

# Stratégia mobilizácie voličov uplatňovaná nemeckými politickými stranami Slovenska (1920–1938)

## Voter Mobilization Strategies applied by the German political parties of Slovakia (1920–1938)

**Szabolcs Czáboczký** (ORCID <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5306-3851>)

### ABSTRACT

*The paper explores, what strategies and methods were used by the two, most influential German political parties of Slovakia, the Zipser Deutsche Partei and the Karpathendeutsche Partei to mobilize as many voters as possible. Despite the latter party founded by a former member of the previous party, the concept according to which they were formed, fundamentally differed. While the oppositional Zipser Deutsche Partei was interested in preserving the pre-1918 political, economic and informal networks in the Spiš region, the – firstly pro-Prague and later National Socialist – Karpathendeutsche Partei strived to integrate the institutions of the Spiš Germans into the political and economic framework coordinated by the Sudeten German elite. The paper attempts to present, how the Zipser Deutsche Partei tried to maintain its positions, and how the Karpathendeutsche Partei sought to change the status quo not only in Spiš, but also in the other German-speaking areas of Slovakia.*

### ABSTRAKT

*Článok skúma, aké stratégie a metódy používali dve najvplyvnejšie nemecké politické strany na Slovensku, Zipser Deutsche Partei a Karpathendeutsche Partei, aby zmobilizovali čo najviac voličov. Napriek tomu, že druhú stranu založil bývalý člen predchádzajúcej strany, koncepcia, podľa ktorej boli vytvorené, sa zásadne líšila. Zatiaľ čo opozičná Zipser Deutsche Partei mala záujem o zachovanie politických, ekonomických a neformálnych sietí v regióne Spiša pred roku 1918, Karpathendeutsche Partei – najprv propražská a neskôr národnosocialistická – sa snažila integrovať inštitúcie spišských Nemcov do politického a ekonomického rámca koordinovaného sudetonemeckou elitou. Článok sa pokúša prezentovať, ako sa Zipser Deutsche Partei snažila udržať si svoje pozície a ako sa Karpathendeutsche Partei snažila zmeniť status quo nielen na Spiši, ale aj v ostatných nemecky hovoriacich oblastiach Slovenska.*

### KEYWORDS

*Voter Mobilization, Zipser Deutsche Partei, Karpathendeutsche Partei, First Czechoslovak Republic, German societies in Slovakia*

### KĽÚČOVÁ SLOVA

*mobilizácia voličov, Spišská nemecká strana, Karpatskonemecká strana, Prvá Československá republika, Nemecké spoločnosti na Slovensku*

Before the end of World War I and the founding of Czechoslovakia, no political party or movement, which bore a German character on ethnic or linguistic basis, gained significant support among the people living in the northern regions of the Hungarian Kingdom (Uhorsko/Magyar Királyság). This doesn't mean, that there weren't any political activists or leaders, who attempted to propagate the idea of German nationhood in the counties inhabited by German-speakers.<sup>1</sup> Since the German language was seen as a necessity of social mobility in Austria-Hungary,<sup>2</sup> the use of German and Hungarian determined public space of the towns and cities of Northern Hungary. The peasants and workers living in smaller, isolated villages on the other hand were often monolingual, for example the Slovak villages in the north-west of the country, but also indifferent towards national definement. According to the data drawn from the Hungarian and Czechoslovak censuses, three regions can be outlined, where the relative or absolute majority of the population considered itself German-speaker or German in Slovakia. The German-speakers of Pozsony, Preßburg, later Bratislava and its vicinity were the first to acknowledge the fact, that they had been incorporated into a country, where they live alongside approximately three million Germans living in the borderlands of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia,<sup>3</sup> since this was the only place in Slovakia, where the political parties of the

- 1 Such an example is Edmund Steinacker (1839–1929), who made an attempt to politically organize the German-speakers of Hungary into one German political movement. For this, he gained support from several Germany-based nationalist organisations.
- 2 This is why some of the middle class or wealthier families from the homogenous, Hungarian-speaking territories considered sending their children to study at educational institutions found in peripheral, linguistically diverse counties. Kinderaustausch was quite common in the region of Spiš (Szepes, Zips), where German was the first language used in public communication, not to mention their prestigious schools in Kežmarok (Késmárk, Keszmark), Podolíneč (Podolin, Pudlein), Levoča (Lőcse, Leutschau) and Spišská Nová Ves (Igló, Zipser Neudorf) offered high quality education. Horel, Catherine: *Multicultural Cities of the Habsburg Empire. Imagined Communities and Conflictual Encounters*. Budapest–Vienna–New York 2023. p. 166.
- 3 For the sake of simplicity, the German-speakers hailing from the western part of Czechoslovakia will be related to as „Sudeten Germans” (Sudetendeutsch). The author is aware of, that the phrase was first used by a journalist in 1902 and became a generalizing term during the change

