

# THE FORMATION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA (1918) AND THE GERMAN POPULATION OF SPIŠ IDEAS AND REALITY<sup>1</sup>

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The Germans of Spiš in the Czechoslovak Republic (ČSR). The relationship of Spiš Germans to the ČSR evolved. In the first years of its existence, it was, as a rule, dismissive. Germans had a hard time coming to terms with Slovaks becoming members of city and village councils; they refused to communicate in the new official language and sabotaged many a governmental regulation. In the town Veľká, the local German adherents of the Evangelic faith even refused for Slovak services to be held in their church; they wanted to divide the town of Spišská Belá into a Slovak and a German part, etc. The older, and partially middle, generation of Spiš Germans did not accept the ČSR during the entire interwar period. It was reflected in the activities of the political party Zipser Deutsche Partei. The Czechoslovak Republic was only accepted later on by the young generation, politically engaged in the Karpathendeutsche Partei. This generation, nevertheless, also took a long time to accept Slovaks and Rusyns as equals to the German inhabitants of Spiš.

Keywords: 1918. Germans. Spiš. Czechoslovak Republic. Zipser Deutsche Partei Karpathendeutsche Partei.

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## In the beginning

Central Europe has always been a place undergoing great demographic changes regarding its population's national composition. This applied to every of its regions, including the area of present-day Slovakia. The diversity of its terrain, however, made closed geographic, as well as administrative, units into compact

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1 The present study is a partial outcome of the grant scheme APVV-19-0058 *Multietnicita a multikonfesionalita a ich vplyv na spoločenský, politický a kultúrny vývoj okrajových oblastí v prvej polovici 20. storočia (na príklade východného Slovenska a Podkarpatskej Rusi)* [The impact of multiethnicity and multiconfessionalism on the social, political, and cultural development of peripheral regions in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (using the example of Eastern Slovakia and Subcarpathian Rus)].

formations, which gradually acquired their own distinct character. This also applied to a small region of Slovakia, known historically as Spiš.

**Spiš** is a region in the north of Slovakia, formed in the Kingdom of Hungary in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century as an administrative unit called *Spiš County* (*Spišská stolica*) with Levoča as its seat. The area of Spiš covered 3,668 km<sup>2</sup> and, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1910), it had 164,120 inhabitants. The national composition of Spiš County was manifold. Slovaks formed the majority (56.1%), followed by Germans (22.2%), Magyars (10.8%), and Rusyns (7.1%). Jews, who were recorded in Hungarian statistics as members of the Israelite confession rather than a nationality, represented 4.4% of the county's population.<sup>2</sup> Spiš is an area situated around and at the foot of the High Tatras, the highest mountain range of the Carpathians. The climate has never been favourable for agriculture, a key branch of local economy. The development of tourism in the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century provided local inhabitants with new job opportunities and contributed to people of many nationalities coming to the region, be it in search of work or better environment. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the High Tatras became a significant and integral tourist-spa-sporting zone of Hungary<sup>3</sup>. This fact became a source of major local patriotism for the people of Spiš and even more so for those who profited from it – the Germans of Spiš.

**The Germans of Spiš** came to the area in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, after a destructive invasion by Tatars, at invitation of the Hungarian King Bela IV (1235–1270). What they found was a ravaged area where Tatars had slaughtered almost 50% of its Slovak population. Germans entered Spiš from northern German areas and Swabia (Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria). They were usually miners or craftsmen. For centuries, the Germans of Spiš kept contact with German areas and strengthened their social position in Hungary not only due to the privileges bestowed on them and their economic activity, but also thanks to their nationality connected to the Austrian (German-speaking) part of the Habsburg monarchy. In the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it provided the Germans of Hungary (as well as Spiš) with stability and social support at the time when, in Hungary, Magyarization of the non-Magyar population was on the rise. Accepting

2 *Historicko-demografický lexikón obcí Slovenska 1880–1910. Štruktúra obyvateľstva podľa materinského jazyka a náboženskej príslušnosti*. Ed. Juraj Majo. Bratislava: Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky, 2012, p. 873.

3 Translator's note: In the present paper, the term *Kingdom of Hungary* denotes the concept of historical *Hungary*, while *Hungary* is used when referring to the modern-day (post October 1918) territory of *Hungary*. Regarding nationalities, *Magyar* is used instead of the more common *Hungarian* when pointing to the ethnicity within historic Hungary, as opposed to *Hungarians* as an umbrella term for the people living in historic Hungary. When referring to the language, *Hungarian* is used throughout.

Magyarization was a specific feature of the Germans of Spiš; they perceived it as a manifestation of civic loyalty with the Hungarian motherland and identified themselves as Hungarians, while preserving their own German awareness by means of their customs and traditions having roots in the German environment of their original fatherland.

### **Spiš and its Germans before World War I**

In addressing the above issue lies the key to understanding the way the Germans of Spiš thought and acted not only in the milestone year 1918, but also in the decades to come. Statistical data are, however, necessary, encoding fundamental information on Spiš County and its inhabitants.

Discounting the earliest censuses of residents, such as Joseph II's census at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and focusing on the modern ones taking place in Hungary in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one can see the character of Spiš County in individual decades and the changes in the nationality structure which took place between individual censuses. Demographers agree that the first modern census of residents in historic Hungary, specifically in Spiš County, took place in 1869<sup>4</sup> and was organised by the Hungarian Royal Ministry of the Interior while the Statistics Department of the Hungarian Royal Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade was in charge of its methodology as well as processing and publishing the results. According to its results, Spiš was, in the above year, inhabited by 50.4% Slovaks, 35% Germans, 13.8% Rusyns, 0.7% Magyars and the minuscule figure 0.1% reflected the number of Gorals – originally people of Polish nationality. This census of residents took two years after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise which, in the decades to come, opened the way for the ambitions of Hungarian governments to transform Hungary into a homogenous Hungarian-speaking country. These ambitions also affected Spiš and, as the years went by, were reflected in the region's nationality composition, the ethnic identity of the local population and, later, their relationship towards Hungary.

Taking a glance at the 1880 census of residents,<sup>5</sup> census marshals counted 162,131 inhabitants of Spiš County. Out of this total, there were 53.3% (86,474) Slovaks, 29.5% (47,872) German, 10% (16,157) Rusyns, 2.1% (3,478) Magyars and 5.1% (8,140) of those inhabitants of Spiš that census marshals placed in the column "others" and "cannot speak". These were children who were not able to speak (any language) just yet, which is why they did not assign them to any of the above nationalities, although their parents did declare a specific

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4 Cf: TIŠLIAR, Pavol. *Mimoriadne sčítanie ľudu na Slovensku z roku 1919. Príspevok k populačným dejinám Slovenska*. Bratislava: Statis, 2007, p. 7.

5 *Historicko-demografický lexikón obcí Slovenska 1880–1910*, p. 60 and 1060.

nationality. Thus, there would surely have been a much higher number of Slovak inhabitants in Spiš County in whom, in the given period, natality was considerably high. The list of nationalities, however, omitted Jews – Jewish nationality which, in Hungary, was not observed. In its censuses of residents, the Hungarian government was not interested in Jews as members of a distinct nation. It only recorded their Israelite confession. According to such a code, in 1880, there were 5,612 Israelites living in Spiš. These were, however, recoded as Germans or Hungarians and the Israelites of Spiš also identified themselves as such. It must be added that, in 1880, 100,424 inhabitants of Spiš claimed to be Roman-Catholic (regardless their nationality), 33,090 identified as Evangelicals (of German, Slovak, or Magyar nationality), while 22,484 Greek-Catholics (of Slovak or Rusyn nationality), 71 Orthodox (all Rusyns), and 411 Calvinists (probably all Magyars) were recorded.

