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***Political Parties of the German Minority in Interwar Czechoslovakia  
(1918-1938) – Brief Summary and Outline of the Issue<sup>1</sup>***

In the moment of breakdown of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918, the authority of state power ceased to exist, at least temporarily. While the Czech parties became the only carriers of political will in consequence of that, participating markedly in formation of the most significant institutions of the new state (e.g. the Revolutionary National Assembly or the government), the German parties got into difficult situation.

Although the basic structure of the German political parties did not change directly, the parties had to cope with different outer framework of their existence in consequence of constitution of the new state. „Until 1918 German-Austrian parties with organizational network and activities developed within the whole Cisleithania were active in the environment of German population of the Bohemian lands,<sup>2</sup> but the breakdown of the monarchy led to interruption of the bonds between the organizations of those parties in the Bohemian lands and their headquarters in Vienna. Those headquarters controlled by deputies of the Reichsrat played crucial role in almost all parties. Therefore the provincial unions of the German parties in Bohemia, Moravia and Austrian Silesia did not exert any own initiative and waited for instructions from Vienna in autumn 1918.<sup>3</sup>

Thus in such conditions, new political parties had to be established in fact, although preserving their ideological continuity with preceding period. All political directions could continue the pre-war formations in such spirit, with one exception, the Agrarian party.<sup>4</sup> The new state that had changed their previous position in the political system constituted essential problem for the existence of those parties. The so far privileged German political parties got into the position of representatives of a national minority that, in addition, mostly refused the new state formation.<sup>5</sup> At the beginning, similar

<sup>1</sup>The article is included in the solution of the Grant Project No. RM04/01/10 „Policy of Czechoslovak governments towards national minorities 1918-1938“, funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

<sup>2</sup>J. HARNA: *Stranickopolitický systém v Československu v letech 1918-1938*. J. MALÍŘ - P. MAREK (a kol.): *Politické strany. Vývoj politických stran a hnutí v českých zemích a Československu 1861-2004*. I. díl: Období 1861-1938, Brno, 2005. 538.

<sup>3</sup>N. LINZ: *Die Binnenstruktur der deutschen Parteien im ersten Jahrzehnt der ČSR*. K. BOSL, (ed.): *Die demokratisch-parlamentarische Struktur der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik*, München - Wien 1975. 201.

<sup>4</sup>Compare N. LINZ: *Der Bund der Landwirte in der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik. Struktur und Politik einer deutschen Partei in der Aufbauphase*, München - Wien, 1982. 132.

<sup>5</sup>The Germans of Bohemia-Moravia long refused to be integrated into the emerging Czechoslovakia and „supposed to remain a part of Austria that would join Germany.“ R. PETRÁŠ: *Menšiny v meziválečném Československu. Právní postavení národnostních menšin v první Československé republice a jejich mezinárodněprávní ochrana*, Praha, 2009. 167. The result of such attitude lead, in October 1918, to creation of the provinces of Sudetenland (centre Opava, Troppau), Deutschböhmen (centre Liberec, Reichenberg), Böhmerwaldgau (centre Prachatice, Prachatitz) and Deutschsüdmähren (centre Znojmo, Znaim). The attempt for disintegration failed; before the end of 1918, the provinces were occupied by the army. But even after

attitude was joined also by all German political parties; at least a part of them was then only gradually won for cooperation with state bodies. An important aspect of the Germans' attitude towards Czechoslovakia consisted in their demand to be recognized as the second state nation, which should lead to bilingual organization of the state. The recognition of German as the second state language would free most Germans from the duty to learn Czech, not forcing them to communicate bilingually.<sup>6</sup>

During the first half of 1919, the representatives of the German political parties who had stayed in Bohemia, Moravia and Austrian Silesia gradually started becoming aware of the fact that „*nicht alles Heil von Deutschösterreich oder der Friedenskonferenz zu erwarten war.*“<sup>7</sup> They also understood that the newly emerged power vacuum would have to be filled. Therefore political initiative had to be taken by the second group of representatives of political parties, i.e. mainly deputies of provincial councils, municipal politicians and party secretaries. So the new subjects emerged mostly with new people, in new democratic environment of the Czechoslovak Republic and in new socio-political conditions.<sup>8</sup> Theoretically, those political parties could choose between „*the policy accepting the Czechoslovak structures and the policy of fundamental refusal of affiliation to the Republic,*“ but actually, they had to cope with the reality of the Czechoslovak Republic.<sup>9</sup>

The signature of the Peace Treaty with Austria in Saint-Germain-en-Laye in September 1919 became only formal confirmation of the existing status for the German parties in Czechoslovakia. As from that moment, also the process of final formation of the German political parties in the new state entered its final stage, ending for most of them before early 1920, so that the new subjects could participate in the first Czechoslovak parliamentary election in April 1920. The established parties represented broad spectrum of opinions,<sup>10</sup> which, ironically, could have counterproductive impact. The Germans were not unified and the goals formulated by them often contradicted each other.<sup>11</sup>

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that, the representatives of German parties hoped that the Paris Peace Conference would guarantee the right of self-determination to the German minority. That did not come true, and the territories with predominantly German population were finally integrated into Czechoslovakia on the base of the peace treaty with Austria (September 1919) without considering the right of self-determination. Compare LINZ: *Der Bund der Landwirte*, 115-119. Besides, the separatist attempt led to later mistrust of the Czechoslovak official places towards the German demands on autonomy.

<sup>6</sup> That demand was directed „*auf die Fortsetzung der Verhältnisse unter der Monarchie und belud die ,tschechoslowakisch' sprechende Bevölkerungsmehrheit mit der Last, Deutsch zu lernen, um auf diese Weise die Gemeinsamkeit im Staate herzustellen.*“ M. ALEXANDER: *Die "Burg" und die Deutschen*. Die "Burg". Einflußreiche politische Kräfte um Masaryk a Beneš, Bd. 2, hrsg. von K. BOSL, München - Wien, 1974. 65.

<sup>7</sup> LINZ: *Die Binnenstruktur*, 203.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem. In June 1919, municipal election was held in Czechoslovakia; German parties participated in them too, recognizing in fact the new state in that way.

<sup>9</sup> L. J. BERAN: *Odepřená integrace. Systémová analýza sudetoněmecké politiky v Československé republice 1918-1938*, Praha, 2009. 97.

<sup>10</sup> From the perspective of their attitude towards the new state, they can be divided into two groups – activist, tending to cooperate with the Czechoslovak government, and negativistic, maintaining negative attitude towards the newly established state for the whole period of their existence.

<sup>11</sup> Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte aus Prag. Innenpolitik und Minderheitenprobleme in der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik (hereinafter Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte), Teil I. Von der

The Constitutional act from 1920,<sup>12</sup> adopted without presence of representatives of national minorities, guaranteed extensive minority rights to the Germans, the German school system could boast three universities and the Germans took significant positions also in economic sphere.<sup>13</sup> But the absence of representatives of minorities from preparation of the fundamental law of the country did not result from considered strategy of Czechoslovak politicians but it rather carried signs of general political uncertainty and partially also incompetence of the Czech political parties, „*im Hinblick auf die eventuelle Abhaltung von Neuwahlen parteipolitische Teilinteressen zu überwinden und eine konsensuelle Lösung zu finden.*“<sup>14</sup> Last but not least, also the unwillingness of the Sudeten German political spectrum to participate in any way in the building of the new state played an important role.

We can delimit several periods from the perspective of the development of the First Czechoslovak Republic and the attitude of the German political parties to it. Until the first half of the 1920s, there was no cooperation at governmental level, the German parties struggled for recognition of their demands towards the state, considered minimalist by them. Therefore the German civic parties united in the German Parliamentary Union (*Der Deutsche parlamentarische Verband*)<sup>15</sup> that delimited itself negatively against the Republic. It issued a sharp declaration according to which „*the Czechoslovak state was constituted to the detriment of historical truth and will endanger the peace forever.*“<sup>16</sup> But at the beginning of the 1920s, the formation started getting serious flaws.<sup>17</sup>

In 1925, after the parliamentary election, the situation at the Czechoslovak political scene changed; the strongest subjects in the Sudeten German party spectrum became the Union of Farmers (Bund der Landwirte, BdL) and the German Christian

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Staatsgründung bis zum ersten Kabinett Beneš 1918-1921. Berichte des Generalkonsuls von Gebstättel, des Konsuls König und des Gesandten Professor Saenger. Ausgewählt, eingeleitet und kommentiert von Manfred Alexander, Veröffentlichungen des Collegium Carolinum, Band 49/I, München, 2003. Der Wahlkampf der deutschböhmisches Parteien, Der Geschäftsträger des Deutschen Reiches An das Auswärtige Amt, Prag, den 24. März 1920, Nr. 101, pp. 264-265, (p. 264).

<sup>12</sup> „Für einen demokratischen Staat war es sicher merkwürdig, daß die politischen Repräsentanten eines bedeutenden Teils der Staatsbevölkerung, nämlich die der Minderheitenvölker, an der Ausarbeitung der grundlegenden Normen des Staates, u. a. auch der Verfassung und des Sprachengesetzes, nicht teilnahmen.“ J. KUČERA: *Minderheit im Nationalstaat. Die Sprachenfrage in den tschechisch-deutschen Beziehungen 1918-1938*, München, 1999. 61.