Sudeten Germans formed their local organisations.<sup>4</sup> The second, more isolated region was the „Hauerland”: Handlová (Nyitrabánya, Krickerhau), Nitrianske Pravno (Németpróna, Deutschproben), Kremnica (Körmöcbánya, Kremnitz) and their surrounding villages, where social and economic structure was heavily determined by mining, woodcutting and metal production.<sup>5</sup>

We will focus our attention first of all on the third region: Spiš. Not only, that this is the area, where the first party arose with an ambition to politically organize the Germans of Slovakia, but the German-speaking and mostly Lutheran political and economic elite nourished a high sense of regional self-government linked with estate consciousness.<sup>6</sup> Due to the experience of welfare under Hungarian rule and upholding contacts with the Hungarian administration and government,<sup>7</sup> the first leaders of the Zipser Deutsche Partei (Spiš German Party, ZDP) firmly opposed the founding of Czechoslovakia at the end of 1918.<sup>8</sup> Their arch nemesis, political rival became the Karpathendeutsche Partei (Carpathian German Party, KDP), which was originally founded by former members of the ZDP, who were bent on organizing the German-speakers in a different manner, through an alternative concept. The paper explores how the two parties' concept differed, what were their main instruments of voter mobilization and preservation of power. And most importantly: how far did they go, what can the rivalry of these two parties tell us about the political atmosphere of the First Czechoslovak Republic?

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of power in 1918–1919. It was mostly applied by the German politicians active in the western borderlands of Czechoslovakia, though the social structure and regional diversity made it quite difficult to implement this as a unifying category, at least until 1935. More on regional thought, urban life and nationalism in Bohemia: King, Jeremy: *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans. A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848–1948*. Princeton 2002.

- 4 Kováč, Dušan: *Nemecko a nemecká menšina na Slovensku (1871–1945)*. Bratislava 1989, pp. 71–72.
- 5 The word „Hauerland” was introduced by the German-language press of Czechoslovakia, which was formed from the „-hau” suffix. Some of the German names of these municipalities bare this suffix, which probably relates to the action of woodcutting. Schvarc, Michal: *Politická agitácia a činnosť Karpatonemeckej strany v oblasti Hauerlandu na Slovensku v rokoch 1935–1938*. *Historický časopis* 52, 2004, 1, pp. 87–88.
- 6 Szélenyi A., Balázs: *From Minority to Übermensch: The Social Roots of Ethnic Conflict in the German Diaspora of Hungary, Romania and Slovakia*. *Past & Present* 196, August 2007, p. 226.
- 7 More on the refugees in Hungary hailing from Spiš and their organisations: Ablonczy Balázs: „Lesz még kikelet a Szepesség felett” Kormányzati befolyás és menekülthálózatok társadalma a két világháború közötti Magyarországon. In: Ablonczy Balázs: *Nyombiztosítás. Letűnt magyarok. Kisebbség- és művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok*. Pozsony 2011, pp. 122–158.
- 8 Czáboczký, Szabolcs: *Career Paths of Zipser Deutsche Partei Mayors in Interwar Spiš*. In: *Civil Servants Under Changing Regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in the First Half of the 20th Century*, ed. Szeghy-Gayer, Veronika. Košice 2024, pp. 59–60.

## THE „ZIPSERS” VS. THE „CARPATHIAN GERMANS”

The idea of founding a „unified Spiš german party” was first drafted on January 15, 1920 in a proclamation written by the editors of the *Karpathen-Post* newspaper, a German-language weekly published in Kežmarok. The owner of the newspaper was a local printer called Theodor Sauter (1886–1949), who was also the leader of the Kesmarker Sozialdemokratische Partei (Social Democratic Party of Kežmarok, KSDP) founded on November 22, 1918.<sup>9</sup> After the signing of the Treaty of Saint-Germain and the consolidation of the newly founded Czechoslovak Republic, which was founded as a nation-state of the „Czechoslovak nation”, the elites not belonging to the state-forming powers searched for methods to protect their interests. This was influenced by three factors. First: the use of the „nationality” category in the Czechoslovak censuses, even though not every citizen of the republic had a „solid” national identity, linguistic loyalty.<sup>10</sup> Second: linguistic rights were measured through this particular category according to the 122. nb. language law.<sup>11</sup> Third: the installment of the general and secret voting system, which urged the political formations to mobilize as many voters as possible.

Not all factors came into motion, when the proclamation was published in the *Karpathen-Post* on January 24 stating, that the new Spiš german party „*should be able to unify the politically unorganized Germans of Spiš, and also the scattered German enclaves of Sáros, Abauj, Gömör, Turóc, Zólyom and Bars, irrespective of class or occupation. It will proceed hand in hand with the Social Democratic Party [of Kežmarok] in all questions. The Zipser Deutsche Partei must be organized on the basis of the Social Democratic Party [of Kežmarok].*”<sup>12</sup> On the other hand: the first parliamentary elections drew ever closer, the new party had to be founded fast. The founding assembly of the ZDP was held on March 22, 1920 in the Manufacturers’ and Traders’ Casino in Kežmarok, where the leaders were elected as well.<sup>13</sup> Before

9 Késmarker Sozialdemokratische Partei. *Karpathen-Post*, November 28, 1918.

10 This led to such issues, like census takers automatically defining the individual as a „Czechoslovak”, if he/she couldn’t name a nationality. More on the topic: Zahra, Tara: The ‘Minority Problem’ and National Classification in the French and Czechoslovak Borderlands. *Contemporary European History* 17, 2008, 2, pp. 137–165.