Skipping the 1890 census of residents and focusing on 1900, it is obvious how, at the turn of the centuries, the nationality structure of Spiš had changed.<sup>6</sup> Out of 162,662 inhabitants of *Spiš* County, 55.8 % (90,699) identified as Slovaks. The increased number was not especially notable and corresponded with natural demographic development. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the number of Germans living in Spiš decreased. This was partially caused by their leaving for the USA in search of work and a better life in the case of the less wealthy classes<sup>7</sup> and also due to internal (Hungarian) migration, some Germans left for new positions, mainly in Transylvania,<sup>8</sup> or other parts of the monarchy. To a great extent, the emigration of the Germans of Spiš was caused by a decline in home crafts. These have been providing a living to entire families but, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, lost their economic force.<sup>9</sup> Emigration of the Germans of Spiš to the USA had an increasing tendency until 1913. Between 1899 and 1913, 7,655 of Germans left Spiš for the USA, representing 17.9% of the Spiš-German population. Nevertheless, the Germans of Spiš had already been living and working in the

6 *Historicko-demografický lexikón obcí Slovenska 1880–1910*, p. 565 and 1565.

7 For more detail, cf: SEGEŠ, Dušan. Die magische Anziehungskraft des „Phantoms in Übersee“: Die Amerika-Migration aus den nördlichen Komitaten Oberungarns an der Wende vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert. In: ZÜCKERT, Martin, SCHVARC, Michal and Jörg MEIER, Hg. *Migration – Zentrum und Pheripherie – Kulturelle Vielfalt. Neue Züge zur Geschichte der Deutschen in der Slowakei. DiGiOst – Band 7*. München; Berlin; Leipzig; Washington: Biblion Medi GmbH, 2016, pp. 39–114.

8 OFFNER, Robert. Der Beitrag zur Geschichte der Beziehungen zwischen der Zips und Siebenbürgen, auf dem Gebiete des Heilwesens am Beispiel der klausenburger Apotheker-Dynastie Mauksch. In: ŠVORC, Peter, Hg. *MUDr. Ludovít Markušovský a jeho doba*. Prešov-Bratislava; Wien: Universum, 1993, pp. 120–129.

9 MELZER, Rudolf. *Erlebte Geschichte. Vom Umsturz 1918 zum Umbruch 1938/39*. Wien: Karpatendeutsche Landsmannschaft in Österreich, 1989, p. 17.

USA, having emigrated throughout the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> In 1900, 26.2% (42,586) identified as German, while the number of Rusyns had grown – 8.8% (14,329). There were also fewer “others” whose number had fallen to 2.6% (3,899); nevertheless, the number of Magyars had grown significantly in 1900 – the statistics recorded 6.6% (10,793) out of the total number of inhabitants of Spiš County. Naturally, there was no explosion in population growth, which is why it could not play any role. These were Jewish people who neither in 1900 nor in 1910 were allowed to claim their own nationality, which is why the column stated Hungarians; however, the same column included Slovaks and even Germans who, for conjuncturalist reasons, changed their own nationality to Hungarian, as that gave them a whole set of social, political, and, as a result, also economic, advantages. To complete the image it should be added that, in 1900, 6,935 Israelites lived in Spiš; however, one would have to look for them in other Hungarian statistical columns recording nationality.

The year 1910 did not enter the history of Hungarian censuses in the most favourable way due to its methodology elaborated in such a way that census marshals were able to include as many people as possible in the country's Magyar population. To do this, the Hungarian Statistical Bureau decided that nationality will be determined in the following way: “[S]uch a language will be considered one's mother tongue that the person in question regards as theirs and which they speak and like to speak best.”<sup>11</sup> This criterion was clear and acceptable but only until the census of residents started. According to a further add-on, by “mother tongue” one could understand a language they learnt later on in their life and that is different from the one they learnt from their mother. A subjective element was, thus, intentionally added to the explanation and determining of one's nationality based on their mother tongue lost its sense. The doors were open for the census marshals to any interpretation they liked and to uncontrollable practices. They often replaced “mother tongue” with language of communication which, in offices, schools and public life in general, was Hungarian. The new interpretation allowed for anyone who used Hungarian only occasionally to be considered Magyar, but were not truly Magyars.<sup>12</sup> This was also going on in census of residents of Spiš. The results were as follows: In 1910, Spiš County had 164,120 inhabitants. Out of this number, 54.14% (88,858) claimed to be Slovak, 23.30% (38,243) German, 11.3% (18,566) Magyar, 7.51% (12,326) Rusyn, 0.32% (532)

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10 SEGEŠ, D. Die magische Anziehungskraft des „Phantoms in Übersee“, p. 50.

11 SVETONĚ, Ján. *Slováci v Maďarsku. Príspevky k otázke štatistickej maďarizácie*. Bratislava 1942, p. 10.

12 DEÁK, Ladislav. O hodnovernosti uhorskej národnostnej štatistiky z roku 1910. In: *Pohlady do problematiky slovensko-maďarských vzťahov*. Ed. Ján Doruľa. Bratislava: Slavistický ústav Jána Stanislava a Slovenský komitét slavistov, 2009, p. 8.

Romanian, 0.09% (145) Serbian, 0.04% (64) Croatian, and 3.28% (5386) of the inhabitants of Spiš stated other, undefined, nationalities.<sup>13</sup> In this census, one can also only find out the number of Jewish inhabitants by means of confession. In 1910, 4.44% (7,292) inhabitants claimed Israelite religion; these, however, need to be looked for among the Magyar and German population of the county.

The Magyarization process affected Spiš towns the most. Looking at some of them and comparing the censuses of 1900 and 1910, the nationality structure changed considerably, at least statistically. In the ten years, in Levoča, the county's seat, the number of Magyars increased by 125.8% from 1,067 to 2,410. On the other hand, the number of Slovaks decreased by 539 and the number of Germans by 378 inhabitants. The situation was similar in the largest town of Spiš – Spišská Nová Ves where, in the ten years, the number of Magyars increased by 57.4%, specifically from 2,220 to 3,494. In the same period, the number of Slovaks only increased by 137 inhabitants and the number of Germans decreased by 238 people. Looking at Kežmarok, which had become the unofficial centre of Spiš Germans, between 1900 and 1910 the number of Magyar inhabitants here had also not only grown (by 362 people, which represented an increase by 38 %) but the number of Germans also decreased by 166 people. The number of Slovaks in Kežmarok, however, had increased.<sup>14</sup> Regarding German nationality and the decrease in its numbers, it should be stated that it was primarily caused by the Jewish population changing their nationality. In 1910, in Levoča, the county's seat, there lived 718 adherents of the Israelite faith, while 661 lived in Spišská Nová Ves and 1050 in Kežmarok, all of these swaying between German and Magyar nationality.<sup>15</sup>

Although, regarding nationality structure, Spiš entered the milestone year 1918 as mostly Slovak, there was a great political, economic, and cultural prevalence of Spiš Germans and Hungarians. Another attribute, typical of the local German inhabitants, was its Magyarization during the previous period to such an extent they not only took on Hungarian state identity but also Magyar

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13 *Historicko-demografický lexikón obcí Slovenska 1880–1910*, pp. 873 and 1873.

14 While in 1900, according to Hungarian statistical data, 3,633 Slovaks, 1,067 Magyars, and 1,755 Germans lived in Levoča; in 1910, there were 3,094 Slovaks, 2,410 Magyars, and 1,377 Germans. In Spišská Nová Ves, there were 4,966 Slovaks, 2,220 Magyars, and 2,024 Germans in 1900, while, in 1910, there were 5,103 Slovaks, 3,494 Magyars, and 1,786 Germans. In Kežmarok, in 1900, there were 1,074 Slovaks, 952 Magyars and 3,408 Germans; in 1910, there were 1,606 Slovaks, 1,314 Magyars, and 3,242 Germans. In Stará Ľubovňa, there were 1,465 Slovaks, 132 Magyars and 322 Germans in 1900; in 1910, there were 1,359 Slovaks, 189 Magyars, and 261 Germans. In Gelnica, there were 1,022 Slovaks, 324 Magyars, and 2,686 Germans in 1900, while, in 1910, there were 1,098 Slovaks, 606 Magyars, and 2,095 Germans. Cf: *Historicko-demografický lexikón obcí Slovenska 1880–1910*, pp. 571 and 819.