<sup>13</sup> J. ŠEBEK: *Politické strany německé menšiny*. J. MALÍŘ - P. MAREK (a kol.): *Politické strany. Vývoj politických stran a hnutí v českých zemích a Československu 1861-2004*. I. díl: Období 1861-1938, Brno, 2005. 861.

<sup>14</sup> KUČERA: *Minderheit im Nationalstaat*, 61.

<sup>15</sup> German Social Democratic Workers Party in the Czechoslovak Republic (Deutsche sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik, DSDAP) did not become part of the Union. Compare *Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte*, Teil I, Diskussion über die Gründung eines deutschen Nationalverbandes. Fernbleiben der deutschen Sozialdemokraten, Deutsche Gesandtschaft An das Auswärtige Amt, Prag, den 11. Mai 1920, Nr. 107, pp. 279-280; Gründung des parlamentarischen Verbandes der deutschen bürgerlichen Parteien, Deutsche Gesandtschaft An das Auswärtige Amt, Prag, den 19. Mai 1920, Nr. 110, pp. 282-283.

<sup>16</sup> E. BROKLOVÁ: *Československá demokracie. Politický systém ČSR 1918-1938*, Praha, 1992. 97.

<sup>17</sup> J. ŠEBEK: *Německý novoaktivismus. Československo 1918-1938. Osudy demokracie ve střední Evropě*, 2, J. VALENTA, E. VORÁČEK, J. HARNA, (eds.), Praha, 1999. 640.

Social People's Party (Deutsche christlichsoziale Volkspartei, DCV), advocating the activist concept of cooperation, whose representatives joined the first nationally mixed government in October 1926.<sup>18</sup> It must be realized that the German parties did not condition their joining the government by national concessions then, but that „*die Teilhabe an der Regierungsgewalt und die dadurch erhoffte Sicherung bestimmter sozialer Interessen...*”<sup>19</sup> became crucial for them at that moment.

The world economic crisis that affected Europe at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s did not stay out of Czechoslovakia. Unemployment in Sudeten areas grew to the skies and the attitudes of local inhabitants started becoming radical.<sup>20</sup> In connection with the development of the political situation in neighbouring Germany, the question emerged which subject would defend and assert the goals of the Sudeten Germans. Both so-called negativistic parties – German National Socialist Workers' Party (Deutsche nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei, DNSAP) and German National Party (Deutsche Nationalpartei, DNP) found themselves in a situation of danger of being officially banned.

So the representatives of the endangered parties saw the last resort in „*creating a unified political national front that should be constituted by merger of DNSAP and DNP with the other German civic parties and directed against Marxism. It was only necessary to find a politically not too capable but sufficiently influential saviour.*”<sup>21</sup> Konrad Henlein became that person, getting to the top of the new movement – Sudeten German Homeland Front (Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront, SHF) – that was established in October 1933. The new subject did not have firm political program, its only goal was to unify all Sudeten Germans.<sup>22</sup>

The last stage of development of the German parties in Czechoslovakia started in 1935 when the Sudeten German Party (Sudetendeutsche Partei, SdP) was constituted before the parliamentary election, relying also upon middle classes that had elected mainly civic parties until then. SdP dominated clearly the German political spectrum in the election, while the activist parties gradually lost their influence although they tried to „*constitute a new activist platform – the so-called neo-activism.*”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> While the former party remained part of the governmental coalitions until spring 1938 when it merged with the Sudeten German Party, the Christian Socials stayed in the government only until 1929 when they were replaced by the DSDAP representative (Ludwig Czech). Erwin Zajicek, the representative of Christian Socials, rejoined the government only in 1936.

<sup>19</sup> P. BURIAN: *Chancen und Grenzen des Sudetendeutschen Aktivismus*. K. BOSL (ed.): *Aktuelle Forschungsprobleme um die Erste Tschechoslowakische Republik*, München – Wien, 1969. 142. Also the corn duties and the so-called congrua (salary of priests in states without separation of church and state) became an important aspect of cooperation of the new governmental coalition. Thus it was not an attempt for Czech-German settlement but rather a purpose-built cooperation.

<sup>20</sup> J. HAAG: *Knights of the Spirit: The Kameradschaftsbund*. *The Journal of Contemporary History*, Volume 8, 1973, No. 3, p. 140.

<sup>21</sup> M. VYMAZALOVÁ: *Sudetoněmecká strana 1935-1936* (unpublished thesis), Praha, 1999. 19.

<sup>22</sup> But SHF wished to go another way than National Socialism. It was ready to recognize the Czechoslovak Republic and formulated clearly its goals – spiritual development of the Sudeten Germans, stress on the estates' idea etc. For negotiations of constitution of SHF compare M. BURIAN: *Deutscher Turnverband a československý stát v letech 1918-1933*. M. WAIC (hg.): *Češi a Němci ve světě tělovýchovy a sportu*, Praha, 2004. 65-66. J. CESAR - B. ČERNÝ: *Politika německých buržoazních stran v Československu v letech 1918-1938*. Vol. II. (1930-1938), Praha, 1962. 196-202.

<sup>23</sup> ŠEBEK: *Politické strany*, 863.

***German Social Democratic Workers Party in the Czechoslovak Republic  
(Deutsche sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik, DSDAP)***

When the Czechoslovak independence was declared in October 1918, Josef Seliger (1870–1920) was leading the party. When negotiating with the Czechoslovak authorities in November 1918,<sup>24</sup> he insisted on the right of self-determination for the Sudeten Germans on behalf of the provincial government and ranked among the most significant representatives of the attempt to create the German separatist provinces. The Social Democratic Party was constituted officially at the constituent congress in Teplice (Teplitz) at the turn of August and September 1919 „from former provincial unions of Bohemia, Moravian and Silesia of the Social Democratic Party of Austria.”<sup>25</sup>

In the program area, DSDAP continued the theses of national issue of the Brno program from 1899 that supposed the introduction of personal and territorial autonomy.<sup>26</sup> At the 7<sup>th</sup> congress of the Social Democratic Workers Party of Austria, the demand on transformation of Austria into a democratic multinational federal state was submitted among other things; further, autonomous national districts should be created or an act governing the rights of the national minorities should be adopted.<sup>27</sup>

The German Social Democrats based their demands in economic and social issues on the Vienna program from 1901 and relied on Austromarxism in ideological area, refusing the idea of proletarian revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat. But they considered Czechoslovakia a product of „Entente imperialism” and saw the task of the party in fighting the counter-revolutionary character of the new state.<sup>28</sup>

In relationship to the newly established state, a shift occurred from the demand on unlimited right of self-determination in the spirit of joining the German Austria that had still been asserted in early 1919, to the demand on autonomy for the Germans inside Czechoslovakia. At the congress of Teplice, a resolution was passed to express recognition of the new state, „provided that it is ready to include the Sudeten German Social Democracy into the creation of its content.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Compare Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte, Teil I, Verhandlungen mit den Tschechen. Die Zukunft Deutschböhmens, Deutsches Konsulat An den Herrn Reichskanzler Ebert, Prag, den 13. November 1918. 79-82.

<sup>25</sup> ŠEBEK: *Politické strany*, 864. The very name, i.e. the German Social Democratic Workers Party in the Czechoslovak Republic, suggested recognition of the new state. LINZ: *Die Binnenstruktur*, 206.

<sup>26</sup> DSDAP demanded „establishment of state-constituting national corporations consisting of (territorial) representatives of non-mixed districts and (personal) representatives of population of the relevant nationality from mixed districts...” BERAN: *Odepřená integrace*, 101.

<sup>27</sup> For more detail compare L. J. BERAN: *České státní právo*. Available at [http://www.go-east-mission.de/dateien/cz/45\\_080307.pdf](http://www.go-east-mission.de/dateien/cz/45_080307.pdf), 4. BERAN: *Odepřená integrace*, 368-369.

<sup>28</sup> E. BROKLOVÁ: *Politická kultura německých aktivistických stran v Československu 1918-1938*, Praha, 1999. 56.

<sup>29</sup> K. SATOR: *Německá sociálně demokratická strana dělnická v Československé republice*. S. KOKOŠKA, T. OELLERMANN (eds.): *Sudetští Němci proti Hitlerovi. Sborník německých odborných studií*,

So the German Social Democracy had abandoned its irredentist goals sooner than the German civic parties and expressed its readiness to recognize the new state and to engage politically within its scope. But that did not mean that it had given up the right of self-determination; it had only decided to assert it in the Czechoslovak parliament.