11 The use of a minority language was allowed in administration and in court, if the percentage of the minority compared to the local or regional population reached 20 %. Szalay Zoltán: Kisebbségi nyelvi jogok Szlovákiában az 1918–1968 közötti időszakban. *Fórum Társadalomtudományi Szemle* 13, 2011, 3, pp. 81–89.

12 „*Diese Partei muß alle politisch noch nicht organisierten Deutschen Zipsers vereinigen, ebenso auch die zerstreuten deutschen Sprachinseln in Sáros, Abauj und Gömör, sowie in Turóc, Zólyom und Bars ohne Unterschied des Standes oder der Beschäftigung. Mit der Sozialdemokratischen Partei soll sie in allen völkischen Fragen gemeinsam vorgehen. Die Zipser Deutsche Partei soll nach dem bewährten Muster der Sozialdemokratischen Partei organisiert werden*” Aufruf zur Organisation einer Zipser Deutsche Partei. *Karpathen-Post*, January 24, 1920. Translated by the author.

13 Konstituierung der Zipser Deutschen Partei. *Karpathen-Post*, March 27, 1920.

the founding assembly the head cadres already made contacts with the Sudeten German and the Hungarian oppositional parties to negotiate about forms of cooperation.<sup>14</sup> In the end, the ZDP allied with the National Christian Socialist Party (Országos Keresztényszocialista Párt, OKP) on the 1920 elections,<sup>15</sup> but none of the ZDP's candidates managed to gain a seat in the Czechoslovak parliament.

This changed during the 1925 elections, when Andor Nitsch (1883–1976), leader of the ZDP received a mandate as a candidate of the electoral coalition forged between the German Smallholders' League (Bund der Landwirte, BdL), the Hungarian National Party (Magyar Nemzeti Párt, MNP), the German Industrialist Party (Deutsche Gewerbeartei) and finally the ZDP. This German-Hungarian alliance was inspired by the will to cooperate with the Czechoslovak government in hope of gaining new benefits through negotiations, occasional deals. The elections resulted in an internal political crisis, since the state-forming parties couldn't create a governmental majority, which is why Antonín Švehla (1873–1933), leader of the Agrarian Party (Agrárna strana, AS)<sup>16</sup> and who was appointed to form a government, visionized a right-wing government incorporating parties of the minorities, but leaving out the state-forming left-wing parties. In October 1926, the BdL decided to join the government, while the MNP under the leadership of József Szent-Ivány (1884–1941) remained in the opposition. This was not only because Szent-Ivány – just as the OKP – nurtured ties with the Hungarian government, which put pressure on him not to join, but also the participation of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana, HSĽS) in Švehla's cabinet from January 1927 made Szent-Ivány's faction weightless.<sup>17</sup>

14 Czáboczký Szabolcs: A Deutscher Kulturverband és a Deutscher Turnverein korai tevékenysége a Szepességen (1922–1935), *Regio* 32, 2024, 1, pp. 5–6.

15 The OKP was founded not long after the signing of the Treaty of Saint-Germain, and in the early period the party was led by a Nitra/Nyitra-based lawyer, Jenő Lelley (1870–1949). During the first Czechoslovak Republic, the OKP's leaders upheld close contacts with the Hungarian government, which also provided financial aid for the party, though their political program wasn't founded on exclusive, ethnic-linguistic based Hungarian nationalism. Most of the influential members of the OKP came from the ranks of the Roman Catholic clergy, like Ágost Fischer-Colbrie (1863–1925), bishop of Košice, who is often mentioned as the person, who laid the ideological basis of the party. The OKP tried to win not only Hungarian voters, but also Roman Catholic Slovak- and German-speakers as well, which is why the party upheld separate sections for them. One of the main goals of this political party was the implementation of the territorial autonomy of "Slovensko" and resisting political-economic centralization coordinated from Prague. This particular goal served most of all Hungarian foreign policy and the Hungarian government saw the OKP as a suitable tool to weaken the processes of Czechoslovak legislation, which was meant to orchestrate a "right moment" for territorial revision. More on the topic: Angyal Béla: *Érdekvédelem és önszerveződés. Fejezetek a csehszlovákiai magyar pártpolitika történetéből 1918–1938*. Galánta – Dunaszerdahely 2002.

16 Original name: Republikánská strana zemědělského a malorolnického lidu.

17 More on the life of Szent-Ivány and his „national realpolitik”: Simon Attila – Tóth László: *Kis lépések nagy politikusa. Szent-Ivány József, a politikus és művelődésszervező*. Somorja 2016.

