instructions were ignored and transfer agenda became chaotic“.<sup>9</sup> The circular of PV from 10 August 1948 accentuated the necessity to keep the evidence about all ethnic Germans living in respective areas of selection commissions and concrete results of transfer agenda in individual cases. The selection commissions were obliged to keep in separate evidence ethnic Germans who were destined to transfer and person who were from transfer excluded, including their place of residence and employment. Further the PV requested information if members of German minority who requested return of Czechoslovak citizenship received it or not. Finally the incited circular exhorted all involved institutions to „...continue with utmost thoroughness in revision of past activities of selection commissions for the transfer of Germans , occurring mistakes eliminate and definitively finalize the transfer agenda of Germans till 15 September 1948“.<sup>10</sup>

However at the end of 1948 PV again critically evaluated the whole process, when state, that in work of institutions involved in transfer agenda persisted irregularities and „...personal interests and material gains are occurring“.<sup>11</sup> A significant step aiming to increase of control of German population was establishment of Central Evidence of Germans. VI/2 Department of CI realized it on beginning of May 1948 and justified it by need to eliminate non-transparent state of German population in Slovakia and lack of „central evidence“. The central evidence should contain basic data - number of German minority members, social and political structure and inclusion of German population into labor market. According the leadership of VI/2 Department leadership the evidence was inevitable for realization of additional transfer, intra-state transfer of Germans and their employment according to their professional skills. Emphasis was placed also upon their relation to state and its economic objectives. Another reason was the possibility of „use of Germans living in Slovakia for sabotage and other pernicious activities“.<sup>12</sup>

Consequently, in August 1948 evidence of persons who during census 1940 reported German nationality commenced. In cases of persons living in regions occupied by Hungary after November 1938 and territories occupied by Nazi Germany, census from 1930 was taken. The central evidence was a first part of agenda carried by VI/2 department. The second part consisted of transfer agenda and third of internal transfer.<sup>13</sup> Revamped CI critically evaluated also the situation in the area of non-replaceable specialists. The subject of criticism was allegedly the non-transparent evidence and lack of data about such persons.<sup>14</sup> The Expert Commission, which was a part of Commission of Industry and Trade was not trusted either. Its duty was to evaluate if non-replaceable specialists are really indispensable and made decision in regard to their transfer. CI requested that Expert Commission once again investigate all cases of German specialists who were excluded from transfer. The Expert Commission confirmed all previous decisions.<sup>15</sup> CI, however, expresses different opinion - the chairman of VI/2 Department declared that the number of German specialist is too high and he, personally, see to it that „...every case will be investigated and evaluated“.<sup>16</sup> The CI at end of May 1948 concluded that there are 570 German non-replaceable specialists in Slovakia.<sup>17</sup>

Also the crucial post of „Commissioner for Transfer Germans out of Slovakia“ was occupied by a new person. Instead of I. Skarba, on the basis of decision of CI from 4 Jun 1948, the Commissioner became the chairman of VI. Department of CI, J. Lietavec.<sup>18</sup> Communist requested this change already in January 1948, at that time it was not accepted.<sup>19</sup> The post of Commissioner was abolished at the end of 1948. According the reports of camp in Nováky, in March 1948 there were 2 042 and at the end of April 2 011 ethnic Germans there.<sup>20</sup> These reports are, however, contradicted by situational mothly report of VI/2 Department of CI. The number of inmates, officially, was 2 969, but 1 605 of these were working outside of camp, residence of 984 was unknown and only 380 were present in camp.<sup>21</sup> In May 1984 the number of inmates decreased to 200 persons, 165 of them elderly and rest waiting for transfer.<sup>22</sup> In September 1948 the chairman of VI. Department of CI informed the Deputy Prime Minister, V. Široký, that in Nováky camp is residing only 69 persons, even though the official number was 2068 persons. Only elderly and persons waiting for transfer were present in camp. Rest - 2000 persons - were allocated to labor duty in agriculture, forestry and construction.<sup>23</sup>