From the perspective of presentation of its opinions, DSDAP had relatively sufficient opportunities to dispense them. The newspaper *Social Democrat* (Sozialdemokrat) became the central press voice from September 1921; a number of regional periodicals existed besides it – *Freedom* (Freiheit) or *People's Will* (Volkswille).<sup>30</sup>

The German Social Democracy ranked among the best-organized parties in Europe and could continue the line from the period before 1914. The party leaders resided first in Teplice-Šanov (Teplitz-Schönau) and in early 1920s moved to Prague. The parliamentary election of April 1920 constituted the greatest success in the whole party history. It obtained 31 mandates in the Chamber of Deputies and 16 in the Senate and ranked first among the German parties.<sup>31</sup> Even the possibility of creation of a governmental coalition of socialist parties emerged, but failed because of the DSDAP demands in the area of national policy.<sup>32</sup>

In early 1920s, the leading elites were exchanged in the party and the political line changed as a consequence. In October 1920, several days after the party congress in Carlsbad, Josef Seliger suddenly died<sup>33</sup> and the Brno lawyer Ludwig Czech (1870-1942<sup>34</sup>) replaced him. He remained chairman of the party virtually during the whole interwar period; only in March 1938 he was substituted by Wenzel Jaksch (1896-1966).

The German Social Democracy did not repeat its election success from April 1920 any more. In the election of 1925 it obtained only 17 mandates in the Chamber of Deputies and 9 in the Senate<sup>35</sup> and it was also this drop that allowed the creation of right-wing coalition (civic coalition) a year later.<sup>36</sup>

At the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1920s, the attitude of DSDAP to the issue of possible joining the Czechoslovak government started changing. Words of readiness to participate in governmental cooperation were clearly expressed at the congress in

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Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, v. v. i., Praha, 2008. 22. The German Social Democracy demanded segmentation of the territory of the state into nationally delimited complexes. Thus its ideas were oriented to transformation from a national into a multinational state.

<sup>30</sup> ŠEBEK: *Politické strany*, 865.

<sup>31</sup> Deset let Československé republiky. Svazek první, (hereinafter DLČS), Praha, 1928. 292-293.

<sup>32</sup> *Právo lidu*, the press voice of the Czechoslovak Social Democracy, refused cooperation stating that „we will not allow our state to be fragmented.” SATOR: 25.

<sup>33</sup> „Durch den Tod Seligers haben nicht nur die deutschen Sozialdemokraten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik ihren Führer verloren: auch das Deutschtum im allgemeinen beklagt in ihm einen, trotz aller Mäßigung im Ausdruck, verlässlichen und mutigen Verteidiger seiner Selbstbestimmungsrechte...” Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte, Teil I, Zum Tode Seligers, Deutsche Gesandtschaft An das Auswärtige Amt, Prag, den 19. Oktober 1920, Nr. 136, p. 334.

<sup>34</sup> He died in Terezín.

<sup>35</sup> DČLS, 294-295.

<sup>36</sup> The German and the Czechoslovak Social Democracy criticized unanimously mainly the social policy of the government. ŠEBEK: *Politické strany*, 867. For more detail compare also BERAN: *Odepřená integrace*, 230-231.



Carlsbad in August 1929 already. In the election of October 1929, a part of voters who had voted for other subjects in preceding election returned to the party and the German Social Democratic Workers Party in the Czechoslovak Republic became the strongest German political party with 21 deputies and 11 senators, again.<sup>37</sup> After complicated coalition negotiations, the German Social Democracy joined the government in the end;<sup>38</sup> its chairman Ludwig Czech became Minister of Social Care, striving particularly to mitigate the impacts of the economic crisis.

The economic crisis and the assumption of power by the Nazis in 1933 brought a change to DSDAP too. Its support to anti-fascist opposition created space for conflicts first with the German national parties in Czechoslovakia and then with SHF. Wenzel Jaksch, the leading representative of the party, was convinced that the manoeuvring space of the democratically thinking Sudeten Germans turned considerably narrow because of „unexpectedly quick establishment of Hitler’s regime in Germany.” Thus he recognized the defensive policy of his party „that retreated from the predominance of the unemployed and from the pressure of Nazism to the only bastion that was left to it: the governmental coalition.”<sup>39</sup> In the election of 1935 the German Social Democracy obtained only 11 mandates in the Chamber of Deputies and 6 mandates in the Senate and lost 50 % of its votes.<sup>40</sup>

The Brno congress of June 1935 decided that the party would stay in the government and cooperate more closely with democratic parties. A year later, the German Social Democracy participated in elaboration of the concept of so-called neo-activism.<sup>41</sup> Its defenders (Wenzel Jaksch, Hans Schütz or Gustav Hacker<sup>42</sup>) asserted more active defence of the German national demands and recognition of equality of rights of the German in all areas of social life.

In March 1938, the last stage of existence of DSDAP started. After the Anschluss, Konrad Henlein called all Sudeten Germans „to recognize now the claim of the Sudeten German Party to their exclusive representation and to join his party.”<sup>43</sup> Soon both BdL and DCV followed his call. At the congress of Liberec (Reichenberg), Wenzel Jaksch was elected to the top of DSDAP and Ludwig Czech left the government a month later.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Československá statistika (hereinafter referred to only as ČSS) – Svazek (Volume) 70. Řada I. (Volby, sešit 4). Volby do poslanecké sněmovny v říjnu 1929. Praha, 1930. 9.

<sup>38</sup> The party stopped conditioning its joining the government by concessions in national policy. SATOR: 27.

<sup>39</sup> M. BACHSTEIN: *Wenzel Jaksch a sudetoněmecká sociální demokracie*. S. KOKOŠKA - T. OELLERMANN (eds.): *Sudetští Němci proti Hitlerovi. Sborník německých odborných studií*, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, v. v. i., Praha, 2008. 31. The German Social Democracy stopped requiring concessions in self-government or in cultural area for some time.

<sup>40</sup> ČSS – Svazek (Volume) 134. Řada I. (Volby, sešit 5). Volby do poslanecké sněmovny v květnu 1935, Praha, 1936. 9. While in 1929 the party obtained 6,86 % votes, in 1935 it got only 3,64 %.

<sup>41</sup> We can meet also the name of young activism (Jungaktivismus).

<sup>42</sup> He constituted the most problematic element in that trio, with regard to his good relationship to Nazi Germany.

<sup>43</sup> Ch. SCHAFFRANNEK: *Poslední fáze sociálně demokratického boje proti Sudetoněmecké straně na jaře a v létě 1938*. S. KOKOŠKA - T. OELLERMANN (eds.): *Sudetští Němci proti Hitlerovi. Sborník německých odborných studií*, Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, v. v. i., Praha, 2008. 45.

<sup>44</sup> Jaksch was not called to the government, and so the party lost its last source of power.

The German Social Democracy, as the only German party, stayed loyal to the principles of the Czechoslovak democracy, while the other existing activist parties recognized the primacy of the Sudeten German Party. But it faced a difficult task – to perform such policy that would differ from the radical course of SdP in its contents but that would be, at the same time, acceptable for the Czech government.<sup>45</sup>

### **German Christian Social People's Party (Deutsche christlichsoziale Volkspartei, DCV)**

The activity of the party continued the traditions of the Austrian Christian Social Party (Christlichsoziale Partei Österreichs) established in 1893. After the break-up of Austria-Hungary and in connection with the municipal election (June 1919), an organizational structure had to be built to get rid of the influence of the Vienna headquarters. The party succeeded, although in weakened form, in preserving continuity with pre-war period and „auf derselben ideologischen Plattform ohne größere Namensänderung nach 1918 weiterzuarbeiten.“<sup>46</sup>

The German Christian Social People's Party was established in Prague on 2 November 1919; the party program was approved by the provincial congress two months before. By being created in Prague, the capital of the new state, the party manifested, as the only German party, very soon to recognize the Czechoslovak capital as the decisive political centre.

The party program was elaborated mainly by two university professors<sup>47</sup> – Karl Hilgenreiner, theology professor (1867-1948, party chairman in 1927-1935<sup>48</sup>) and Robert Mayr-Harting, civil law professor (1874–1948). In the national issue, the program advocated, similarly to the other parties, the assertion of full political equality and autonomy; the Christian Socials followed the constitutional protection of the national state. In economic part, it relied on the „principles of social teaching of the Church; social problems should be solved by introducing organization of estates overcoming class division.“<sup>49</sup> In cultural area, considerable attention was paid particularly to the educational issue; state assistance was required for „confession schools; besides, also anti-Semitic tendencies appeared, e.g. numerus clausus for Jew students at secondary schools and universities, which was justified by religious-cultural regards.“<sup>50</sup> The party required introduction of plebiscite for important issues.<sup>51</sup>

Although the German Christian Social People's Party did not have any own press

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<sup>45</sup> SCHAFFRANNEK: 45.

<sup>46</sup> LINZ: *Die Binnenstruktur*, 212.

<sup>47</sup> Also dr. Wenzel Frind (1843–1932), the Prague suffragan and provost of the Metropolitan canonry at St. Vitus in Prague participated in elaboration of the program.

<sup>48</sup> Josef Böhr, editor in chief of the *Volkszeitung* magazine in Varnsdorf, was the first chairman of the party.

<sup>49</sup> ŠEBEK: *Politické strany*, 877.

<sup>50</sup> Ibidem, 878.

<sup>51</sup> For more detail compare J. ŠEBEK: *Mezi křížem a národem. Politické prostředí sudetoněmeckého katolicismu v meziválečném Československu*, Brno, 2006. 32-35.



voice, it could rely on a number of Catholic periodicals. The *German Newspaper* (Deutsche Presse) was the basic newspaper of the party from 1925.