When the common club of the BdL and the MNP desolved, Nitsch decided to side with Szent-Ivány, since he had his own contacts in the Hungarian parliament. His decision had severe consequences. ZDP members led by Karl Manouschek (?–1941), an industrialist originally hailing from Olomouc (Olmütz) formed an informal group in Švedlár (Svedlér, Schwedler) and just before the provincial and district elections held on December 2, 1928, they registered a candidate list – separately from the ZDP – called „Karpathendeutsche Volksgenossenschaft” (Carpathian German People’s Association) in the Gelnica (Gölnicbánya, Göllnitz) district.<sup>18</sup> This was the rudimentary form of what later became known as the Karpathendeutsche Partei, which saw the ZDP’s pact with the Hungarian opposition inconclusive. Even though Nitsch and Szent-Ivány was still interested in negotiating with Czechoslovak governmental circles, the BdL was much more motivated to expand their political base in Slovakia. This is how the KDP and BdL forged their alliance before the 1929 parliamentary elections under the name „Deutsche Wahlgemeinschaft” (German Electoral League, DW).<sup>19</sup> From this moment, the KDP became the ZDP’s number one rival: Nitsch’s political space to maneuver shrunked radically and each year the race for the German voters of Slovakia became more intense.

## STRATEGIES OF THE ZDP

*„Under the Hungarians, there were three tax officials and everything went like clockwork; now there are more than thirty and each one works with a different tax rate.”*<sup>20</sup> Aurélia Scholtz, an elderly lady from Ľubica (Leibic, Leibitz) complained to her relative about the changes in tax affairs under Czechoslovak rule, since not only her, but many others were used to the previous, pre-1918 tax system. In the valley of the Poprad river, several villages were inhabited by German-speaking smallholders, who were in need of assistance of completing their tax return according to the new Czechoslovak laws. This is where the Zipser Bauernbund (German Smallholder League of Spiš) came into the picture. The civil organisation was founded on January 26, 1920 in Kežmarok under the name „Bund der Landwirte”,<sup>21</sup> and was later renamed probably so as not to be confused with the political party mainly active in Bohemia and Moravia. It’s not a coincidence, that Andor Nitsch was elected as vice president, who aimed to organize these smallholders in the Poprad-valley even

18 Štátny archív v Košiciach (henceforth ŠA KE), pobočka Spišská Nová Ves (henceforth pb. SN), Okresný úrad v Gelnici (henceforth OÚ GL), box 88, 18428/1928. admin.

19 Die Deutsche Wahlgemeinschaft. Tagesbote, October 6, 1929.

20 Letter of Aurélia Scholtz, March 30, 1935. In: Két távirat. Scholtz Aurélia emlékezete, ed. Márton Zsolt. 2020. p. 13.

21 Bund der Landwirte im Kesmarker Bezirk. Karpathen-Post, January 31, 1920.

before 1918.<sup>22</sup> The Bauernbund can be seen as an organizational form to coordinate the work of the agricultural casinos founded before the „prevrat”, which were meant to not only educate the smallholders on modern methods of farming,<sup>23</sup> but also to create small, local communities. At the beginning, it seemed that the organization was based on to protect the interests of the smallholders in Spiš, regardless of their religion or nationality.<sup>24</sup> Though it soon became one of the most important elements of the ZDP's organizational background, which focused its activity to give tax counseling services for the smallholders in the region.<sup>25</sup> Not only did Nitsch request audience from Milan Hodža (1878–1944) in May 1923, who was at that time Minister of Agriculture, to negotiate on the matter of tax complaints written by German-speaking farmers,<sup>26</sup> but even the ZDP's officials offered their services to complete tax returns. Johann Strobl and Géza Klein both served as the ZDP's party secretaries, who went door to door offering help with tax affairs free of charge,<sup>27</sup> which what they did regularly on a yearly basis during Nitsch's leadership, who saw this method as an excellent way to win voters for the ZDP.

Just before the 1929 parliamentary elections, Nitsch openly spoke in Spišská Belá (Szepesbéla, Bela) at a party rally organized by the ZDP and criticized the Czechoslovak political system with these words: „*This is how our country's democracy works, where the elections are held with Schnapps and Goulash!*”<sup>28</sup> Bribery was a common phenomena before each election in the First Czechoslovak Republic, when activists of the political parties tried to win the voters' sympathy through several ways. In this case, the state-forming Czechoslovak parties weren't any more innocent than the opposition, since according to the report made by the Gendarmerie Station in Mníšek nad Hnilcom, before the 1925 elections the activists of the AS acted in the same way as Edmund Maier, district secretary of the ZDP in Gelnica. More precisely: Maier collected signatures from the citizens in the small village of Stará Voda (Óváz, Altwasser), promising 2–3 decilitres

22 A „Nagy-Lomniczi Mezőgazdasági Egyesület.” Karpathen-Post, March 17, 1904. Kováč, D.: Nemecko a nemecká menšina, p. 33.

23 For example: At the beginning of March 1926, educational courses were held about agricultural insurance and also about the use of manure, new agricultural machines in Švedlár, Mníšek nad Hnilcom (Szepesremete, Einsiedel an der Göllnitz) and Vondrišiel (Merény, Wagendrüssel, today: Nálepkovo). Landwirtschaftliche Vorträge. Karpathen-Post, March 13, 1926.