The report of CI from 5 January 1949 dealing with the German agenda for year 1948 dispatched to Ministry of Interior informs that at that time in Slovakia lived approximately 24 000 persons of German nationality. Of these number 40 % worked in agriculture, 44 % in industry, 4 % in various professions and 12 % without employment. Of these numbers 65 % was excluded for the transfer and 35 % was waiting to be transferred.<sup>24</sup> The government paid a great attention to German population, and, consequently, gathered large body of data. CI, on the basis of reports sent by district committees at the beginning of

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1949, compiled a list of ethnic Germans living in Slovakia which contained 23 863 persons.<sup>25</sup> According to State Police, the number of Germans was higher - in March 1949 it was 27 324 persons.<sup>26</sup> Out of Germans who remained in Slovakia after end of the mass transfer, only anti-fascists had Czechoslovakian citizenship. According to Constitutional Decree No. 33, only members of mix marriages (where person of German nationality was married to Slovak or Czech mate) if the marriage was concluded before 16. March 1939. The requests could be submitted from 1 January 1947 till 30 July 1947. The condition for accepting the request was passing a test from Slovak (Czech) language by each candidate in place of respective district national committee. After passing of this test, the granting of citizenship was in competence of MI.<sup>27</sup>

The new geopolitical situation - dictate of Soviet Union and creation of „World Socialist System“ - inevitably impacted the approach to ethnic minorities. However, in Czechoslovakia changes only slowly progressed. During the first half of 1948 a new Constitution was adopted, parliamentary election went on and communists stabilized their power. New regulations in regard to state citizenship of Germans and Hungarians were prepared. In March 1948 MI deliberated character of these changes. The Commissioner for Transfer of Germans in Czechland, A. Kučera, argued that the intended regulations should be adopted only in regard to Hungarians and not include Germans, because it will slow down the assimilation of ethnic Germans. However, this suggestion was not accepted.<sup>28</sup>

The Czechoslovak government adopted on 13 April 1948 the „Decree No. 76 in Regard to Return of Czechoslovakian State Citizenship to Persons of German and Hungarian Nationality“ which partially mollified the conditions of return of citizenship and broadened the circle of possible recipients. The term to processing of requests was five years (later shortened to three years) and condition of award of citizenship for persons older than 14 years was provable knowledge of Slovak (Czech) language. District national committees were issuing to ethnic Germans who were about to become state citizens so called attestats of state reliability. On the basis of this document they were considered to citizens till request was proceeded. In Czechlad there were not great interest to request Czechoslovak citizenship - main obstacle was insufficient knowledge of Czech language.<sup>29</sup> In Slovakia the situation was different. The German population in Slovakia was predominantly cognizant of Slovak language. Especially in regions of Bratislava and Spiš the German population spoke Slovak and Hungarian languages fluently.

The decisive factor which influenced the approach of Czechoslovak government to ethnic Germans was the need to accommodate a new geo-political reality. In that sense, crucial was the transformation of Soviet occupational zone in Germany into German Democratic Republic in fall of 1949. The after-war shape of Soviet Block was stabilized. The transfers of persons were undesirable anymore, namely not transfers of ethnic Germans to West Germany. The division of Europe and Germany into American and Soviet sphere of influence impacted also German population of Czechoslovakia. Establishment of German Democratic Republic transformed till then condemned Germany into one of Soviet satellites and an „ally“. An imperative of build-up of relations created on the principle of „proletarian internationalism“ with the all „peoples democratic“ states, including Eastern Germany, pressed the Czechoslovakian government to re-evaluate the approach to ethnic Germans. The result of this was the „Decree No. 252/1949 in Regard to Return of Czechoslovakian State Citizenship to Persons of German Nationality“ adopted on 29 November 1949, which at the same time annulled Decree No. 76/1948. On 9 February 1950 the „Instructions to the Government Decree No. 252/1949“ were issued. The Decree No. 252 brought two important changes - the person requested the Czechoslovak citizenship was not obliged to prove the knowledge of Slovak or Czech language and request must have been processed by a respective institution without delay. However the candidates to citizenship must have a permanent residence on Czechoslovak territory and they should participate, according to their abilities on the construction endeavors of Czechoslovakian workers.<sup>30</sup> Only if candidate breached the duties of Czechoslovak citizen, the citizenship should be denied.