Two wings represented by both above stated professors were active inside the party. Robert Mayr-Harting represented the moderate part of the party, tending to cooperation with the Czechoslovak political representation. His conception won in mid-1920s when the party became part of the government of civic coalition; Mayr-Harting got the office of Minister of Justice. But there was a national wing in DCV too; it „preferred the Sudeten German interests to a national interests of the Catholic policy”<sup>52</sup> and was represented by Karl Hilgenreiner.

The DCV membership consisted predominantly of active Catholics, both in towns and in villages. The strongest organizations were situated in south Moravia (around Znojmo, Znam) and in Silesia (around Opava, Troppau). In 1923 the party had about 44 000 members. By the end of the 1920s, that number dropped to 38 000, 43 % of which in Moravia and Silesia. As only a third part of the Sudeten Germans lived in that area, the percentage representation of DCV was higher than in Bohemia there.<sup>53</sup>

The parliamentary election of April 1920 did not turn out very well for the German Christian Social People's Party. Together with the Union of Farmers, those two civic mid-oriented parties obtained 28,1 % of all German votes, but DCV got only 11,1 % of German votes and 10 deputies and 4 senators (compared to 31 mandates of its big political rival, DSDAP).<sup>54</sup>

DCV achieved the best electoral result for the period of its existence in the parliamentary election of 1925 when it obtained almost a fifth part of all German votes and 13 deputies and 7 senators.<sup>55</sup> The party owed its success also to the lack of popularity of the German negativism that was politically markedly weakened in mid-1920s. A year later, DCV and BdL joined the government; Robert Mayr-Harting got the office of Minister of Justice.<sup>56</sup> But that step did not constitute attempt for Czech-German settlement but rather purpose-built cooperation; the German parties did not condition their joining the government by national concessions.

In the parliamentary election, hold in 1929, the position of the Christian Social Party was weakened<sup>57</sup> and the post-election negotiations finally led to withdrawal of DCV from the government,<sup>58</sup> because of the demand that the non-socialist bloc is not

<sup>52</sup> BERAN: *Odepřená integrace*, 102.

<sup>53</sup> LINZ: *Die Binnenstruktur*, 214.

<sup>54</sup> DČLS, 292-293.

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem, 294-295.

<sup>56</sup> The representatives of the German parties were first to get the offices of Ministers of Education and National Enlightenment and Posts and Telegraphs, but the idea was opposed by the Czechs. It is important that the Germans adopted also less significant offices in 1926, although they certainly had, because of their economic significance, claim to offices, „von denen aus mehr und nachhaltiger Aufbau und Ausbau des Staates hätten beeinflusst werden können.” BURIAN: *Chancen und Grenzen*, 142.

<sup>57</sup> DCV, together with the German Trade Party (Deutsche Gewerbestimme), obtained 4,71 % votes and 14 deputies and 8 senators. ČSS, Volume 70, p. 9.

<sup>58</sup> It was a near-sighted political step, „because a party that had stood at the cradle of activist line of the German policy was eliminated.” ŠEBEK: *Mezi křížem a národem*, 135.

stronger than the socialist bloc in the government.<sup>59</sup> The Czech Social Democrats had insisted on the German Social Democrats to join the government. But it was not international solidarity but political calculation. The withdrawal from the government led to gradual radicalization of DCV and to stronger accentuation of national political interests caused by the activity of its chairman, Karl Hilgenreiner.

After the establishment of the Sudeten German Homeland Front in autumn 1933, DCV assumed disapproving attitude against that movement, feeling endangered by calls concerning the Christian world-view; but later it changed its attitude and tried to establish cooperation.

The year 1935 and the May parliamentary election brought serious defeat to DCV. The party obtained only 1,98 % votes and 6 mandates.<sup>60</sup> The electoral failure signalled the fight for further direction of the party. There were voices demanding merger with the then strongest German political subject – Sudeten German Party. At the Prague congress in September 1935, the activist wing won and Hans Schütz (1901-1982), trade union leader, became its speaker; Count Friedrich Stolberg (1877-1954) was elected chairman of DCV. The negotiations with Milan Hodža, the Prime Minister, led to the party's return to the Czechoslovak government; Erwin Zajicek (1890-1976) joined it as minister without portfolio.<sup>61</sup> The fact that he and Franz Spina (BdL) held only the offices of ministers without portfolio clearly showed „*wie uninteressant die deutschen Aktivisten im Grunde für die Staatsleitung jetzt geworden waren.*“<sup>62</sup>

After the Anschluss of Austria in March 1938, DCV stopped its activity at proposal of the national wing around Karl Hilgenreiner on 23 March, it withdrew from the government and its deputies joined the SdP.

### **Union of Farmers (Bund der Landwirte, BdL)**

Union of Farmers was the strongest civic party of Germans in Czechoslovakia. It continued the activity of the German Agrarian Party (Deutsche Agrarpartei, established in 1905), but after the break-up of Austria-Hungary, the party had to be constituted completely newly, „*da seine hauptsächliche Vorgängerin [German Agrarian Party – L. N.] ... trotz großer Wahlerfolge keine nennenswerte Parteiorganisation aufgebaut hatte.*“<sup>63</sup>

BdL was established very soon, in mid-November 1918 in Česká Lípa (Böhmisch

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<sup>59</sup> Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte, Teil III. Von der Regierung unter Švehla bis zum Vorabend der nationalsozialistischen Machtergreifung in Deutschland 1926-1932, Berichte des Gesandten Dr. Walter Koch. Ausgewählt, eingeleitet und kommentiert von Manfred Alexander, Veröffentlichungen des Collegium Carolinum, Band 49/III, München 2009, Probleme der Regierungsbildung, Deutsche Gesandtschaft An das Auswärtige Amt, Prag den 26. November 1929, Nr. 77, pp. 208-210 (p. 208).

<sup>60</sup> ČSS, Volume 134. 9.

<sup>61</sup> Hodža announced the entry of DCV into government in his speech in the Senate. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (hereinafter PA AA), Berlin, R 103624, report of the German envoy in Prague, Ernst Eisenlohr, fol. 043.

<sup>62</sup> BURIAN: *Chancen und Grenzen*, 148.

<sup>63</sup> LINZ: *Die Binnenstruktur*, 216. For more detail compare N. LINZ: *Der Bund der Landwirte in der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik. Struktur und Politik einer deutschen Partei in der Aufbauphase*, München – Wien, 1982.

Leipa), and it built the party organizational network during the next three months. At the end of February 1919, the first provincial congress of the party for Bohemia was held and the foundations of its quickly developing organizational structure were laid there. The foundation of the party in Moravia did not run so quickly as in Bohemia; but in May 1919 the provincial congress met in Šumperk, „constituting the beginning of building of the organizational structure of the party in Moravia too.”<sup>64</sup>

The program of the party did not differ from the programs of the other German parties in its national part. The demand on national self-determination played the main role in it, followed by the demand on adequate representation in the government or on self-government of municipalities „in nationally unified administrative districts.”<sup>65</sup> Of course the demands formulated in such way did not correspond to reality and the representation in the government was not possible without clear expression of state-constituting attitude. The economic part of the program focused particularly on smallholders, BdL supported the land reform and division of large farms; the social part promoted protection „of all country social groups.”<sup>66</sup>

The party had to build also its own press voices along with its establishment. From October 1919, the *German Country Mail* (Deutsche Landpost), issued in Česká Lípa, became the main one.

The BdL voters came mainly from among the smallholders; the support among town inhabitants was minimal. The strongest party organization had their seat in the west and in the north of Bohemia, in the regions of Žatec (Saaz) and Louny (Laun), while there was no centre in Silesia. At the beginning of the 1920s, BdL had the most members among the German parties, and that position did not change even in 1930.<sup>67</sup>

Franz Křeppek (1855–1936), Franz Spina (1868–1938) or Wolfgang Zierhut (1886–1946) were active in the lead of the party.<sup>68</sup> Franz Spina, university professor and Slavist, ranked among leading representatives of the party from the early 1920s. When he got acquainted with the situation in the new state after joining the Czechoslovak parliament, he came to the conclusion „that under the given circumstances, there is only one way to improve the situation of the German people – positive policy, active work in the state, and if possible, cooperation.”<sup>69</sup> When BdL became part of civic coalition in 1926, Spina got the office of Minister of Public Works.

The parliamentary election of April 1920 brought success to BdL; the party obtained 11 mandates in the Chamber of Deputies and 6 in the Senate,<sup>70</sup> becoming the strongest German civic party. From the early 1920s, a wing supporting the cooperation with official places, of course particularly with the Czech Agrarian party

<sup>64</sup> ŠEBEK: *Politické strany*, 881. In consequence of difficulties with building of the organizational network of the party, BdL was established as a party with nationwide field of activity only on 22 January 1920 in Prague.

<sup>65</sup> BROKLOVÁ: *Politická kultura*, 72.

<sup>66</sup> ŠEBEK: *Politické strany*, 882. The party required dissolution of permanent army too.

<sup>67</sup> LINZ: *Die Binnenstruktur*, 217. The number of members started dropping only after 1933, in connection with their move to SHF.

<sup>68</sup> Franz Peterle, a farmer who was not in the parliament, was chairman of the party, but did not have any factual influence on the decision-making of the party.

<sup>69</sup> BROKLOVÁ: *Politická kultura*, 73.