24 The Slovak smallholders were represented as well by Ján Šterbák from Malý Slavkov and Martin Longa from Kežmarok, who were elected as vice president and secretary. Bund der Landwirte im Kesmarker Bezirk. Karpathen-Post, January 31, 1920.

25 Einbekenntnisse zur Einkommenssteuer. Karpathen-Post, January 12, 1924.

26 Der Zipser Deutsche Bauernbund. Karpathen-Post, June 30, 1923.

27 Sprechabende der Zipser Deutsche Partei. Karpathen-Post, March 31, 1923. Vortrag der „Zipser Deutsche Partei” in Bela. Karpathen-Post, April 14, 1923.

28 Štátny archív v Prešove (henceforth ŠA PO), špecializované pracovisko Spišský archív v Levoči (henceforth šp. SA LE), Štátne zastupiteľstvo v Levoči (henceforth ŠZ LE), box 310, Nst III 77/1929.



of free Schnapps for each signature in the local pub.<sup>29</sup> If we were to compare the data of the 1921 and 1930 censuses, we would see that the percentage of the nationalities in Stará Voda changed dramatically over nine years. In 1921, 261 (86, 14%) of the total population (303) declared themselves German, but in 1930 this number had fallen to 82 (24, 12%) with a total of 340 inhabitants. In April 1925, the district captain (okresný náčelník) of Gelnica sent a report to the lord lieutenant (župan) of Košice (Kassa, Kaschau), in which he interpreted the experiences with the locals: „*When we drew up a protocol in Slovak language with the farmer Ján Urbančík from Stará Voda, he refused to sign it, because it wasn't written in German. He continued to do so, despite the fact that Mayor Stefan Maykuth, who was present, told him to his face that he was Slovak by birth.*”<sup>30</sup> This phenomena can be traced to Manouschek, since his factory once stood between Švedlár and Stará Voda, where some of the locals worked as employees. At this time, Manouschek was one of the most agile members of the ZDP, who – according to Maykuth – played the role of the „germanizer” in Stará Voda, who put pressure on his employees to declare themselves German on the census or they will lose their jobs. So the subject of bribery and blackmailing weren't only votes given on political parties, but also the declared nationality on the census.

Árpád Wittchen (1868–1941) bank official, who served as mayor in Mníšek nad Hnilcom from 1906 and remained in this position until his death, is also an example of not only how the ZDP could mobilize voters, but rely on local networks to preserve its political and economic influence. The fact, that he took the oath of loyalty towards the Czechoslovak state as a mayor serving under Hungarian rule,<sup>31</sup> deserves attention as well. During the 1923 local elections, he was the number one candidate on the ZDP's list, which came out as the victor against the local branch of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československa, KSČ).<sup>32</sup> Communist activists were quite agile amongst the local workers and the unemployed, who were eager to disrupt the rival's events as well. Just before the 1925 parliamentary elections, Nitsch was continuously interrupted in his speech at a party rally in Mníšek nad Hnilcom by the sympathizers of the KSČ, who shouted phrases like „*Hoch lebe die Kommunistische Partei!*” (Long live the Communist Party!)<sup>33</sup> In 1927, not only the political race got more diverse, but the incumbent mayor decided to lead the candidate list of the German Social Democratic Workers' Party (Deutsche Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei, DSDAP). The *Karpathen-Post* saw the decision made by Wittchen and his supporters, as „*they discovered their*

29 ŠA KE, pb. SN, OÚ GL, box 14, 992/1926. prez. 2020.

30 Ibidem, box 8, 631/1925. prez.

31 Zavatzky, Günter: Mníšek nad Hnilcom. Sabinov 2017. p. 80.

32 Results of the 1923 local elections in Mníšek nad Hnilcom: ZDP – 14 mandates, KSČ – 8 mandates. *Wahlergebnisse*. Karpathen-Post, 1923. szeptember 22.

33 ŠA KE, pb. SN, OÚ GL, box 12, 214/1926. prez.



*socialist consciousness only, when they acknowledged, they were not the ones, who were leading the ZDP's list.*"<sup>34</sup> Despite the article's negative connotations, the seven „Zipsers" and the six Social Democrats supported Wittchen in the local council of representatives.<sup>35</sup> In my perspective, Wittchen's move was first of all motivated by political pragmatism. For one thing: he saw it as a way of gaining support from local workers and the poorer classes by aiming to improve their material needs, and for second: to weaken the influence of the increasingly aggressive KSČ among them.

