

“EVERY GERMAN IN THE SPECIFIED YEAR GROUPS HAS TO APPEAR BEFORE THE COMMISSIONS WITHOUT INVITATION.”

THE RECRUITMENT AND SERVICE OF GERMANS FROM SLOVAKIA
IN THE WAFFEN-SS 1939–1945

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The recruitment and military service of Carpathian Germans in the Waffen-SS during the Second World War is one of the still little researched questions in the history of this community in 20th century Slovakia. More than 8,200 men enlisted in the armed units of the SS in three phases: illegally, quasi voluntarily and finally as obligatory military service. Not all of them enlisted on the basis of their actual personal convictions. Some men found themselves against their will in places where crimes against humanity were committed. The study is devoted to the recruitment mechanism and analyses the motivation of the men of the German minority to join the Waffen-SS. It also focuses on their service in some Waffen-SS units and in concentration camps. The last part does not avoid the question of criminal responsibility after 1945.

Key words: Carpathian Germans of Slovakia. Waffen-SS. Concentration camps. Heinrich Himmler. Franz Karmasin. Gottlob Berger.

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News of the interest of German justice in the extradition of the former guard at the Auschwitz – Birkenau extermination camp Johann Breyer, who had lived for decades in the USA, flashed through the Slovak media at the end of September 2012. The information might not have attracted much attention, if the village of Nová Lesná below the Tatra Mountains had not appeared as Breyer’s birthplace.¹ The case more or less lost its fizz in the media for almost two years. This was connected mainly with the procedures of the German judicial authorities, which ended with the extradition of Breyer from the USA.² However, in June 2014,

1 See e.g. <https://www.topky.sk/cl/11/1325432/Vysetruju-rodaka--87--z-Ceskoslovenska--Podiel-na-vyhladeni-statisicov-v-Osviencime->. [2019-03-27]. Nemci budú súdiť nacistu. (The Germans will put a Nazi on trial.). In *Hospodárske noviny*, 26 Sept 2012, p. 8. ISSN 1335-2938

2 Bundesarchiv (hereinafter BArch) Ludwigsburg, B 162/43834, Bl. 231-239. Undated request

when the American police arrested Breyer and when he died at the end of July 2014 shortly before his extradition to Germany, various articles appeared in the serious press, both German and Slovak, about Breyer and his role in the murder of at least 344,000 Jews deported from Hungary. The great majority of them devoted hardly any attention to the mechanism for recruiting Germans from Slovakia into the armed component of Himmler's elite order when seeking Breyer's motive for joining the Waffen-SS. If they did, they touched only the surface of the problem without deeper analysis.³ However, the SS had begun to recruit Slovak citizens with German nationality systematically from as early as spring 1939.

During the existence of the Lúdák Slovak state from 1939 to 1945, more than 8,200 members of the German minority in Slovakia were recruited into various formations of the Waffen-SS and National Socialist security apparatus.⁴ According to the records of the Ministry of Defence of the Czechoslovak government in exile in London, about 1,500 of these served in various concentration camps.⁵ Whether willingly or unwillingly, they participated in a criminal system, and some of them knew they were committing crimes against humanity. The recruitment of Slovak citizens of German nationality occurred in three phases: The first illegal phase from spring 1939 to the end of summer 1942 really happened on the basis of the voluntary decision of the recruits. The second phase, from the end of 1942 to June 1944 was formally voluntary, while the third phase, from June 1944 to the end of the war in May 1945, was obligatory, based on the inter-state agreement between Germany and Slovakia from 7 June 1944 "*On the fulfilment of military service [...] in the German armed forces – Waffen-SS.*" For this reason, analysis of the changing mechanism for recruiting ethnic Germans of Slovakia into the Waffen-SS during these years is the subject of this study. However, the actual service in the Waffen-SS units, including concentration camp guard and police-security units are not left outside the focus of my interest, and neither is the question of the consequences of service in the Waffen-SS in terms of criminal law after 1945.

from the state representatives at Weiden in der Obepfalz for the extradition of Breyer.

- 3 See articles in the on-line editions: Der Tagesspiegel, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Süd-deutsche Zeitung, Sme and Pravda. The only exception in this area of the article by Vladimír Jancura in Pravda on 17 July 2014, in which he asks for the views of the historians Dušan Kováč and Ján Hlavinka.
- 4 MELZER, Rudolf. *Erlebte Geschichte. Rückschau auf ein Menschenalter Karpaten-deutschum. Teil 2: Von 1939 bis 1945 und wie es weiterging*. Vienna: Karpatendeutsche Landsmannschaft in Österreich, 1996, p. 539. ISBN 9783853742662
- 5 Národní archiv (National Archives, hereinafter NA) Prague, f. Ministerstvo vnitra (Ministry of the Interior – London (hereinafter MV-L), carton (hereinafter c.) 119, 2-11-18b. "Volks-deutsche" from the Slovakia, 22 Feb 1945.