<sup>70</sup> DČLS, 292-293.

members, profiled in the party.<sup>71</sup>

Union of Farmers ranked among top promoters of German activism.<sup>72</sup> In 1923 Franz Křeppek agreed the policy of cooperation with the Czechoslovak government with Professor Bruno Kafka and Ludwig Spiegl – both were from German Democratic Freedom Party (Deutsche Demokratische Freiheitspartei).<sup>73</sup>

BdL achieved the best electoral result for the period of its existence in the parliamentary election of 1925 when it ran in coalition with the German Trade Party (Deutsche Gewerbetypartei) and the Hungarian National Party (Magyar Nemzeti Párt). The 24<sup>74</sup> or 19 mandates<sup>75</sup> obtained transformed the formation into the strongest German political subject. The joining the government a year later was only logical result of preceding development.

In the parliamentary election held in 1929, BdL ran together with the German Work and Electoral Association (Deutsche Arbeits- und Wahlgemeinschaft, established in 1928). But the cooperation turned up unproductive when it did not bring the expected votes of town voters. On the contrary, the number of deputies, as compared to 1925, dropped to 16 and the number of senators to 9.<sup>76</sup>

After the foundation of SHF, the representatives of BdL established contacts with that movement. Konrad Henlein, its leader, was also aware of the need of preservation of positive relationships with the Czechoslovak government, and thus he searched for protection in the camp of the German activist parties and turned to the strongest German civic party – BdL. The goal of Henlein's efforts was to avoid the danger of official ban with the help of the BdL, particularly in the first weeks after foundation of SHF.<sup>77</sup>

Union of Farmers did not refuse negotiations. Its leaders hoped to get the main say in the new organization and to strengthen their own position. As the members of the BdL refuse to negotiate with the national socialists in June and September 1933, Franz Spina started direct negotiations with Henlein in October 1933 already. He took

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<sup>71</sup> ŠEBEK: *Politické strany*, 883.

<sup>72</sup> President Masaryk called the party to joint cooperation on the governmental level in 1921. Compare *Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte*, Teil I, Masaryk lädt den Bund der Landwirte zur Mitarbeit an der Beamtenregierung ein, *Deutsche Gesandtschaft An das Auswärtige Amt*, Prag den 3. Mai 1921, Nr. 186, pp. 434-435.

<sup>73</sup> Compare *Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte*, Teil II. Vom Kabinett Beneš bis zur ersten übernationalen Regierung unter Švehla 1921–1926, *Berichte des Gesandten Dr. Walter Koch*. Ausgewählt, eingeleitet und kommentiert von Manfred Alexander, *Veröffentlichungen des Collegium Carolinum*, Band 49/II, München 2004. Der Bund der Landwirte auf dem Wege zu einer realistischen Politik, *Deutsche Gesandtschaft An das Auswärtige Amt*, Prag den 17. Juli 1923, Nr. 65, p. 166, for shift of BdL towards realistic policy compare p. 167.

<sup>74</sup> DČLS, 294.

<sup>75</sup> Without the 5 mandates that fell upon the Hungarian National Party within the joint list of candidates. Compare *Národní shromáždění Republiky československé v prvném desetiletí*, Praha 1928, pp. 1202-1203.

<sup>76</sup> ČSS, Volume 70. 9.

<sup>77</sup> E. FRANZEL: *Sudetendeutsche Geschichte: eine volkstümliche Darstellung*, Mannheim - Würzburg 1990. 371. Henlein declared that „*Heimatfront stands on the floor of the state and favours essentially also the participation in the government.*“ R. N. FOUSTKA: *Konrád Henlein. Neoficiální historie jeho strany*, Praha, 1937. 28.

interest particularly in the relationship of SHF to the Czechoslovak state and to the BdL. The talks allowed Henlein and his movement to survive the initial period of uncertainty and to provide him with benevolent approach of the Czechoslovak authorities.<sup>78</sup>

As from the end of 1934, there was criticism of the existing policy towards SHF in BdL, related to fear from outflow of voters and from loss of political influence. Before the election of May 1935, the congress of the party met in March and its delegates supported Franz Spina's conception of activism. But when the election results were declared, it turned up that his policy had failed. BdL got only 1,73 % of votes and 5 deputies and none of senators.<sup>79</sup> In spite of that, Franz Spina became member of the government as minister without portfolio.

All activist parties were losing their sympathizers from 1935 because they did not have a program to be opposed to the „populist collecting program of the Sudeten German Party.”<sup>80</sup> In response to the electoral failure, there was change in the BdL leadership. Gustav Hacker (1900-1979) became chairman of the party in 1936. Hacker ranked, together with Wenzel Jaksch and Hans Schütz, among the representatives of so-called neo-activism, but at the same time tried to find a way also to Konrad Henlein. In January 1938 he tried to unite BdL with SdP; he did not succeed,<sup>81</sup> but on 16 March 1938 the BdL leadership decided that the party „withdraws from the headquarters of German activist parties and removes its representatives from activist district places.”<sup>82</sup> Hacker managed to dissolve the party and to transfer the membership to SdP.

### **German National Socialist Workers' Party (Deutsche nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei, DNSAP)<sup>83</sup>**

The German National Socialist Workers' Party constituted ideological antipole to DSDAP but on the other hand, both political subjects were similar in an essential aspect – in strong continuity with pre-war period. DNSAP continued the activity of the German Workers Party (Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, established in 1904). The establishment of the new state did not constitute significant problem because of the fact that the party headquarters were situated in Ústí nad Labem (Aussig an der Elbe). „In Czechoslovakia,

<sup>78</sup> F. ŠTĚPÁN: *Spolupráce německých buržoazních stran s henleinovskými fašisty v letech 1933-1935*. Sborník archivních prací XIII, No. 1, 1963. 7. Henlein could rely also on benevolent attitude of a part of „Czech right-wing politicians, in whose profit-seeking calculations he represented hope of government without socialists.” VYMAZALOVÁ: 22.

<sup>79</sup> ČSS, Volume 134. 9.

<sup>80</sup> BROKLOVÁ: *Politická kultura*, 81. The German envoy Eisenlohr wrote in July 1936: „Ich erwiderte ihm [Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs Krofta – L. N.], die Zusammenarbeit mit den deutschen Aktivisten nütze der tschechoslowakischen Regierung nichts, weil die Aktivisten von der Minderheit nicht als Repräsentanten des Deutschtums anerkannt würden...” PA AA, R 103624, fol. 084.

<sup>81</sup> ŠEBEK: *Politické strany*, 885.

<sup>82</sup> BROKLOVÁ: *Politická kultura*, 81. Franz Spina resigned on 22 March 1938.

<sup>83</sup> DNSAP ranked, together with the German National Party (Deutsche Nationalpartei, DNP) among so-called negativistic parties holding negative attitude against the new state.

the party was established at the congress in Duchcov in November 1919.”<sup>84</sup>

The DNSAP program was based on the program of its predecessor and was oriented against Marxism, liberalism and capitalism. The national part was dominated by Great Germany ideas; the party required also „ensured life space of nationalities with own constitution, own elected administration and territorial army.”<sup>85</sup> That model was in fact directed to a federally conceived state based on full territorial autonomy, casting some doubt on the existence of independent Czechoslovakia. The DNSAP program included even anti-Semitic passages. While Norbert Linz considers its anti-Semitism „economically and socially motivated”, Jaroslav Šebek writes of racially motivated defence of anti-Semitism.<sup>86</sup>

The DNSAP program found the greatest response in frontier industrial areas where inflow of Czech workers endangered the jobs of Germans, particularly in coal districts in the north and west of Bohemia. Thus the German Social Democracy logically became the greatest political rival; both parties competed for votes of workers, but also for support of middle-class traders and clerks.

Like it was the case in DSDAP, the party leaders from pre-war period kept the main say in DNSAP too – the cofounder of the party and until 1926 its chairman, Hans Knirsch (1877–1933), who can be classified as moderate party representative and advocate of loyal policy; his successor in chairman function<sup>87</sup> and party ideologist, Rudolf Jung (1882–1945), and the party secretary, Hans Krebs (1888–1947). Also the editor Josef Patzel (1876–1927) and the chief of trade unions and later senator Adam Fahrner (1873–1945) played an important role.

The parliamentary election of April 1920 brought only 5 deputies and 2 senators to DNSAP, in spite of joint list of candidates with the German National Party (the parties united into the „Deutsche Wahlgemeinschaft”).<sup>88</sup> Although we cannot speak of so-called activism or negativism in that stage yet, the voters of the German parties supported clearly the parties heading towards later policy of cooperation with the Czechoslovak government.

In the elections of 1925 and 1929, DNSAP ran as an independent subject already. Although the party could show great organizational activity, it could not be seen too much in the electoral result – in 1925 7 deputies and 3 senators<sup>89</sup> and four years later

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<sup>84</sup> ŠEBEK: *Politické strany*, 869. The main press voice of the party was *The Day* (Der Tag) newspaper. The German envoy in Prague, Samuel Saenger, wrote about the congress: „...auch hier die Anerkennung der unabänderlichen Realitäten, zunächst also der definitive gewordenen Zugehörigkeit zur Tschechoslowakischen Republik ... aber auch hier gleichzeitig die Wiederkehr des Bekennermutes zu seiner Nation und den mitgeborenen nationalen Grundrechten, die kein beschriebenes oder bedrucktes Papier einem nehmen könne.” *Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte*, Teil I, Eine Kundgebung Seligers und die Formulierung seiner politischen Grundsätze. Parteitag der deutschen Nationalsozialisten in Dux, Der Bevollmächtigte Vertreter des Deutschen Reiches An das Auswärtige Amt, Prag, den 21. November 1919, Nr. 82. 226.