15 *Historicko-demografický lexikón obcí Slovenska 1880–1910*, s. 1819.

ethnic identity. What is more, not only formally, but also in reality – an act that was later on, in the autumn and winter months of 1918, assessed by the Germans as wrong. This fact was based in history. The main denomination among the Germans of Spiš were German Lutherans who were in opposition to the Catholic Habsburgs and were, naturally, on the side of the Hungarian nobility in the anti-Habsburg uprisings. This was, later, reflected in their adherence to the Kingdom of Hungary – the Germans of Spiš were its loyal citizens. There was no threat of opposition or rebellion on their part towards the Kingdom of Hungary, not even at the start of Magyarisation. After the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise, they essentially accepted the expanding Magyar state-national bureaucracy, which, technically, endangered neither their economic nor their social status; the Germans of Spiš, thus, became part of it.

German was an international language of business in Eastern and Central Europe, which was why Magyars also needed to speak it. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Germans of Spiš sent their children to Magyar families so they could learn Hungarian, while Magyars sent their offspring to German families to learn their language. This brought both parties together. The Germans of Spiš also took a great number of leading positions in the Kingdom of Hungary and integrated themselves in the economic life of Budapest. Ultimately, this was linked to their assimilation by the Magyar environment, which took place in several steps – from Hungarian patriotism to Magyar nationalism. The Germans of Spiš were in no way socially discriminated against during the Magyar dominance in the Kingdom of Hungary; on the contrary, it enhanced their journey to social growth and success.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, adopting the 1907 Education Act, proposed to the Hungarian Parliament by Albert Apponyi requesting Hungarian to be introduced in the first grade of elementary school, was not perceived negatively in Spiš-German circles, as was the case, for instance, on the part of Slovaks.

In their relationship to the Slavic population – i.e. Slovaks and Rusyns – the local Germans and Magyars, or “Magyarons”<sup>17</sup>, were extremely critical; they looked down on them as people of a lower social class and showed it at various occasions. They did not respect them as equal partners. The *Hungarian Carpathian Society*, established in 1873 as *Magyarországi Kárpát-egyesület*, with its seat in Kežmarok can serve as an example. It was established by František Dénes and Samuel Roth, secondary-school professors from Kežmarok and Levoča, Mikuláš Szontagh, a medical doctor from Nový Smokovec, Edmund Téry from Banská Štiavnica, and others. The main goal of the society was mountain

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16 JAHN, Egbert K. *Die Deutschen in der Slowakei. Ein Beitrag zur Nationalitätenproblematik*. München und Wien: Oldenbourg, 1971, pp. 24-25.

17 Magyarón (*Mad'arón*) – a pejorative term used by Slovak nationalists to denote a person of non-Magyar nationality who claims to be a Magyar.

guiding and rescue services. The society quickly grew – by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it had 26 branches.<sup>18</sup> When Samuel Roth died, Count Albín Csáky, the governor (župan) of Spiš became the chair of the *Hungarian Carpathian Society*. In times of increasing Magyarization, he provided space for Magyar chauvinism also within the *Hungarian Carpathian Society*. What it meant in practice was excluding anyone who failed to fulfil an essential membership condition – to be able to speak and write in Hungarian and German. In this way, the *Hungarian Carpathian Society* excluded almost all Slovak mountain guides, as they could not speak both the languages, especially Hungarian. In Spiš, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the society membership was merely formed by Germans.

Discrimination of Slovak inhabitants manifested in Spiš County during elections to the county councils as well as the Hungarian parliament. Various obstructions placed in front of the Slovak candidates made it impossible for them to succeed. Similar trends were in place in the elections to town councils which, in mixed-nationality towns and villages, were in the hands of Germans who also performed the duties of town and village mayors. The pro-Hungarian, but, mainly, pro-Magyar orientation of Spiš Germans strengthened their already marked political, economic, cultural, and social position in Spiš and, at the same time, attached them to Hungary in a more profound way. Spiš Germans considered Hungary their fatherland, always generous towards them to the full extent of the word. Apart from this, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the German environment of Spiš lacked more pronounced German national awareness, which, in some representatives of the German elite of Spiš, raised concerns about German-ness being lost in Spiš. It was only individuals, such as the Lutheran pastor in the village Švedlár, Roland Steinacker, who believed this was not to be the case; nevertheless, they were still convinced that they, as well as Magyars, were at risk of assimilation by Slavs. In Spiš, this was by Slovaks or, possibly, Rusyns. This “Slavic danger” (slawische Gefar) attached the Germans of Spiš to the Kingdom of Hungary and affiliated them to Magyars.<sup>19</sup> They also clearly expressed their Hungarian patriotism in 1914 when Austro-Hungary declared war on Serbia.

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18 POSEWITZ, Tivadar. *A Magyarországi Kárpátgyesület története 1873–1898*. Igló 1898; GROSZ, Alfred. *Die Hohe Tatra: Geschichte des Karpatenvereins*. Stuttgart: Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Karpatendeutschen aus der Slowakei, 1961, p. 145–164; ŠVORC, Peter and Branislav ŠVORC. Die Hohe Tatra im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert und ihre Entdecker. In: *Danubiana Carpathica. Jahrbuch für Geschichte und Kultur in den deutschen Siedlungsgebieten Südosteuropa*. Herausgeben von Mathias Beer, Konrad Gündisch, Harald Heppner, Gerhard Seewann. Band 8 (55), 2014, p. 71–72; GAŠPAR, Ján. Der Anteil des Karpatenvereins bei der Erschließung des slowakischen Teils der Karpaten. In: *Danubiana Carpathica...*, p. 75–94; <http://www.vysoke-tatry.info/vyklad.php?tatry=383>

19 JAHN, Egbert K. *Die Deutschen in der Slowakei*, p. 31.



### **The Germans of Spiš, Austro-Hungary and the outbreak of World War I**

When World War I broke out, the middle class of Spiš welcomed it in the same way as that in Budapest or Vienna. The towns of Spiš, in the summers rather quiet, were now full of life. Posters everywhere, the memorandum of the old emperor announcing to “his nations” the declaration of war against Serbia<sup>20</sup>, train timetables in order for local men to be able to enlist as quickly as possible, and the main topics of all discussions were the attempt on the life of the successor to the throne and the war.

In Kežmarok, Levoča, Spišská Nová Ves, Spišská Belá and other towns, manifestations of joy could be heard and, in adventurous people, also impatience for rebellious Serbs to be punished as soon as possible.<sup>21</sup> They perceived the war as a patriotic duty and, at the same time, an adventure making men into heroes who will come back to their homes decorated with badges of honour for their merits. At least, this was how the Spiš German weekly *Karpathen-Post* presented it on its front pages. Its editors in the article *The Omen of War*,<sup>22</sup> published two days after its declaration and called upon mothers and fathers to send their sons with hope “*to the field of honour*”. Their words sounded confident that the war would be short and victorious, although some might lay down their lives: “*Ja, für König und Vaterland sind wir zu allen Opfern bereit!*”<sup>23</sup>

### **Year 1918 – the end of old and start of new identities?**

As was soon obvious, the expectations of a brief and victorious war did not come true. Austro-Hungary lost the five-year long conflict. What happened was not expected by anyone; something that, at the beginning of the war, not even the worst pessimist was ready to admit. Not only Austro-Hungary lost the war but, what was more, it ceased to exist. Within two months, it collapsed like a house of cards, which opened the doors to further radical events. Not only did the Austro-Hungarian monarchy cease to exist, but also the Kingdom of Hungary that was part of it. Existing assurances, already undermined by the war events, now collapsed. In Spiš, this was perceived with pain not only by the local Magyars, but also the Germans of Spiš, Jewish inhabitants as well as the Magyarized groups of the Slovak population. All were worried for their future.