Earlier we mentioned, that the German-speaking elite of the Poprad-valley nourished a high sense of regional self-government, which also manifested in their way of defining themselves as „Zipsers". Though the Zipser word was not necessarily used to describe those, who were born in Spiš, nor was it a way to define „the German-speaker from Spiš", since there were several examples of people like Karl Bruckner<sup>36</sup> or Artur Polnisch,<sup>37</sup> who weren't born in Spiš, but integrated into the regional frames of society, thus „earned the right" to be called and to define themselves as Zipsers. The Zipser word was more of a tool to create solidarity amongst those, whose sole interest was to preserve the status quo of the political, economic and cultural relations: influence over factories and banks, schools and civil organizations. It was a method of expressing positive attitude towards the existing network of confidentials, decision-makers and the will to maintain this network. Even this on the other hand, had various shades. Miklós Fedor<sup>38</sup> defined the Zipser as such: „*This society of three nationalities has a common name: zipser. The Hungarian, the German and even the Slovak, the »spišák« calls*

34 Gemeindewahlen in Einsiedel. Karpathen-Post, October 8, 1927.

35 Results of the 1923 local elections in Mníšek nad Hnilcom: KSČ – 316 (8 mandates), ZDP – 270 (7 mandates), DSDAP – 214 (6 mandates), OKP – 121 (3 mandates). *Die deutsche Einheit in Einsiedel – wieder hergestellt.* Karpathen-Post, October 29, 1927.

36 Karl Bruckner/Bruckner Károly (1863–1945), teacher, school principal. Born originally in Oberschützen/Felsőölvő (Burgenland) in a Lutheran, German-speaking family. After finishing his university studies in Budapest, he settled down in Kežmarok in 1889, where he became a professor of the local Lutheran Lyceum. In 1902 he founded the Freies Lyzeum (Free Lyceum), which was meant to educate the German-speaking people living in the vicinity. Between the years of 1899–1906 and 1912–1929 he was elected as school principal of the Lutheran Lyceum. As a prominent, prestigious figure of the cultural life of Kežmarok, he was elected president of the ZDP on the founding assembly.

37 Artur Polnisch (1892–1965), journalist, bank manager. Born originally in Beli Manastir (Pélmonostor, present-day Croatia), later attended the Catholic High School in Levoča. After the consolidation of Czechoslovakia, he became the owner of the *Szepesi Híradó*, the Hungarian-language weekly newspaper, which was also the regional organ of the Hungarian opposition. During the 1930s, he was elected as bank manager of the Levoča-based Zipser Creditbank (Szepesi Hitelbank, Spišská úverná banka) and the head director of baths in Starý Smokovec (Ótátrafüred, Altschmecks). More on the life of Polnisch: Czáboczky, Sz.: *Career Paths*, pp. 62–66.

38 Miklós/Mikuláš Fedor (1874–1948), school principal, politician. He was the principal of the Slovak language elementary school of Levoča. He joined the OKP in the 1920s, became one of the leaders of the OKP's Slovak section, who often criticized not only the Czechoslovak government, but

*himself Zipser as well, who lived alongside them for centuries. This common name means nothing more, that they belong to the same family, living in brotherly love and understanding on the land of their ancestors.”*<sup>39</sup>

Emphasizing the idealised harmony of coexistence amongst the „indigenous peoples” of Slovakia was an element of the OKP’s communication,<sup>40</sup> the ZDP on the other hand prioritized an ethnic definition of the Zipser, which can be portrayed through the activity of the party members during the first half of the 1920s to lay the organizational basis for the Deutscher Kulturverband (German Cultural Association, DKV) in the region.<sup>41</sup> After the founding of the KDP, the ethnic definition slowly faded, while the regional definition became more vivid in the political communication of the ZDP. At their party rally organized in Levoča on October 22, 1929 Emmerich Varga<sup>42</sup> said: „*The Sudeten brothers deserve all honor and respect. They helped us a lot in the cultural field. We welcomed them with love, but they should not abuse their rights as our guests, and should not attempt to gain political merits through our bodies.*”<sup>43</sup> Naturally, the „Zipser” as a regional category created the „non-Zipser” category, which was traditionally described with the „Hergelaufener” adjective, meaning foreigner, outsider or immigrant. The „Hergelaufener” word was endowed with a negative connotation and served as a label, as an antonym of the Zipser, thus describing people, who are not interested in preserving the status quo, in fact, they pose a potential threat to it. The reaction of the ones who were labelled (most commonly members of the KDP),<sup>44</sup> suggests that the anti-foreigner rhetorics of the ZDP successfully managed to the mobilize voters.

also the political trajectory of the HSLS. One of the head agitators of the OKP’s ideology of the „indigenous peoples” of Slovakia, whose purpose is to resist Czechoslovak centralization.

39 Fedor Miklós: Fehér zászló a Zipserföld bástyáján. Szepesi Híradó, January 9, 1937.

40 Szeghy-Gayer Veronika: Felvidékből Szlovenszkó. Magyar értelmiségi útkeresések Eperjesen és Kassán a két világháború között. Pozsony 2016. pp. 80–81.

41 The DKV was the legal successor of the Deutscher Schulverein, which aimed to give financial aid to the German language schools in Austria-Hungary and preserve the German school network. In Czechoslovakia, the DKV was also a job mediator for Sudeten German teachers, who worked in schools belonging to the church, but were upkept by the DKV. Czáboczky, Sz.: A Deutscher Kulturverband, pp. 7–9.