<sup>85</sup> BERAN: *Odepřená integrace*, 100.

<sup>86</sup> LINZ: *Die Binnenstruktur*, 209-210. ŠEBEK: *Politické strany*, 869.

<sup>87</sup> He carried out that function until 1933 when DNSAP was dissolved.

<sup>88</sup> LINZ: *Die Binnenstruktur*, 211. „Deutsche Wahlgemeinschaft” (the German Electoral Association) got 17 deputies and 8 senators in total. *Národní shromáždění Republiky československé v prvním desetiletí*, pp. 1212-1213, 1223-1225).

<sup>89</sup> DČLS, 294-295.



8 deputies and 4 senators.<sup>90</sup>

The world economic crisis that affected Europe at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s did not stay out of Czechoslovakia. In autumn 1930, NSDAP won the election to the Reichstag in Germany, which led to increased activity of DNSAP. The party addressed successfully particularly the younger and thus more radical voters, frustrated particularly by increasing unemployment.

After Hitler's assumption of power, national socialist parties were banned in a number of states bordering on Germany. In connection with that development, the question emerged which subject would defend and assert the goals of the Sudeten Germans. Both so-called negativistic parties (DNSAP and DNP) found themselves in a situation of danger of being officially banned.<sup>91</sup>

### **German National Party (Deutsche Nationalpartei, DNP)**

Deutsche Nationalpartei continued the activity of Austrian-German national parties.<sup>92</sup> As in early 1919 political leadership was missing in the Bohemian lands, several national party unions were created in uncoordinated manner, which „eine enorme Zersplitterung der Kräfte bewirkte.”<sup>93</sup> After a short episode of Deutschböhmisches Volkspartei (established in April 1919), which was banned after 14 days because of its high treason activity, the Deutsche Nationalpartei was constituted in the same month, with slightly modified program, „but build the network of party branches only with difficulties.”<sup>94</sup>

The program of DNP, similarly as that of DNSAP, was based on the negative attitude towards Czechoslovakia and required national self-determination for its German inhabitants. In autumn 1919 DNP elaborated a proposal for national structure of the stated, which equalled, in fact, although unwillingly, the recognition of the newly established state.<sup>95</sup> The DNP representatives ranked among the most decisive opponents of the Czechoslovak state and criticized sharply the government policy towards the German population. In the opinion of DNP, the Germans were in the Czechoslovak Republic not out of their own will.<sup>96</sup>

The German National Party disposed of weak membership.<sup>97</sup> The party leadership

<sup>90</sup> ČSS, Volume 70. 9.

<sup>91</sup> In October 1933, the Czechoslovak government decided of dissolution of DNSAP. But a great part of DNSAP members moved immediately to the newly established SHF. R. KVAČEK: *K historii Henleinovy Sudetoněmecké strany. Dějepis ve škole*, Vol. IV., No. 5, 1957. 198. „The resolution of the government of dissolution of DNSAP and ban of activity of DNP was mere wild guess.” S. BIMAN, J. – MALÍŘ: *Kariéra učitele tělocviku*, Ústí nad Labem, 1983. 69.

<sup>92</sup> For example Nationalpartei Deutschböhmens and Deutschsoziale Volkspartei.

<sup>93</sup> LINZ: *Die Binnenstruktur*, 219.

<sup>94</sup> ŠEBEK: *Politické strany*, 873. The first congress of DNP at which the remaining national groups united with it was held only in early December 1919 in Liberec (Reichenberg).

<sup>95</sup> BERAN: *Odepřená integrace*, 99.

<sup>96</sup> BROKLOVÁ: *Československá demokracie*, 98. „We will never recognize the Czechs as masters, we will never feel as slaves in this state,” a part of one declaration of DNP said. Ibidem, 132.

<sup>97</sup> LINZ: *Die Binnenstruktur*, 220.

consisted mostly of former pre-war activists of German national associations. Ernst Storch (1865-1937), the mayor of Chomutov (Komotau), was the first chairman of the party.<sup>98</sup> But the main figure of the party was the chief of its parliamentary club and from 1922 its chairman, JUDr. Rudolf Ritter Lodgman von Auen (1877-1962).<sup>99</sup> Lodgman became fighter for the rights of Germans in Czechoslovakia;<sup>100</sup> he led the attempt for creation of the Deutschböhmen province in October 1918 and even participated in the negotiations of peace treaty as member of the Austrian delegation, but was not able to avoid the final verdict of the powers in Saint-Germain-en-Laye in September 1919. Other important officials included for example Alois Baeran, in Moravia Ernst Schollich or Othmar Kallina.

The parliamentary election of April 1920 brought 12 deputies and 6 senators to DNP (the party ran together with the German National Socialist Workers' Party, both subjects united into „*Deutsche Wahlgemeinschaft*“). With gradual consolidation of the Czechoslovak state, the influence of DNP and Lodgman von Auen grew weaker, which could be seen in the election of 1925. Before them, Lodgman von Auen tried to create the Sudeten German Union (*Sudetendeutscher Verband*) that would cover all German parties,<sup>101</sup> but did not succeed. DNP got weaker in the election;<sup>102</sup> Lodgman von Auen was not elected to the Senate in the first scrutiny, and therefore withdrew from further rounds, resigning to the office of chairman and retiring.<sup>103</sup>

The last election in which DNP took part was held in 1929. The party ran together with the Sudeten German Country Union (*Sudetendeutscher Landbund*), but failed. It got only 7 deputies (one deputy was elected for *Sudetendeutscher Landbund*) and not a single senator.<sup>104</sup> After Adolf Hitler's assumption of power, DNP had similar fate as DNSAP; official ban was imminent to it. While DNSAP dissolved by itself,<sup>105</sup> DNP did not do it and ceased to exist in fact after the ban.

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<sup>98</sup> In 1921 he was substituted by the physician Gustav Doberauer. No one of them was member of the parliament.

<sup>99</sup> The full name was banned according to the Czech law.

<sup>100</sup> In his opinion, there were two possibilities from the perspective of state organization – either the Czechs succeeded to catch the Germans round their necks, which would mean Czechization of the whole territory, or they had to cope with the fight of three and half millions of Germans. *Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte, Teil I, Politische Vorstellungen des Dr. Lodgman, Deutsche Botschaft An das Auswärtige Amt, Wien, den 24. Oktober 1919, Nr. 76. 208-212, (p. 208).*

<sup>101</sup> Compare *Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte, Teil II, Lodgman von Auen zum Eintritt Deutschlands in den Völkerbund und zum Zusammenschluss der sudetendeutschen Parteien, Deutsche Botschaft An das Auswärtige Amt, Prag, den 10. September 1925, Nr. 144. 373-374.*

<sup>102</sup> It obtained 10 deputies and 5 senators. *DČLS, 294-295.*

<sup>103</sup> The senator Heinrich Brunar became the new DNP chairman. The party was weakened by it and „*hat sich ... zu keiner einheitlichen und zielbewußten Aktion mehr aufzuraffen vermocht.*“ *Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte, Teil III, Die Deutschnationalen und der Aktivismus, Deutsche Gesandtschaft An das Auswärtige Amt, Prag den 12. Juli 1927, Nr. 27. 73.*

<sup>104</sup> *ČSS, Volume 70. 9.*

<sup>105</sup> Compare *Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte, Teil IV. Vom Vorabend der Machtergreifung in Deutschland bis zum Rücktritt von President Masaryk 1933-1935. Berichte des Gesandten Koch, der Konsuln von Bethusy-Huc, von Druffel, von Pfeil und des Gesandtschaftsrates von Stein. Ausgewählt, eingeleitet und kommentiert von Heidrun und Stephan Dolezel, Veröffentlichungen des Collegium Karolinum, Band 49/IV, München 1991, Selbstaflösung der D. N. S. A. P., Telegram, Prag, den 5. Oktober 1933, 13 Uhr, Nr. 31. 73-74.*

### **Sudeten German Party (Sudetendeutsche Partei, SdP)**

On 1 October 1933 already, Konrad Henlein issued a call from the author Walter Brand, which showed distinct features of Kameradschaftsbund (KB):<sup>106</sup> „I call herewith all parties and estates to unite all Sudeten Germans and I put myself in the lead of this movement.”<sup>107</sup> So the Sudeten German Homeland Front (Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront) was established.<sup>108</sup> The new political subject did not have firm political program and its only goal was to unite all Sudeten Germans. SHF profiled itself as popular movement that did not have anything to do with the discredited political parties.

The structure and the statutes of SHF corresponded to the political situation of that time – its leading places were occupied by KB members who had the main say in political, ideological and personal area; the former national socialists had not come to power yet.