They feared what future developments might bring about. As was admitted by the editorial office of the weekly *Karpathen-Post*, since the late summer of 1918, only one topic was discussed in Spiš: “*What’s going to happen to us?*”

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20 For the text of the memorandum, cf: <http://www.moderni-dejiny.cz/clanek-mym-narodum-28-7-1914-71/>

21 Der Krieg. In: *Karpathen-Post*, 30. Juli 1914, 35. Jahrgang, Nr. 31, p. 3.

22 Im Zeichen des Krieges. In: *Karpathen-Post*, 30. Juli 1914, 35. Jahrgang, Nr. 31, p. 1.

23 Der Krieg. In: *Karpathen-Post*, 30. Juli 1914, 35. Jahrgang, Nr. 31, p. 3.

*Are we to become part of Czechia or Poland? Will we become Slovaks or stay Germans and Magyars? Will we still be part of St Stephen's crown?*"<sup>24</sup> Some people, especially civil servants, began a hunt for dictionaries to start learning Slavic languages in case Spiš fell under the control of one of the Slavic nations. They were thinking of Poles or Czechs, which was why they were after German-Czech or Hungarian-Czech<sup>25</sup> as well as German-Polish, or Hungarian-Polish dictionaries, which were, until that time in Spiš, given very little use. Slovak did not come to their minds, as they did not believe Slovaks could be thinking of a Slovak state, as they would not be able to, according to the local gentry, manage it. What was more, they could understand and somewhat speak Slovak (the Spiš dialect) so they could make themselves understood.

Thoughts of the closest future varied; what they all had in common, however, was determination not to allow such changes that would tear Spiš from historical Hungary. In *Karpathen-Post*, the editorial office called upon its readers: "*Wachet auf, die Zeit ist da zu Taten!*" – "*On guard, the time for action is upon us!*" They believed that, even if Spiš was occupied by Czech troops, it would only be a temporary occupation of the defeated country by the victorious army. A peace conference that, in history, almost always took place to determine new post-war rules for all (victorious as well as defeated) parties concerned was to, according to local Germans, maintain Hungary in its original form. For this, however, to happen, all inhabitants of Hungary (i.e. including the people of Spiš) were to express determination to not accept the plans of their Czech and Slovak enemies to create a Czecho-Slovak state at the expense of the territorial scope of the Kingdom of Hungary. The reasons were, in their view, quite clear. Who, if not the people who lived there, was to decide about the fate of Hungary and, specifically, the fate of Spiš? The requirements of the American president Woodrow Wilson, expressed in the times of war, for all nations to have the right to self-determination only confirmed such a belief.

The Germans of Spiš, of course, had their own explanation, and so did members of other nations living in Hungary. For the Germans of Spiš, it was clear that they were the ones to decide the fate of Spiš rather than anyone on the outside: "*Who has the right to say: Spiš will be Polish, Czech, or Slovak? Does the word in the mouth of an enemy, the words the Poles or Czechs use to enforce their freedom, and Slovaks their right to their language, the words of the self-determining right of nations only benefit enemies, victors rather than those who lost the serious battle? Do [Germans], perhaps, have no right to self-*

24 Wachet auf! In: *Karpathen-Post*, 24. Oktober 1918, 39. Jahrgang, Nr. 43, p. 1.

25 For instance, BRÁBEK, František. *Příruční slovník maďarsko-český / Magyar-cseh kézi szótár*. Praha: Nakladatelství J. Otto, spol. s r. o., 1910.

*determination; can you not exclaim: We are Germans and will be Germans and we want to stay in Hungary – our fatherland!”*<sup>26</sup>

Although the Germans of Spiš barely formed a quarter (23.30%) of the population of the county; they were convinced it was they who had the right to decide the fate of Spiš. They accepted the right to decide on behalf of Spiš befitted the local Magyars and those inhabitants with Hungarian patriotic awareness and opinion-forming significance. They did not accept Slovaks or Rusyns as groups living in Spiš. For them, they were merely a secondary element, with no merits in the development of the region, no experience, education, or historic justification to give opinions on fundamental issues regarding the future of Spiš County. In October 1918, such an attitude towards the county's Slovak population was to be seen on the pages of *Karpathen-Post*, but all it was were long-term dismissive and superior views towards their Slovak and Rusyn fellow citizens expressed in writing. The editor of the magazine *Karpathen-Post* Gyula Hefty, who, in Spiš, organised a movement against its annexation to the Czechoslovak Republic, wrote a letter to the Hungarian government expressing the views of the Germans of Spiš on the ongoing events. In the conclusion of the letter, he wrote that, should it not be possible to keep Spiš County as part of Hungary, the Germans of Spiš, based on the right to self-determination, would create a distinct German Spiš and, in this way, become attached to Hungary, as no one could ask them, only for the sake of Slovak farmers and servants, who had eight to ten children while Germans and Magyars only had one or two, to become Slovak.<sup>27</sup>

The author of the *Wachet auf!* article asked a question regarding the past, but mainly the contemporary time, and also answered it: *“Who created urbarium back in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries when the place was still a primeval forest? Who built villages and towns, who built roads, who regulated rivers... who founded schools... trades... commerce... and who, for centuries, defended our region from enemies? It was we, Germans, with the support of the Hungarian state, who invited us and gave us our region. Spiš was not a Slavic land. There were very few Slovaks living there!... all that is here was done by Germans; the land usually lies in the hands of Germans and Hungarians and, in the entire Spiš County, there is not a single educated man who would claim to be Slovak! We have been Germans and want to stay Germans! As Germans, we were Hungarians and we also want to stay Hungarians!... Villages, towns, and the county must, however, freely declare they will never abandon their language or leave their fatherland,*

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26 *Wachet auf!* In: *Karpathen-Post*, 24. Oktober 1918, 39. Jahrgang, Nr. 43, p. 1.

27 TAJTÁK, Ladislav. Spiš a vznik Československa. In: ŠVORC, Peter, ed. *Spiš v kontinuite času/Zips in der Kontinuität der Zeit*. Prešov; Bratislava; Wien: UNIVERSUM, 1995, pp. 149–151.

*that they are part of Hungary and want to stay there too. God, may the affiliation of Spiš never become questionable.*"<sup>28</sup>

In the last days of October and November 1918, the Germans of Spiš were strongly engaged in trying to keep Spiš part of Hungary. The declaration of the Czechoslovak National Council in Paris on making the Czech and Upper-Hungarian counties into a Czecho-Slovak state, when the war was over, caused outrage. In their view, there was no such option.<sup>29</sup>

The mayor of Kežmarok, Dr. Elemér Mattyasovszky, called an assembly of notable people of Kežmarok to meet on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1918 and, subsequently, also the town council who appealed to all town councils in Spiš and asked them to support the integrity of Hungary. These got engaged just as much as the leaders of Kežmarok, since they were rather panic-stricken with the thought Spiš could become a Slovak county in a Czecho-Slovak state.<sup>30</sup> The question was how Slovaks would act, having been addressed by Mihály Károlyi, the new Prime Minister of the Hungarian/Magyar Government, on October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1918, who requested that the integrity of Hungary be preserved. The Slovak response was dismissive – Slovaks had different constitutional intentions and were determined to fulfil them. Even though, at the end of October and the beginning of November 1918, Slovaks living in Spiš were not very clear in their expressions favouring the Czech-Slovak state, it was obvious they were leaning towards this alternative and they were to support it. That, naturally, alarmed the Germans of Spiš who went to great lengths in order to preserve Spiš as part of the Kingdom of Hungary.

On October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1918, the Krompachy town council, under the leadership of the then mayor, Dr. Izsó Schwartz, joined the protest of the Kežmarok town council and promised loyalty to Hungary in a letter addressed to the Hungarian government.<sup>31</sup> The town councils of Ľubica, Levoča, Poprad, Gelnica, Spišská Nová Ves responded in the same way and, consequently, also councils in sixty further towns and villages of Spiš. The councils of Spiš towns then sent telegrams to the Hungarian government in Budapest in which they expressed their views and determination to defend the integrity of Hungary. By this act, they also responded to the initiative of the new Hungarian Prime Minister, Count Mihály Károlyi, who had an appeal printed addressed to all nationalities of Hungary and asked for Hungary to be kept as a joint country for all who live there and

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28 Wachet auf! In: *Karpathen-Post*, 24. Oktober 1918, 39. Jahrgang, Nr. 43, p. 1.