On 1 January 1949 the occupational authorities of USA terminated the additional transfer of Germans out of Czechoslovakia and till autumn of 1949 only so called voluntarily transfer of Germans to these zones proceeded. In frame of this type of transfer only Germans could participate, who obtained a permission (in contemporary terminology „Permit“) by occupational authorities. The ethnic Germans could be transferred if the occupational administration did not objected their arrival to Germany and this could be confirmed by granted permission to entry. The persons who wanted to leave Czechoslovakia were obliged to obtain so called „Zuzugsgenehmigung“ (Permission to settlement) via persons living in Germany whom they wanted join. After receiving this document, respective district national committee issued permission to leave CSR. CI instructed the institutions issuing these permission to be „...more forthcoming in cases of persons who are non-productive, that is, persons physically and mentally unstable, incurable sick, elderly, disabled and cases of divided families“.<sup>31</sup> In cases where unification of families was not

unambiguously proved, national district committees were obliged to „monitor the ability and skills of transferees and possibility to replace them in reason to prevent the slowdown of production in important factories, or to prevent possible release of manufacturing secrets“.<sup>32</sup> As a consequence of complicated procedure to obtain all necessary documents, only relatively small number of Germans left Slovakia. From camp in Nováky only 45 families were dispatched.<sup>33</sup>

The Soviet occupational authority accepted the additional transports from CSR also during the first half of 1949, but also more rigorously. The transport dispatched on 15 June 1949 refused to accept, because, according to Soviet arguing, the quota was exhausted. The Czechoslovak representatives tried to renew transports during the negotiations with the Soviet general Gorochov realized on 17 June 1949. The general Gorochov expressed „utter dissatisfaction with the mode in which Czechoslovakian site is realizing transfer“ and added that „it would a big mistake to think that Czechoslovakian authorities can get rid of the all Germans and send them to Soviet zone in Germany“.<sup>34</sup> General Gorochov declared that Czechoslovakian authorities transferred to soviet zone more than 800 war criminals sentenced to 20 years of imprisonment, however, without proper documentation. Also many thousand Germans transferred to Soviet zone have families in other occupational zones. In last transports almost 90 % of transferees hand families in western zones. The Czechoslovak representatives pleaded CSR would suffer great damage and „great internal and international political danger...if Soviet authorities will insist on return of Germans , who were possibly transferred into Soviet zone by a mistake“.<sup>35</sup> The Czechoslovakian representatives argued that such a high number of divided families exists because transfer of many Germans out of Soviet zone to western zones. Eventually general Gorochov allowed the transfer on 20 June 1949.

On 22 June 1949 the camp in Nováky was liquidated.<sup>36</sup> The persons selected for transfer were about to be concentrated in their respective districts and transferred into some camp in Czechland. The voluntary transfer of Slovak Germans via city of Cheb was also stopped. In summer 1949 the occupational authorities in Germany were willing to accept Germans from Czechoslovakia who had families in their respective zones.<sup>37</sup> CI reacted to this situation and instructed the Slovak institutions involved in transfer that the notion „family member“ is not precisely defined and it will be possible to transfer not only immediate members of families (husbands, parents, children, grand children and grand parents) but also all relatives brothers, sisters etc. CI declared that this was occurred „an opportunity to realize the transfer of considerable number of German minority members, whose residence in CSR is not desirable, especially persons who are non productive (elderly, disabled, sick etc.)“.<sup>38</sup> These persons were even not required to obtain so called Zuzugsgenehmigung or other document furnished by occupational authorities.