Konrad Henlein, the SHF leader, avoided any indications of promotion of intolerant nationalism. He hoped that such moderate program would help to protect SHF against ban that was still imminent. He wanted to avoid the fate of DNSAP and DNP. The leadership of SHF had to abandon the implacable rhetoric directed against the existing activist political parties.

There was close interconnection among the leading persons of Kameradschaftsbund<sup>109</sup> and Sudeten German Homeland Front.<sup>110</sup> The SHF statutes were conceived so that their validity could be extended to the whole Sudeten German society.

The takeover of most national-socialist-oriented former members of DNSAP, after it had ceased to exist in October 1933, led to programmed conflict between

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<sup>106</sup> It was a closed movement of German national intelligence, consisting of 200-300 members. The goal of the organization established in 1926 as the Working Circle for Social Sciences (*Arbeitskreis für Gesellschaftswissenschaften*) and transformed legally in 1930, according to the federal laws, changing his name to *Kameradschaftsbund, Bund für volks- und sozialpolitische Bildung*, was to promote the ideas of Othmar Spann, Viennese philosopher and sociologist, and his teaching of estates' state. The goal of the KB members was, from the beginning, the unification of the „Sudeten German tribe” and transformation of Czechoslovakia into a federalist multinational state. Compare L. NOVOTNÝ: *Kameradschaftsbund. Contribution to the History of the Czech-German Relationship (Part one)*, Prague Papers on the History of International Relations 2008. 291-309. (*Part two*), Prague Papers on the History of International Relations 2009. 387-405.

<sup>107</sup> V. OLIVOVÁ: *Kameradschaftsbund. Z českých dějin. Sborník prací in memoriam prof. Dr. Václava Husy*, Praha, 1966. 248.

<sup>108</sup> „Mit der Gründung der Sudetendeutschen Heimatfront (SHF) im Oktober 1933 entstand eine – verglichen mit den traditionellen Parteien – in vielerlei Hinsicht andersartige politische Kraft, die in dem parlamentarisch-demokratischen System der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik von Beginn an einen Fremkörper darstellte.” J.-H. ESCHENBÄCHER: *Zwischen Schutzbedürftigkeit und Alleinvertretungsanspruch: Die Beziehungen der Sudetendeutschen Heimatfront zu den traditionellen bürgerlichen deutschen Parteien in der Tschechoslowakei 1933–1935*. Bohemia. Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur der böhmischen Länder, hrsg. im Auftrag des Collegium Carolinum von F. SEIBT, und H. LEMBERG, Bd. 39, 1998. 323.

<sup>109</sup> Walter Brand (1907-1980), Heinrich Rutha (1897-1937) or Wilhelm Sebekovsky (1906-1981).

<sup>110</sup> Konrad Henlein (1898-1945), Karl Hermann Frank (1898-1946) and others.

the moderate SHF leadership dominated by KB members and the radical part of the membership.<sup>111</sup> Ideological heterogeneity of SHF manifested itself more and more frequently in subsequent months.<sup>112</sup> The ideas of the radical members of the movement were unambiguously oriented to the National Socialism of the German Reich, while the opinions of the leadership, influenced by Spann's ideas, tended to the Austrian system.<sup>113</sup> The structure of Sudeten German Homeland Front represented certain double-track character – the intellectual, but politically inexperienced party leadership constituted the „centre”, while its counterweight consisted in less educated, but politically experienced national-socialistically oriented officials in the districts.

The first opportunity to show all-year work of Sudeten German Homeland Front under the guidance of Spann's intelligence was provided by the congress of Česká Lípa (Böhmisch Leipa) in October 1934.<sup>114</sup> But the official places hesitated to allow the congress to be held. The Ministry of the Interior did not show great enthusiasm, and even Wolfgang Zierhut, the BdL deputy, had to intercede with Rudolf Beran, the leader of the Czech Agrarian party. Zierhut assured the Czech Agrarians that he stood security for Henlein's loyalty towards the Czechoslovak Republic. At the same time, Henlein should publish expressions of his loyalty in the governmental newspapers, which he did.<sup>115</sup>

The main speech of Konrad Henlein<sup>116</sup> at the congress of Česká Lípa was in spirit of liberal and tolerant tone of the Kameradschaftsbund group. According to Henlein, the goal of the movement was to create a national association that should overcome social differences between members of the nation. Sudeten German Homeland Front has the goal of cooperation of Czechs and Germans and it is definitely not a fascist or national socialist movement, he declared. SHF was, according to his words, not a political party but a movement that wished primarily „union of the Germans in this state and their employment as state-conservative element under preservation of their

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<sup>111</sup> For growth of membership compare V. ZIMMERMANN: *Sudetští Němci v nacistickém státě. Politika a nálada obyvatelstva v říšské župě Sudety (1938-1945)*, Praha, 2001. 39.

<sup>112</sup> But, additionally to the different political goals and ideological roots, it must not be forgotten „daß es sich bei der Auseinandersetzung zwischen den beiden Strömungen zu einem großen Teil schlicht um Kämpfe um Posten und Macht handelte.” R. GEBEL: „Heim ins Reich!“ *Konrad Henlein und der Reichsgau Sudetenland (1938-1945)*, München, 1999. 27.

<sup>113</sup> S. DOLEZEL: *Základy říšskoněmecké politiky vůči Československu v letech 1933-1938 se zvláštním zřetelem k sudetským Němcům*. J. K. HOENSCH - D. KOVÁČ, (eds.): *Ztroskotání spoluzítí. Češi, Němci a Slovinci v první republice 1918-1939*, Prague, 1993. 107-108.

<sup>114</sup> Compare *Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte, Teil IV, Sudetendeutsche Heimatfront und tschechoslowakische Innenpolitik*, Deutsche Gesandtschaft An das Auswärtige Amt, Prag, den 19. Oktober 1934, Nr. 72, pp. 152-154; *Heimatfront-Kundgebung in Böhmisch-Leipa*, Deutsche Gesandtschaft An das Auswärtige Amt, Prag, den 22. Oktober 1934, Nr. 73, pp. 155-162.

<sup>115</sup> O. NOVÁK: *Henleinovci proti Československu. Z historie sudetoněmeckého fašismu v letech 1933-1938*, Praha, 1987. 41. It was completely clear political manoeuvre because Henlein represented a movement consisting predominantly of DNSAP members and SHF received financial subsidies from Germany.

<sup>116</sup> For the reception of Henlein's speech, compare *Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte, Teil IV, Resonanz der Henlein-Rede in der ČSR*, Deutsches Konsulat An das Auswärtige Amt, Reichenberg, den 29. 10. 1934, Nr. 75. 164-166.

*natural rights.*<sup>117</sup> In internal policy, Henlein asked for extended self-government<sup>118</sup> and equal occupation of offices in administration apparatus of the state, army, justice etc. In the end of his speech, Henlein offered cooperation of Sudeten Germans at building the state.<sup>119</sup>

The whole first half of 1935 was filled with the election campaign before the parliament election to be held in May. Sudeten German Homeland Front was transformed into Sudeten German Party (Sudetendeutsche Partei) on advice of the Agrarian party.<sup>120</sup> The new party prepared carefully for the election, he did not lack money from Sudeten German entrepreneurs and from the Reich.<sup>121</sup> According to the German envoy in Prague, Walter Koch, the Czechoslovak government hoped to cause problems to Henlein's movement by pressing it to change its name from SHF to SdP.<sup>122</sup>

On the other hand, still in April 1935 there were lively discussions that SHF could be banned.<sup>123</sup> National socialists, people's party and Czech and German Social Democrats within the government coalition expressed themselves in favour of the ban. The government did not come to reach an agreement and shifted the delicate problem to the president of the Republic, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. He finally decided that SHF would not be banned. According to Marie Vymazalová, he did not have sufficient documentation for it.<sup>124</sup> According to the report by the German envoy Koch, President Masaryk intervened as a *deus ex machina*. The „Národní listy” newspaper wrote on „*daß über Henlein definitiv entschieden worden sei und daß es zur Auflösung der Heimatfront nicht komme.*” According to the paper, it meant „*einen absoluten Sieg der Agrarier und eine vollständige Niederlage der sozialistischen Parteien.*” Konrad Henlein sent a long telegram to the President, assuring him of his complete

<sup>117</sup> OLIVOVÁ: 251. The speech included also a sentence according to which SHF differed essentially from National Socialism because it respected the freedom of the individual. That sentence indicated the influence of KB on preparation of the speech.

<sup>118</sup> „*As we do not live in national but multi-national state, the demand of democracy states that it has to provide not only individuals but also individual national groups with development of their life. We see true democracy in decentralization, i.e. in maximum self-government.*” BIMAN – MALÍŘ: 112.

<sup>119</sup> NOVÁK: 45. His speech in Česká Lípa was a well-prepared cover-up because any criticism was intended only for the Czech public in order to convince it about the friendly intentions of the new movement.

<sup>120</sup> The laws applying at that time allowed only candidacy of political parties. SHF was a movement, thus it could not participate in the election. Besides, the word party sounded more democratically than movement.

<sup>121</sup> Jaroslav Kučera states that SdP got 331 711 Reich Marks in total for electoral activities. J. KUČERA: *Mezi Wilhelmstraße a Thunovskou. Finanční podpora Německé říše Sudetoněmecké straně v letech 1935-1938*, Český časopis historický 95, 1997, No. 2. 392.