29 Gegen die tschecho-slovakischen Aspirationen! In: *Karpathen-Post*, 24. Oktober 1918, 39. Jahrgang, Nr. 43, pp. 1-2.

30 Aufruf an die Zipser Deutschen. In: *Karpathen-Post*, 31. Oktober 1918, 39. Jahrgang, Nr. 44, p. 1.

31 *Dejiny Krompách*. Eds. Ivan Chalupický, Ján Rak. Košice: Východoslovenské vydavateľstvo, 1981, p. 146.

promised that every nationality will be allowed to manage their own issues in the area they live and the language they speak. Mihály Károlyi especially honoured the Germans of Spiš. This was connected to the establishment of the *German-Hungarian Folk Council (Deutschungarischen Volksrat)* founded by the university professor Jakob Bleyer in Budapest together with 17 journalists, professors, clergymen, and farmers. The council was to only accept conservative Christians, utterly loyal Hungarian patriots, and refused the membership of German social democrats. In its programme, it emphasised that the Kingdom of Hungary would not require German national autonomy.<sup>32</sup>

It was officially founded on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1918 and, among its members, there were two Germans of Spiš – Kornel Seltenreich and Dr. Artur Weber. When admitting these members to the German national council, Károlyi emphasised the engagement of patriotic Hungarian Germans in the battle for Hungary, which, naturally, pleased them and encouraged them in further campaigns for Hungary.<sup>33</sup> A more liberal programme was presented by another German body – *The German Folk Council of Hungary (Deutschen Volksrates für Ungarn)*, founded in the Saxon-Transylvanian environment. It also confirmed the requirement to preserve the integrity of the Kingdom of Hungary as far as possible; on top of that, it also requested democratisation of Hungary.

In the autumn of 1918, the activities of Spiš Germans took two directions – both regarding the preservation of Hungary. On the one hand, they perceived Spiš as a predominantly German region which they also wanted to keep that way; on the other hand, they realised that it was not going to be possible without the support of the local Slovak population, which is why they also appealed to Slovaks in the spirit of Károlyi's request for not tearing the old country up and definitely not to try for Spiš to break away from Hungary and become part of the Czecho-Slovak state.

On November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1918, *Upper-Hungarian Council of Hungarian Germans (Oberungarischen Volksrat der Deutschungarn)* was founded in Kežmarok, which preserved the Budapest line set by Jakob Bleyer. Among their founders were the teacher Dr. Johann Lipták, the Imperial Member of parliament Dr. Tibor Kéler, the headmaster of the Kežmarok grammar school Karl Bruckner, the publisher of the German newspaper *Karpaten-Post* Theodor Sauter, and its editor Gyula Andor Hefty, as well as the Senior Pastor Albert Kübecher, Armin Mayer, Dr. Ladislaus Roth, Julius Gretzmacher, Sr., whose names are to be found on the invitation for the Germans of Spiš to form the *German Folk*

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32 JAHN, E. K. *Die Deutschen in der Slowakei*, p. 33.

33 Errichtung eines Volksrates der ungarländischen Deutschen. In: *Karpaten-Post*, 7. November 1918, Jahrgang 39, Nr. 45, p. 2.

*Council of Upper Hungary (Deutschen Volksrates von Oberungarn).*<sup>34</sup> Several consultative meetings took place on the above issue in Kežmarok, as well as other towns of Spiš. The meeting, which took place on November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1918 and was attended by representatives of Spiš Germans from Kežmarok, Ľubica, Huncovce, Matejovce, Veľká, Spišská Belá, Toporec, Podolíneč, Stráne pod Tatrami, Žakovce, Tvarožná, Vrbov, and Rakúsy, heard the headmaster of the Kežmarok grammar school, Karl Bruckner, who was in charge of the meeting, emphasise that although old Hungarian governments made a whole series of mistakes in their national politics, it does not mean they would cause Hungary to cease existing. The Germans of Spiš still wish for it to be preserved, as they trust it will guarantee their existence. What they wanted to enforce in the new Hungary was the use of German as an official language of Spiš. They agreed that, under the new circumstances, this should not be difficult. What they considered a problem, however, was the Slovak population, who were not particularly engaged, let alone in the issue of preserving Hungary. This was what they considered the greatest threat for the country and, specifically, Spiš. That was also a reason to start petitions against annexing Spiš to the Czecho-Slovak state. The campaigners addressed all people regardless their nationality. To convince Slovak and Rusyn inhabitants, they used the argument that Czechs would not respect them and, mainly, they mentioned economic issues. Apart from other things, they also claimed that, when Czechoslovakia is founded, those people of Spiš who sold their farm products in the south of the country to Magyars would lose this opportunity and would become even poorer than they had been before.<sup>35</sup> In this way, under direct and indirect pressure, the petitions were also signed by Slovaks, Rusyns and Gorals from Zamagurie. On November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1918, the weekly *Karpathen-Post* stated that thirty towns and villages of Spiš had already submitted signed petitions at the County Office in Levoča for the preservation of Hungary.<sup>36</sup>

Even though, until the very end of World War I, the Germans of Spiš almost exclusively acted as Hungarian patriots, in the last months of 1918, they also carefully started to mention their German national affiliation. Hungarian patriotism and, in many a case, the Magyar national identity of the Germans of Spiš led them to a rejection of the “German-wide ultra-nationalism”, which was to be noticed in the Germans living in Transylvania and the Banat. German

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34 Einladung, In: *Karpathen-Post*, 14. November 1918, Jahrgang 39, Nr. 46, p. 2. In the contemporary press, as well as in academic literature, several modifications of the name the “German Folk Council of Spiš” are to be found.

35 Was verheißen uns die Tschechen? In: *Karpathen-Post*, 31. Oktober 1918, Jahrgang 39, Nr. 44, p. 2.

36 Zipsens Erwachen. In: *Karpathen-Post*, 7. November 1918, Jahrgang 39, Nr. 45, p. 1.

nationalism was likened to Magyar chauvinism and was, similarly, rejected. They were typical of their own status of “good Hungarians” (“gute Ungarn”), to which they also affiliated after the foundation of Czechoslovakia, and especially during the Czechoslovak-Hungarian conflict, which resulted in declaring the Slovak Soviet Republic on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1919, in Prešov.

The riot that broke out after the war was over, as well as worries regarding the collapse of Hungary, were a reason why the new Hungarian government expressed an appeal, through its Minister of War, István Friedrich, for national guards, or civilian patrols, to be created in every town and village to maintain order and prevent riots and looting and, should a need arise, also defend the Hungarian fatherland as a civilian armed unit. Such national guards and civilian patrols had, however, also been spontaneously created in Spiš even before the appeal. Similarly, national councils were established as a revolutionary element of the newly formed democratic power. Hungarian, German, as well as Slovak councils were created and each of them, in their local environment, defended their national goals. In Spiš, national councils and civilian patrols were primarily created by the local Germans, Magyars and Jews. In Levoča, the seat of the county, the governor, Count Dr. Tibor Mariássy, initiated the establishment of the County Hungarian (Magyar) National Council. It was officially founded on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1918<sup>37</sup> and its role was stabilisation of the situation in Spiš County as well as coordination of local pro-Hungarian activities. However, in this hectic time, more meaningful activities were not possible.