42 Emmerich Varga (1883–1951), Lutheran pastor, mayor. Born originally in Letanovce (Létánfalva, Lethensdorf) and later attended high school in the nearby town of Spišská Nová Ves. Afterwards he started to study Lutheran theology in Prešov (Eperjes, Preschau) and spent almost a year at the University of Leipzig. After serving as a young pastor in Zagreb and Szepetnek, he became the pastor of Poprad in 1910, where he served until 1942. He was the vice president of the ZDP, one of Andor Nitsch’s top confidentials, who also became a senator in the parliament of Prague between 1934–1935 due to the death of János Richter (1872–1934), former senator of the MNP. More on the life of Varga: Czáboczky, Sz.: Career Paths, pp. 67–71.

43 Szövetkezett pártjainknak komoly gyűlése Lőcsén. Szepesi Híradó, October 26, 1929.

44 For example Zoltán Kunsch, an agile member of the KDP, impulsively rejected, that he or his party members be labelled as „Hergelaufener”. ŠA PO, šp. SA LE, ŠZ LE, box 216, 851/1938. 1508/1938; Ibidem, box 218, 1297/1938. Zpráva.

## STRATEGIES OF THE KDP

When the KDP was founded by Manouschek and his companions, an ideology was put into practice, got a solid frame. The „Karpathendeutsch” category was presented by the party members as a regional, Slovakian version of the German Volksgemeinschaft idea, according to which all German-speakers/Germans belong to the German nation, national community on an ethnic-linguistic basis. The idea imagined a sense of belonging between not only the scattered German-speaking enclaves of Slovakia, but also the Germans living on the borderlands of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, despite that the socialization of these German-speaking societies differed. Of course, this ideology was not only a result of Andor Nitsch's decision to leave the BdL's parliamentary club, but more of an approach to maximize the effectiveness of the voter mobilization among the German-speaking societies of Slovakia. The KDP's nationalist agenda adapted to the logic of the Czechoslovak nation-state, more precisely: to the „nationality” category determined in the censuses. Not only it adapted to the framework of the state, but was also willing to cooperate with the Czechoslovak government as an ally of the BdL. Before the 1929 parliamentary elections, the KDP organized a party rally in Smolnícka Huta (Szomolnokhuta, Schmöllnitzhütte), where Manouschek announced *„you can't gain anything with the Zipser Deutsche Partei, they can't do any good for you, they can only bring harm. (...) You may vote as you please, I won't push anything, but I would like to remind you of something: ours is a German and a state-forming, not an oppositional party. You should think about, how you can do good. Hodža is bent on uniting all the Slovaks, while we're striving to unite the Germans.”*<sup>45</sup> Despite the departure of Manouschek from Slovakia in 1930,<sup>46</sup> the idea of „national unity” remained the most consistent voter mobilizing method applied by the party.

On the other hand, national unity as universalism has no regard for anykind of particularism: no regionalism and no social framework, which fuels a certain regional thought. A report from the Police Directorate in Bratislava states, that *„the »Bund der Landwirte« with the help of the »Deutscher Kulturverein« continues to agitate immensely amongst the Spiš Germans, who have interests in touristic facilities in the High Tatras. This is supported by Dr. Spina, Minister of Health, to cut them off from the Hungarians.”*<sup>47</sup> During the first half of the 1930s, the ZDP and the KDP aimed to create a „unified” German political block in Slovakia under its own leadership, but none of them actually succeeded. While the KDP nurtured close contacts with the German Consulate in Bratislava, Andor Nitsch was backed not only by the Hungarian government, but also gained the support of the German

45 ŠA KE, pb. SN, OÚ GL, box 93, 16322/29. admin. 70/1929. Zpráva

46 Manouschek left Slovakia supposedly at the turnpoint of 1929–1930 due to economic reasons and settled down in Switzerland. Kamerad Manouschek. Deutsche Stimmen, January 3, 1942.

47 Slovenský národný archív, Policajné riaditeľstvo v Bratislave, box 252, Mat/193/1.

consul in Košice.<sup>48</sup> Despite the race for „unities” being a tie, the political, economic and organizational background of the ZDP was constantly under pressure. First: the Slovakian regional leadership of the DKV was in the hands of the head of the KDP, a lawyer from Bratislava, Samuel Frühwirth (1876–1951).<sup>49</sup> Second: the Sudeten German teachers employed by schools upkept by the DKV were the most agile members of the KDP. Three: the BdL and the KDP strived to bring the German-speaking voters of Spiš under their influence financially as well.<sup>50</sup> All of these factors indicate, that the building of national unity amongst the Germans of Slovakia was coordinated from the western part of the republic. Social networks and regional institutions built on mutual trust or economic reliance, that were not an integral part of the KDP’s or the BdL’s structures were considered as „hostile to the German cause”. While the ZDP was in a defensive, the KDP took up the offensive, since the main goal of the „Carpathian Germans” was to dismember the local and regional networks and to integrate the German-speakers of Slovakia into the institutional framework of the Sudeten Germans. This ambition was often accompanied by anti-establishment rhetorics, which bore religious connotations,<sup>51</sup> related to „out of date” practices<sup>52</sup> and was affiliated with the use of the negative „Magyaron” label, meaning: the individual is „not a real German”.<sup>53</sup>

48 Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (henceforth MNL OL), Politikai osztály általános iratai (henceforth K 63), box 71, item 7/4, 34/pol./1935; Schvarc, Michal – Holák, Martin: Úvod do problematiky. In: Tretia ríša a vznik Slovenského štátu, Dokumenty I, eds. Schvarc, Michal – Holák, Martin – David, Schriffel. Bratislava 2008. XXXIV.