However, the numbers of German minority members who left Slovakia in frame of unification of families were very low. There are no precise numbers available. The estimated number of such person is in range of several hundreds. The Slovak authorities expressed disappointment with this outcome, because they selected 9 516 persons for this form of transfer (3 125 from Bratislava, 2 098 from Gelnica, 1 121 from Kežmarok, 1 045 from Turčiansky Martin and 1 038 from Turčianske Teplice).<sup>39</sup> The position of German minority in Slovakia after termination of mass and additional transfers was very difficult. They were decimated community without civil rights. The majority of them lived in CSR without state citizenship, their property was confiscated and some of them were homeless. Many of them lost family members and were discriminated.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Pešek, J.: Nemci na Slovensku po ukončení povojnového hromadného odsunu. Historický časopis, 46, 1998, 2, p. 275.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 276.

<sup>3</sup> The leftist organizations composed mostly of sympathizers or members of CCP.

<sup>4</sup> Slovak National Archive (SNA) Bratislava, fond (f.) Povereníctvo vnútra (PV) – Pracovné tábory (PT), box 32, archive unit (a. u.) 4/143.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> State District Archive (SDA) Žiar nad Hronom seated in city of Kremnica, f. ONV Kremnica, box 121. Výberové komisie pre odsun Nemcov – dodržiavanie smerníc (The selection commissions for transfer of Germans – upholding of instructions).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

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- <sup>11</sup> SNA, f. PV - prezídium, box 14/83. Mesačná správa o činnosti VI. odboru PV za mesiac október 1948 (Monthly situational report of activities of VI. Department of CI for October 1948).
- <sup>12</sup> SNA, f. PV - PT, box 32, a. u. 4/112.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid, a. u. 4/76.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid, a. u. 4.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid, a. u. 4/76.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> SNA, f. ÚP ZP, Zápisnica zo zasadnutia ZP 4. IV. 1948 (Report from meeting of ÚP 4 April 1984).
- <sup>19</sup> SNA, f. ÚV KSS-GT, box 2165, 338/2.
- <sup>20</sup> SNA, f. PV - prezídium, box 14, 83/89, 83/88 and 83/131.
- <sup>21</sup> SNA, f. PV - PT, box 32, a. u. 4/76.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> SNA, f. ÚV KSS-GT, box 2146/197.
- <sup>24</sup> SNA, f. PV - PT, box 32, a. u. 4/143.
- <sup>25</sup> SNA, f. PV - PT, box 95. Hlásenie okresov o stave Nemcov (Report of districts in regard to number of Germans).
- <sup>26</sup> SNA, f. PV - PT, box 99. Cited according to Pešek, J.: Op. c., p. 268.
- <sup>27</sup> SNA, f. PV - PT, box 105, a. u. 573/0721 - 13/2 - 1950.
- <sup>28</sup> Bobák, J.: Maďarská otázka v Česko-Slovensku (1944-1948). Martin, Matica slovenská 1996, p. 172.
- <sup>29</sup> On the situation of the Czech territory in detail: Staněk, T.: Nemecká menšina v Českých zemích 1948-1989. Praha, Institut pro stredoevropskou kulturu a politiku 1993, pp. 82-83.
- <sup>30</sup> Sbierka obežníkov pre KNV, roč. II., 1950, č. 31, por. č. 151.
- <sup>31</sup> SNA, f. PV - PT, box 105. Vydávanie povolení na vycestovanie z ČSR (Issuing of permissions to leave CSR).
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>33</sup> SNA, f. ÚV KSS-GT, box 2146, zl. IV. GT 197/1. Cited according Pešek, J.: Op. c., p. 265.
- <sup>34</sup> Archive of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Czech republic Praha, f. Nemecko 1945-1959, teritoriální odbor obyčejní, box 15. Dodatečný odsun Nemců do sovětského pásma (Additional transfer of Germans into Soviet Zone).
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>36</sup> SNA, f. PV - PT, box 105. Sústredovací tábor Nováky - zrušenie (Camp in Nováky - termination).
- <sup>37</sup> Archive of City of Bratislava, f. NV Bratislava, box 497. Dodatočný dielčí odsun Nemcov za účelom zlúčenia rodinných zväzkov (Additional partial transfer of Germans in reason of unification of families).
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>39</sup> SNA, f. PV - PT, box 32. Hlásenie okresov o stavoch Nemcov (Report of districts in regard to numbers of Germans).