In these turbulent days, when no one knew what was going to happen, on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1918, a meeting of the local (German) National Council of Spišská Belá took place in its Town Hall. The council was only established a couple of days prior to the meeting (on November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1918) and Andreas Czirbesz became its chair, while the Evangelical pastor Franz Ratzenberger and Dr. Johann Pollak became his deputies. Among the members of the national council were two Jews – on the Committee for General Safety and on the Committee for Propaganda.<sup>38</sup> The local national council was pro-Hungarian integrity; it, however, was in favour of its republican state organisation. The mayor of the town, Julius Ludwig, was very supportive of this issue, as were the members of the town council.<sup>39</sup> It adopted an internal regulation regarding the strictest possible ban on the sale of alcoholic drinks within the town, as there were worries that local Slovaks, under the influence, could start looting shops, usually owned by the local Jews

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37 CHALUPECKÝ, Ivan. *Dejiny Levoče 2*. Košice: Východoslovenské vydavateľstvo, 1975, p. 216.

38 Neuigkeitsbote. In: *Karpathen-Post*, 21. 11. 1918, 39 Jahrgang, Nr. 47, p. 3.

39 Die Stadt Szepesbéla. In: *Karpathen-Post*, 14. 11. 1918, 39 Jahrgang, Nr. 46, p. 3.

living in Spišská Belá. In Spišská Nová Ves, where a garrison was stationed, the Slovak population did not dare speak against Hungary, especially after the news that the Spišská Nová Ves division, lead by Lt. Kopeczký, drew blood from the soldiers of the Prešov garrison who, under the influence of alcohol, on the last day of October looted local shops on the Main Street in Prešov. On the morning of November 1<sup>st</sup>, the Spišská Nová Ves division arrested 41 Prešov soldiers who, on the orders of their commander, were executed by St. Nicholas Church.<sup>40</sup>

The dominance of Spiš Germans, Magyars and Magyarized or Germanized Jews was reflected in the apprehensive approach of the Slovak and Rusyn population regarding the establishment of such Slovak national councils that would support the idea of a Czecho-Slovak state. Slovaks, thus, did not found such national councils; but those that did get founded supported Hungary and cooperated with German and Hungarian national councils, such as the *Spiš Slovak National Council* in Spišská Nová Ves. It protested against integrating Slovakia into the Czechoslovak Republic, refused to cohabit with the Czechs and claimed it would rather form a joint *Spiš Republic* with Germans, which actually started to be extensively discussed, in mid-November 1918, by the Germans of Spiš. This mixture of national councils in Spiš was joined by the *Russian National Council*, established in Stará Ľubovňa, which wished to defend the interests of the local Rusyn population. It requested rights for the Rusyns living in the north-east of Slovakia. Although the Rusyns of Spiš claimed to be of Ukrainian national orientation, they neither wanted to be part of Poland, nor did they want to be integrated into a Ukrainian state. However, according to a report in *Karpathen-Post*, they wished to stay in Hungary, which seemed to be an interest they shared with the Germans of Spiš.<sup>41</sup>

The idea of a Spiš Republic followed earlier war-time contemplations by Dr. Jozef Pásztor who, on several occasions in *Karpathen-Post*, reflected upon strengthening Spiš-German cultural identity. This was to be done by means of creating some kind of “Spiš home”, which he called *Villa Scepusia*. At the end of the war, when Upper Hungary, i.e. its Slovak territory, was threatened, the above idea was transformed into a bolder form – the Germans of Spiš came up with the idea of declaring an autonomous and independent Spiš Republic. The closer the Czechoslovak troops got to Spiš, the more the *Spiš Republic* was discussed in German circles. Their idea was along the lines of a small-scale Switzerland, which would be a condominium of Hungary with its economy mainly lying in

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40 ŠVORC, Peter a kol. *Veľká doba a jej dôsledky. Prešov v 20. rokoch 20. storočia*. Prešov: Filozofická fakulta Prešovskej univerzity, 2012, pp. 30–31.

41 Ukrainische Aspirationen an die Zips. In: *Karpathen-Post*, 5. Dezember 1918, 39. Jahrgang, Nr. 49, p. 4.



tourism in the High Tatras and natural resources found in Spiš. The decision of Spiš Germans to declare an independent Spiš Republic was, very probably, also enhanced by an interview carried out by one of its main initiators, Gyula Hefty, on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1918, in Budapest. When Hefty asked Milan Hodža,<sup>42</sup> as a representative of the Czecho-Slovak state in Hungary, what the position of Germans in Czechoslovakia would be, he said the constitution of the new state would guarantee all citizens the right to use their mother tongue; however, the official languages would be Czech and Slovak, which all civil servants, who would be selected from the majority population and appointed by the government, would have to learn. At schools, all children in Slovakia, i.e. also in Spiš, would learn Slovak. Should there be a sufficient number of children of a certain national minority to fill a school, the language of instruction would be their mother tongue; however, from the fifth grade on, Slovak or Czech would be added as a language of instruction.<sup>43</sup> The local Germans did not like such a vision of the fate of Spiš, which strengthened their determination to make a declaration that would exclude Spiš from Czechoslovakia.

On December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1918, on the initiative of the Presidium of the *German Folk Council of Upper Hungary* an independent *Spiš Republic (Respublica Scepusiana)* was declared in Kežmarok. It was also supported by Germans in other towns of Spiš, which caused displeasure as well as concerns in the local population who did not care for the republic.<sup>44</sup> The Germans of Spiš were, however, indirectly supported in their opposition towards the Czechoslovak Republic by the Eastern Slovak National Council in Prešov, which, on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1918 in Košice declared the *Slovak People's Republic*, with patronal rights of Budapest.

By means of the *Spiš Republic* and *Slovak People's Republic*, German, and in part Slovak, activists from Eastern Slovakia expressed their opposition towards the Czechoslovak Republic, being convinced this view will be considered by the Entente powers, who, in Paris, will not allow for the area of Eastern Slovakia (i.e. also Spiš County) to be included in the emerging Czechoslovak state. These hopes were, however, not based in reality and the Germans of Spiš, together with all opponents of the Czechoslovak Republic in Spiš County, were convinced about this fact by the arrival of Czechoslovak troops and occupation of the county by the Czechoslovak military power.

The declaration of the Spiš Republic was a clear effort of the Germans of Spiš to buy time for Hungarian diplomacy to quietly gain support, prior to the peace

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42 Milan Hodža (1878–1944), a Slovak Agrarian politician, the Czechoslovak Prime Minister between 1935 and 1938.

43 Was wird uns verheißen? In: *Karpathen-Post*, 19. Dezember 1918, 39. Jahrgang, Nr. 51, p. 2.

44 TAJTÁK, L. Spiš a vznik Československa, p. 152.

conference, for keeping at least some areas of the former Hungary, including Spiš, in the new Hungary. A realistic view on the contemporary situation, however, clearly pointed to Spiš not being able to stay in Hungary, which is why on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1918, representatives of Spiš Germans Dr. Förster and Dr. Winkler left for Liptovský Mikuláš in order to start up communication with the Liptov Committee of the Slovak National Council (Slovenská národná rada) and announced that they were going to accept Czechs in a friendly way and would not stand against the arriving Czechoslovak troops. They were promised by the SNR and the commanders that the troops would not plunder towns of Spiš or pursue the local population, including the Germans of Spiš.

On December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1918, the Czechoslovak army lead by Lt. Schöbel occupied Poprad, on December 16<sup>th</sup>, Kežmarok<sup>45</sup> and, by the end of 1918, almost the entire area of Slovakia had become part of the new state. Thus, Spiš, at the very end of 1918, not only was to start a new year but also enter a new state. Coincidentally, in 1919, the Spiš German weekly *Karpathen-Post* started its 40<sup>th</sup> year. Its editors found this not only a landmark in the life of the weekly, but mainly in the life of the German population of Spiš. They were convinced that there were hard times ahead but, at the same time, the Germans of Spiš would survive this period, as they simply, had to. The weekly was to keep helping them in this battle, as, at the end of the editorial, the staff added: *“Not with a broken heart, but rather courage and trust we approach the turn of the years and fates and in the hope that the ideals and goals that we have set and for which we have fought, will not be left in ruin.”*<sup>46</sup> Although, on the one hand, disappointment was felt, on the other hand, there was great joy and hope for a better life. Moreover, this “other hand” was also true for the Slovak and Rusyn population.