<sup>122</sup> Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte aus Prag, Teil IV, Gründung einer neuen nationalen, oppositionellen Sudetendeutsche Wahlgruppe, Deutsche Gesandtschaft An das Auswärtige Amt, Prag, den 2. 5. 1935, Nr. 117. 243-245.

<sup>123</sup> In February 1935 already, a report discussing the „*defects detected in the activity of*” Sudeten German Homeland Front „*in the district of Bohemia*” appeared in the Presidium of the Ministry of the Interior. The document informed of the fact that SHF had taken over almost all members of former DNSAP and DNP. National Archive (hereinafter NA), f. PMV, sg. 225-918-3, fol. 45.

<sup>124</sup> VYMAZALOVÁ: 32.

loyalty to the Czechoslovak Republic and his honest will „zu aktivistischer Politik.“<sup>125</sup>

SdP united members of the German minority of all social classes, but the core of the membership consisted of traders, small businesspersons, workers and students; the country population did not reach such representation.<sup>126</sup>

The election ended with total success of SdP and Henlein reached his height.<sup>127</sup> The political influence of the existing German parties was considerably weakened (the Agrarian party lost 60 % of its votes, the Social Democratic Party 50 % and the Christian Social Party 40 %).<sup>128</sup> Sudeten German Party, which obtained 1 249 530 votes, i.e. 15,18 %, became the strongest German party.<sup>129</sup> It obtained even more than that the Czech Agrarian party, which, thanks to conversion, got one mandate more than SdP.<sup>130</sup>

Also the KB representatives strengthened their position in the lead of the new party. The influence of Walter Brand over Konrad Henlein grew, which led to more visibility of his position in the party. SdP started issuing its own newspapers, the diary newspaper *Die Zeit* and the monthly *Volk und Führung*.

Henlein and the other leaders of SdP hoped that the electoral success would be reflected also in the internal political development of Czechoslovakia. They thought that Sudeten German Party would be invited to the newly created government and that it would get real opportunity to influence the internal and external policies of the state. They searched the motives for their hopes in the fact that the party had become the strongest political subject of all and that the existing activist parties had absolutely failed in the election.<sup>131</sup>

In June 1935, K. H. Frank spoke in the Chamber of Deputies, presenting a program speech „full of passionate calls for unification of Germans, but at the same time relatively cautious against ČSR.“<sup>132</sup> But the declarations of the wish to be constructive opposition contrasted with the goal to pass the Sudeten

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<sup>125</sup> Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte aus Prag, Teil IV, Positive Entscheidung über die Henlein-Front, Deutsche Gesandtschaft An das Auswärtige Amt, Prag, den 6. 4. 1935, Nr. 111, pp. 228-230. Henlein's telegram to Masaryk compare ibidem, Telegramm Konrad Henleins an Staatspräsident Masaryk, Nr. 112a. 231-233.

<sup>126</sup> ŠEBEK: *Politické strany*, 899.

<sup>127</sup> „By our electoral victory, we showed the whole civilized world how three and half million Germans fight for their right...The world is interested that things go on good and right ways in our country. Nobody can turn our development back...“ BIMAN – MALÍŘ: 124.

<sup>128</sup> OLIVOVÁ: 253.

<sup>129</sup> The party got 44 deputies and 23 senators. ČSS, Volume 134. 9.

<sup>130</sup> For the result of the election compare NA, PMV, sg. 225-918-4. „Only thanks to the election mathematics and the fact that pursuant to the election regulations, votes of Czechoslovak parties unsuccessful in the elections ... were added to the strongest Czechoslovak (i.e. not minority) party; upon the distribution of mandates, the second Czechoslovak Agrarians won one mandate more in the Chamber of Deputies...“ A. KLIMEK, *Velké dějiny zemí Koruny české, svazek XIV., 1929–1938*, Praha, Litomyšl, 2002. 313.

<sup>131</sup> SdP was not invited to the government in the end. It had clearly shown that it would not settle for miniature concessions but that it would insist on essential reforms of the national regime of the Republic. But such demand was unacceptable for the Czechoslovak political representation. Rudolf Beran refused to invite SdP to the government on 21 May 1935 already, „because first he would have to invite Hlinka's party there, about which it is not known how far it is infected by autonomism.“ KLIMEK: 318.

<sup>132</sup> ŠEBEK: *Politické strany*, 907.



German issue to international forum.<sup>133</sup>

The internal political isolation and actions of the Czechoslovak government brought uncertainty into the party and deepened mutual political and personal conflicts given by the heterogeneous composition of SdP.

The crisis in the Sudeten German Party culminated in mid-July 1936. SdP found itself in very difficult situation. It did not succeed in asserting its policy inside Czechoslovakia; it was in an uncomfortable situation after the failure of the „December bloc”, its activity was systematically restricted and potential ban of the party as such was imminent.

An intervention from Berlin became the decisive factor that helped to terminate the inner crisis of SdP. 24 July 1936, Walter Brand announced to retire from public life. Henlein accepted his resignation and thanked him for previous cooperation. By letting Brand fall, he actually distanced himself from the whole KB group that had stood by him from the beginning and helped him in the difficult development in the beginning of building of SHF.

Sudeten German Party was reorganized after July 1936 when it was endangered by inner disintegration; it pulled together on Nazi base and became a party that started orienting on Berlin unambiguously. But by resolving the crisis, the period of influence of Kameradschaftsbund ended too. Konrad Henlein who had fluctuated between both streams in the party, KB and the Nazi officials, understood in mid-1936 that from international perspective, the victorious ascension of the Third Reich was obvious, so he slowly started orienting on Germany. The SdP leadership was reorganized and, besides Henlein, Frank and Sebekovsky, e.g. Ernst Kundt (1897-1947) joined it.

After the election of 1935, the effort of SdP to influence the other German parties intensified. The party declared oneself the only one political subject defending the Sudeten German interests and wanted to subordinate the other parties. The so-called activist parties revised their program goals after 1935, they strengthened nationalist tendencies, but they resisted the pressure of SdP on revision of external policies and equality of Germans at least at the beginning. But their resistance got gradually weaker (DSDAP remained the only exception in this sense); the wings ready to cooperate with SdP got more influence. The policy of so-called activism started being out of date.

The Sudeten German Party was the strongest political party in Czechoslovakia from 1935. Its popularity reacted to the growing dissatisfaction with the activity of the political parties that, in opinion of the Sudeten Germans, defended their interests insufficiently. The other German political parties understood after the elections of 1935 that the preceding policy of activism had not succeeded. The so-called neo-activist leaders (Wenzel Jaksch, Hans Schütz or Gustav Hacker) asserted more active defence of the German national demands and recognition of equality of rights of the Germans in all areas of social life. In the course of the year they had to fight at three fronts – agitation against the more and more aggressive SdP; fight for support of the

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<sup>133</sup> For example Henlein or Rutha made several travels to London for that purpose, in order to negotiate with high representatives of *Foreign Office*. Compare for example L. NOVOTNÝ: *The Sudetendeutsche Problem in 1936 in Reports of the British Legation in Prague*, Prague Papers on the History of International Relations 2010 (in print).

Czechoslovak government; fight against their own party leaders. The Czechoslovak government responded quite hesitantly. The unstable situation of the governmental coalition and vague promises from early 1937 (reception of representatives of neo-activists by the Prime Minister Hodža) did not contribute to resolve the complicated situation in the end.<sup>134</sup>

The last stage of the development came in spring 1938. After the Anschluss of Austria and after Henlein's and Frank's visit to Hitler, the SdP leaders got the instruction to make unrealizable claims on the Czechoslovak government.<sup>135</sup> The subsequent development of almost half a year culminated by the Munich Conference where Czechoslovakia had to cede its borderlands. The period of the First Czechoslovak Republic and its political parties ended.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> BERAN: *Odepřená integrace*, 298-304.

<sup>135</sup> The culmination consisted in so-called Carlsbad Demands from April 1938 that demanded full equality of the Germans with the Czechs, the recognition of the German national group as juristic person, full national self-government of the German territory, full freedom of „*German world view*“ etc. Those points were openly directed against integrity of Czechoslovakia.

<sup>136</sup> The above stated political parties were not the only German political subjects in Czechoslovakia. I stated only the most important ones, particularly the three activist parties (DSDAP, DCV, BdL), further the negativist parties (DNSAP and DNP) and SHF/SdP as the strongest party of the German minority from 1935. In interwar Czechoslovakia there were also other German political parties, the importance of which did not achieve the significance of the above stated parties; but they created also joint lists of candidates with bigger parties from time to time. They were the German Trade Party (Deutsche Gewerbetepartei), the German Work and Election Association (Deutsche Arbeits- und Wahlgemeinschaft) or the German Democratic Freedom Party (Deutsche Demokratische Freiheitspartei). The German minority had its political parties also in Slovakia – e.g. the Zipser German Party (Zipser Deutsche Partei), the Carpathian German Party (Karpathendeutsche Partei), that made electoral union with SdP before the election of 1935, or the German People's Party (Deutsche Volkspartei für die Slowakei und Karpathorußland).