49 Der Karpathengau des Deutschen Kulturverbandes. Karpatten-Post, November 7, 1925.

50 Activists of the KDP founded new branches of the credit union called „Raiffeisenkasse” in several municipalities of Spiš, which were linked to the Mährische Genossenschaftszentrale (Moravian Union Centre) in Brno (Brünn). A Deutscher Bauernbund és a szepességi hitelszövetkezetek tiltakoznak az idegeneknek a szepességi gazdasági életbe való beavatkozása ellen. Szepesi Híradó – Szepesi Hírlap, February 22, 1930.

51 Leopold Brixel, a P. E. teacher employed in Levoča and Kežmarok, who hailed from Janov u Krnova (Johannestal), said the following at the previously mentioned party rally held in Smolnícka Huta: „*Nitsch and his party assume, that the Zipser Deutsche Partei was destroyed by us. They are referring to the unity and equality of Spiš. It’s a strong bastion. And what do we see? There are Lutherans there, who are plotting against the Catholics, but we Catholics are no dogs.*” ŠA KE, pb. SN, OÚ GL, box 93, 16322/29. admin. 70/1929. Zpráva.

52 Franz Karmasin (1901–1970), who became the leader of the KDP after 1935, announced the following at a party rally held in Švedlár in 1938: „*Our opponents boast of a beautiful past, but this is not nearly enough for us. We are not a museum where the past is meant to be preserved. We are on the threshold of the future, and that is the only thing what matters.*” ŠA KE, pb. SN, OÚ GL, box 140, 6580/1938. admin. 2672/938.

53 According to the political concept of the KDP, the Germans of Slovakia „became conscious” after the dissolvment of Hungarian rule. The concept was interpreted among others at the gathering of the KDP in Bratislava in 1937 celebrating 10th anniversary of the party’s establishment. MNL OL, K 63, box 78, item 7/4, 113/pol./1937.

If we were to bare in mind the political concept followed by the KDP and the party's strong ties with Germany's diplomatic representatives in Czechoslovakia, it won't strike us as a surprise, why the KDP decided to ally with Konrad Henlein's Sudetendeutsche Partei (Sudeten German Party, SDP). The poverty brought by the 1929 economic crisis, the Czechoslovak government's indifference or rejection towards the minority claims and the failure of the German governmental parties to fulfill these claims led to intense radicalization in the Czech and Moravian borderlands. Adolf Hitler's rise to power and the economic accomplishments of Nazi Germany appealed to the Germans living near the Czechoslovak-German border. When Hitler's foreign policy started to dismember the geopolitical system constructed by the Treaties of Versailles step by step, the Anschluß was such an event, which had a deep impact on the German-speaking societies of Slovakia as well. By 1938 the KDP is no longer an independent party, since it fused with the SDP after the 1935 parliamentary elections and Henlein was „offered” the presidential seat.<sup>54</sup> Since the KDP's members, who soon became admirers of Hitler and the Nazi symbols, still saw the ZDP as an obstacle of achieving „national unity”, threatening and the generation of fear became new methods of voter mobilization. Of course, the scale of enemies multiplied, since on the night of May 12–13, 1935, Štefan Bendžala (1897–?) from Levoča, who was also an agile, local member of the KDP, painted swastikas on eight points of the main square with white paint, with the following text in Spiš Slovak dialect: „*Židzi von!*”<sup>55</sup> (Out with the Jews!). Two days after the Anschluß, unknown perpetrators painted „Heil Hitler” and swastikas on the walls of three buildings in Mníšek nad Hnilcom.<sup>56</sup> 15–18 year olds decided to march in military uniforms on the streets of Švedlár, while shouting „Heil” and saluting in Nazi manner.<sup>57</sup> These events of power demonstration understandingly generated fear amongst those, who weren't members of the KDP and out of safety precautions, they decided to join the party.<sup>58</sup>

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54 MNL OL, K 63, box 71, item 7/4, 206/pol./1935.

55 ŠA PO, šp. SA LE, ŠZ LE, box 215, St. 695/1938. 209/1938.

56 Ibidem, box 214, St. 437/1938. 488/38.

57 ŠA KE, pb. SN, OÚ GL, box 140, 7295/1938. admin. 1199/1938.

58 ŠA PO, pobočka Poprad, Okresný úrad v Kežmarku, box 30, 618 prez. 913/38.