### **After the upheaval**

The Germans of Spiš were determined to continue to defend their national rights and their existing position in the new state, which they did not think would last. The Czechoslovak state, however, did not infringe the rights of the Germans; on the contrary, it supported them. What they, however, lost in Czechoslovakia, was their previous position and, by effect, their privileges.

As early as January 1919, the new governor of Spiš, Ján Rumann, had a proclamation printed in three languages – Slovak, German, and Hungarian,

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45 Die Besetzung von Késmárk. In *Karpathen-Post*, 26. Dezember 1918, 39. Jahrgang, Nr. 52, p. 1; SULÁČEK, Jozef. Sociálne premeny na Spiši v prvej polovici 20. storočia. In: *ŠVORC, P. Spiš v kontinuite času/Zips in der Kontinuität der Zeit*, p. 170.

46 Zum Vierzigsten Jahrgang. In: *Karpathen-Post*, 26. Dezember 1918, 39. Jahrgang, Nr. 52, p. 1.

announcing the administration had been taken over by the Czecho-Slovak state power, and dissolving the town and village councils which were to be replaced by new ones and include Slovak representatives. He, further, announced Slovak as the official language, as well as the language of instruction in schools. In those towns and villages where a minority non-Slavic population prevailed, their own language could be used, which, in Spiš, was German.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, the transition from old to new order was not simple or straightforward. In many places, civil servants refused to take the oath of loyalty to the Czechoslovak Republic. Those who did so were labelled by the local non-Slovak middle class as traitors. In Spišská Nová Ves, postal workers, who had just taken the oath of loyalty, were met outside by a mob who spat at them and threatened them.<sup>48</sup> Teachers experienced a similar situation; many of them refused to take the oath. There was a possibility there would be no teachers to teach at schools and the entire administration of Spiš would collapse.

In March 1919, a referent of the Ministry for the administration of Slovakia Anton Štefánek met with opposition from a majority of teachers and part of Levoča's general population when he required that Slovak was immediately introduced in primary and secondary schools while the use of Hungarian as the language of instruction was to be terminated by May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919. The headmaster of the Catholic grammar school, E. Kálmár, even refused to hand the school over to the Czechoslovak state, as he still considered it property of Hungary. He only did so after the intervention of the gendarmerie.<sup>49</sup> Similar dismissive relationships could be seen in the clerical area. German Evangelicals refused to form an autonomous Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia, which was founded when the monarchy collapsed. When they failed to prevent it, they requested an independent district for German and Hungarian Evangelical parishes while German was exclusively used at conventions as well as holy services.<sup>50</sup> The Synod in Trenčianske Teplice held in January 1921 demonstrably rejected the new church organisation. On behalf of German and Magyar Lutherans, the Senior of the Bratislava German-Magyar Parish Dr. Karl Eugen Schmidt read out the declaration in which, apart from other things, he refused to accept the assembly as a lawful synod.<sup>51</sup> German Lutherans in Slovakia expressed great

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47 Vorläufige Regelung der Verwaltung. In: *Karpathen-Post*, 16. Januar 1919, 40. Jahrgang, Nr. 3, p. 1.

48 CHALUPECKÝ, I. *Dejiny Levoče 2*, p. 221.

49 CHALUPECKÝ, I. *Dejiny Levoče 2*, p. 250.

50 ŠVORC, Peter. Juraj Janoška – kňaz a politik. In: *Sláva šľachetným. Zborník z vedeckej konferencie*. Liptovský Mikuláš: Spolok Martina Rázusa a Transcius, 2010, p. 76.

51 For more detail, cf: ŠVORC, Peter. Synoda evanjelickej cirkvi augsburského vyznania na Slovensku roku 1921 ako významný medzník v národnoemancipačných snahách slovenských

dissatisfaction in 1919 (shortly after the upheaval) when they criticised Slovak Lutherans for delegating part of the essential competences to the Czechoslovak state represented by the Minister with full power for the administration of Slovakia, meaning they gave up church autonomy which was one of the fundamental attributes of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession. Those German Lutherans of Spiš who rejected the Slovak Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession would have preferred to join the German Evangelical Church of Silesia.<sup>52</sup> This request was not, however, respected.

Slovak Lutherans rejected the requests established by Dr. K. E. Schmidt at the synod in Trenčianske Teplice; primarily the one asking to preserve the *Hungarian Evangelic Church of the Augsburg Confession*; they also rejected the formation of districts on a nationality principle. They stated that two districts – Eastern and Western – would suffice for the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession; they were, however, accommodating in accepting German and Hungarian as languages of worship in German and Magyar congregations.<sup>53</sup>

The dissatisfaction of the Germans of Spiš with the new situation was also local in nature. For instance, in Veľká by Poprad, local Germans refused to have holy services in Slovak, as they considered the church in the village Veľká property of local German Lutherans. This highly negative approach only started to change, be it in church or in general, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, also thanks to the diplomatic activities of Juraj Janoška, the Bishop of the Eastern District. In spite of that, the negative attitude of the Germans of Spiš towards Slovaks and Czechoslovakia never truly ceased to exist.

The railway system faced similar problems to those that occurred in the public sector and education, and what was more, in Spiš, there was also a risk of a conflict between the Czechoslovak and Polish state authorities regarding the northern part of Spiš, occupied by Polish troops. It was only warded off by a regulation issued by the French Marshal Ferdinand Foch, ordering Poles to leave Slovakia, which was to be occupied by Czechoslovak troops until the decision of the Paris peace conference.<sup>54</sup> The threat of occupation of Spiš by

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evanjelikov. In: KOHÚTOVÁ, Mária, ed. *Kresťanstvo v dejinách Slovenska*. Bratislava: Historický ústav SAV a SHS, 2003, pp. 161–171.

52 SCHVARC, Michal. Zwischen Renationalisierung und staatlicher Intergration. Zur Kirchenorganisation der evangelischen Deutschen in der Zips nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. In: *Kirche und Gruppenbildungsprozesse deutscher Minderheiten in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa 1918–1933*. Eds. Rainer Bendel, Robert Pech, Norbert Spannenberger. Münster: LIT, 2015, pp. 142–144.

53 *Národné noviny*, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 1921, Year LII, Vol. 23, p. 2.

54 *Neuigkeitsbote*. Warschau. In: *Karpaten-Post*, 16. Januar 1919, 40. Jahrgang, Nr. 3, p. 2.

Poles, paradoxically, united the Germans and Slovaks of Spiš and blunted the sword of confrontation.

In spite of the orders of the Minister for the Administration of Slovakia, various regulations by the County office, Slovaks only with difficulty won recognition in the local administration, thanks to ignoring the existing German or Magyar fellow citizens. Those took long to make their peace with the fact they had to share local rule with Slovaks. Their hope for the situation to take a reverse turn was strengthened by the Czechoslovak-Hungarian conflict, during which, on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1919, the Slovak Soviet Republic was declared in Prešov. The fact that the Germans of Spiš could not make their peace with the new situation was also proved by the weekly *Karpathen-Post* starting its news on Kežmarok in the following way: “*From occupied Kežmarok. We got through the seventh day of occupation...*”, which is what they did every single week, only changing the number of weeks Spiš had been part of Czechoslovakia. In Spišská Belá, local Germans requested for the town to be divided into two politically independent towns. Until 1923, the minutes of town council meetings were exclusively taken in Hungarian, as a language of compromise between German and Slovak and even in 1932, when a government statute on town almanacs was issued, the German part of the town council enforced two chroniclers – a Slovak and a German who both made entries in the same almanac – the Slovak starting at the beginning, the German using the second half.<sup>55</sup> When, in early July of 1919, the Hungarian Bolshevik Red Army left the territory of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia slowly started to stabilise which, however, did not mean the position of the Germans of Spiš would be fully renewed in all spheres of life in Slovakia. This fact aroused their dissatisfaction strengthened by the realisation that, most likely, Czechoslovakia was there to stay, which was gradually confirmed by peace treaties of Paris, Saint-Germain-en-Lay, and Trianon.

On August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1919, the representatives of the Magyar-German Social Democratic Party, or its Spiš branch, with Theodor Sauter of Kežmarok as its leader, together with the representatives of Spiš German Lutheran circles under the leadership of B. Hajts, a Lutheran pastor, formulated ten fundamental requirements of the Germans and Magyars of Spiš for the Memorandum addressed to the Czechoslovak government.<sup>56</sup> They requested 1) the ceasing of the military dictatorship and martial law in Spiš, no interference of military power in civil matters; 2) complete freedom of press, speech, assembly, association and basic

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55 ŠVORC, Peter. Politický život a obecná správa v Spišskej Belej. In: *Spišská Belá*. Zost. Božena Malovcová. Prešov: Universum,, 2006, p. 168.

56 Die Abordnung der Zipsen Deutschen. In: *Karpaten-Post*, 16. August 1919, 40 Jahrgang, N. 33, p. 1.

rights for all citizens of each nationality; 3) an immediate lift of the censorship of newspapers and books and the ban on the import of literature and press from abroad; 4) immediate elections for municipal and town councils based on the general Czechoslovak right to free elections; 5) filling all public administrative positions based on a public selection process with the applicants from Spiš taking priority, so as those who had been working in Hungarian services could also apply; 6) recognition of pension rights for all those employees who, at the time of Spiš being occupied, were Hungarian civil servants and now are Czechoslovak citizens, or are trying to acquire citizenship; 7) full civic and national equality for all, i.e. not only Czechs but also Germans and Magyars living in Slovakia; 8) equal rights for all citizens in the area of agriculture, industry, and trade; 9) brief and full publication of all civil liberties granted to all citizens by the French Republic as a model and patron of Czechoslovakia and, finally, 10) territorial reorganisation of Spiš into two administrative units with seats in Gelnica and Kežmarok.<sup>57</sup> As part of the Memorandum, analysed in several of its August (1919) issues by the editorial staff of the weekly *Karpaten-Post*, the issues of language of instruction and official language in both proposed units and, especially, the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession, were specified – in its Spiš-German congregations. The authors of the Memorandum also touched upon personal issues in education which started to lack teachers, since the requirement of the Czechoslovak government was clear at the very foundation of the new state – only such teachers can work at schools who are fluent in the official (Slovak) language and take an oath of loyalty to the Czechoslovak state. In the German community living in Spiš, this was a major problem – teachers were not familiar with standard Slovak and most of them refused to take the oath of loyalty to their new state.

On August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1919, a delegation of 19 leading representatives of the Germans of Spiš, led by the factory owner Aladár Wein, arrived in Bratislava, where they met Vavro Šrobár, the Minister with full power for the administration of Slovakia and handed him the Memorandum. On August 13<sup>th</sup>, the delegation was received in Prague by the Prime Minister of the Czechoslovak government Vlastimil Tusar and, consequently, the President of the republic T. G. Masaryk. They both familiarised themselves with the requirements of the Germans of Spiš and all three politicians promised to deal with them, situation allowing, which was viewed by the delegation on their return back home as their mission not being in vain.<sup>58</sup>

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57 Was wir fordern... In: *Karpaten-Post*, 30. August 1919, 40 Jahrgang, N. 35, p. 1.

58 Die Zipser Abordnung in Pressburg und in Prag. In: *Karpaten-Post*, 23. August 1919, 40 Jahrgang, N. 34, p. 2.

The problem that the Germans of Spiš experienced with coming to terms with the new – Czechoslovak – reality was reflected in the political life of the Germans of Spiš as well as Czechoslovakia. On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1920, a new political party was founded in Kežmarok with 32 representatives of Spiš German villages – The Spiš German Party (Zipser deutsche Partei/ZdP), and Karl Brückner became its first leader. From the very start, ZdP was pro-Magyar, which also manifested itself in the 1920 parliamentary elections, when the party stood in coalition with the Magyar-German Christian Social Party (Országos Keresztény-socialista Párt). In 1925, it became part of the Magyar National Party (Magyar Nemzeti Párt) and was led by Andor Nitsch, who also became a member of the National Assembly.<sup>59</sup>

When, in August 1919, the first census of residents in Slovakia took place, at that time not state-wide, it turned out that Spiš actually was an area with a majority Slovak population, in spite of numerous German parts in the districts of Kežmarok, Spišská Sobota, and Gelnica. In 1919, there were 58.14% Slovaks, 23.16% Germans, 7.21% Magyars, 7.65% Rusyns, and 3.84% members of other nationalities living in Spiš.<sup>60</sup> The numbers of Slovaks, Germans and Magyars gradually changed, especially to the disadvantage of the Magyar, and partly German, nationality. This, however, was not caused by the Magyars and Germans leaving Spiš, although that happened too. When the Czechoslovak Republic was founded, Spiš was only left by some Magyar civil servants and their families and those who, during the milestone autumn and winter days and weeks of 1918 committed criminal offences, for which they would have been punished. Rather, it was caused by the Slovak and Rusyn population that used to, for various reasons, claim to be of Magyar or German nationality, now identified with their own. In 1919, it, however, was not on a mass scale.

The next census of residents, this time at a national level, took place in February 1921 and brought about further changes in the nationality composition of Spiš. This census also included Jewish nationality, in Czechoslovakia recognized in 1920, which was used by part of, although not all, Spiš's Jewish population who declared it. Out of 7,415 Israelites, only 46.78% claimed to be Jewish. 53.2% kept the original nationality they stated in 1910, i.e. German or Magyar. In 1921, out of 168,745 inhabitants, 62.67% (105,759) were recorded (which was almost 9% more than in 1910). 21.68% (36,953) of the Spiš population claimed to be German (i.e. 2% less than in 1910), while only 3.1% (5,350) claimed to be

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59 LIPTÁK, Eubomír, ed. *Politické strany na Slovensku 1860–1989*. Bratislava: Archa, 1992, pp. 171–172.

60 TIŠLIAR, Pavol. *Mimoriadne sčítanie ľudu na Slovensku z roku 1919. Príspevok k populačným dejinám Slovenska*. Bratislava: Statis, 2007, p. 125.

Magyar. This was a decrease of 8%, i.e. 13,129 people, out of the total number of Spiš inhabitants.<sup>61</sup> This decrease was mainly caused by those Jews who claimed the Jewish nationality, as well as Slovaks and Rusyns who were now confident Czechoslovakia had become reality on the map of Europe and Slovakia, or, specifically Spiš, are to stay as part of it.

The Germans of Spiš, disregarding the young generation who entered the productive age as late as the 1920s and 1930s, had not identified with Czechoslovakia. The younger generation was not tied to Hungary or pro-Hungarian orientation. It was more attracted by its own – German (at the end of the 1930s Greater German) orientation, which was also obvious in their political life. The pro-Hungarian Zipser deutsche Partei (ZdP) party waned and was, at the end of 1920s, replaced by the Karpatendeutsche Partei (KdP) party. Ideologically, its members were in the opposition to Zipser deutsche Partei. While ZdP maintained a pro-Hungarian stance, KdP took a German, or, later, Greater German, position. The generation gap and differing national-identity forming experience also played a significant role and divided the Germans of Spiš.

After the 1918 upheaval, Germans became the dominant nationality in Spiš, not only thanks to their numbers, but also their influence in the administration of Spiš towns and villages, from which the German element was partially forced out, while the Magyar one was forced out almost completely. In the interwar period, other nationalities living in Spiš played a negligible role, with the numbers of Polish or Roma people nowhere near their numbers at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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61 *Statistický lexikon obcí v republice Československej. Úradný soznam miest podľa zákona zo dňa 14. dubna 1920, čís. 266 sb. Zák a nar. III. Slovensko. Praha: Ministerstvo vnútra a Štátny úrad statistický, 1927, p. 160.*



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