The recruitment of ethnic Germans from outside the frontiers of Germany – in National Socialist jargon known as “*Volksdeutsche*” – into the armed units of the SS began before the Second World War, with great probability in 1938.⁶ In relation to the small numbers in the “*SS-Verfügungstruppe*”, “*Leibstandarte-SS Adolf Hitler*” and “*SS-Standarte Deutschland*” it was rather sporadic, with people already living in Germany as students or low-paid workers joining voluntarily. It is quite possible that Germans from Slovakia came in contact with the recruiters at this time, but only in very small numbers and concrete supporting evidence is lacking. The available documents only testify to their service in the Sudetendeutsches Freikorps during the culmination of the Czechoslovak crisis or the resulting occupation of the annexed territories by Wehrmacht units and police-security forces.⁷

Himmler’s words about stealing “*Germanic blood from the whole world*”⁸ for the SS armed units began to be fulfilled by his subordinates already in spring 1939. Slovakia, which bought its independence with German “protection” on 14 March 1939, was an appropriate field for this experiment. Its ethnic German minority of 130 thousand people naturally attracted Himmler’s attention, and already in April, he directed the recruitment of its politically reliable members into the ranks of the SS.⁹ Men who belonged to the Freiwillige Schutzstaffel (FS) paramilitary units, thousands of whom came to work in the Third Reich, formed the initial target group. The chief of the SS directed their registration. Selected men had to undergo racial and medical examinations.¹⁰ The SS did not recruit only among seasonal workers. A promising environment was also found

6 WEGNER, Bernd. *Hitlers Politische Soldaten. Die Waffen-SS 1933–1945*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2010 (9th edition), p. 302. ISBN 350676313X. See also MILATA, Paul. *Zwischen Hitler, Stalin und Antonescu. Rumäniendeutsche in der Waffen-SS*. Köln am Rhein: Böhlau, 2009 (2nd edition), p. 35. ISBN 9783412138066.

7 Štátny archív v Bytči, pracovisko Martin (State Archive at Bytča, Martin Branch), f. Okresný úrad v Martine (District Office in Martin) 1923 – 1945, 3170/1938 prez. BArch Berlin, ehem. BDC, RuSHA-Akte Albert B. Biography from 31 Oct 1940. F. Karmasin was in temporary exile in Vienna. At the end of September 1938 he attempted to form the Karpatendeutsches Freikorps. See BArch Koblenz, NL 1180/42. Record from 26 Sept 1938.

8 WEGNER, ref. 6, p. 303.

9 Institut für Zeitgeschichte Munich (hereinafter IfZ), Fd 33/I, Bl. 3. Luther’s record for Likus from 19 April 1939. Himmler’s initiative was probably connected with the stationing of the II Battalion “*Leibstandarte-SS Adolf Hitler*” in north-western Slovakia in the second half of March 1939. The battalion temporarily placed in Žilina came into contact not only with local, but also with Germans from the Kremnica – Pravno area. (SNA, f. Národný súd (National Court) 1945–1947 (hereinafter NS), Tn I’ud 17/1947 – Franz Karmasin, microfilm II. A 945. Karmasin’s letter to Himmler from 29 March 1939.)

10 IfZ, Fd 33/III, Bl. 352. Memorandum from the Chief of the Head Office of the SS from 15 April 1939.

among the Carpathian German college students in the occupied Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Socialization in the Zipserdeutsche Pfadfinderschaft,¹¹ a conspiratorial organization close to the Volkssport, a Sudeten German National Socialist paramilitary organization operating since about 1930, more or less predestined people to membership of the SS. A group of at least eight young men studying in Prague and Brno is an example. In spring 1939 they decided to join the SS, and this led to some of them joining the Waffen-SS in 1940.¹²

Heinrich Himmler did not limit his activities only to the territories of the Reich. In summer 1939 he directed them directly towards Slovakia. Since he regarded Slovak sovereignty as only a formal facade, he ordered the commander of “SS-Oberabschnitt Donau” Ernst Kaltenbrunner to form a unit of the general SS in the territory of the “protected” state, without the knowledge of the Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt – the foreign ministry of the Reich).¹³ In July 1939, he visited Bratislava to sound out the situation, but encountered unexpected opposition from the leadership of the Deutsche Partei (DP). The reason was prosaic, its leader Franz Karmasin hid behind the violation of the customs of international law, but he actually feared loss of influence over the development of the party’s FS units.¹⁴ Heinrich Himmler temporarily retreated from his aim after this unforeseen kick against the decree of Hitler’s deputy Rudolf Hess banning the recruitment of Germans from Slovakia into NSDAP organizations,¹⁵ and possible foreign policy complications.

The outbreak of the Second World War opened the door to the implementation of Himmler’s far-reaching plans and perverted visions. Apart from police-security roles, “strengthening of the German folk” by resettling “*Volksdeutsche*” and deportation or later liquidation of racially inferior ethnic groups,¹⁶ he emphasized building up armed SS units, known from winter 1939/1940 as the

11 The police authorities placed the groups among the “hackenkreuzler” movement. See: Štátny archív (hereinafter ŠA) Košice, f. Policajné riaditeľstvo (Police Directorate) Košice – Odbočka spravodajskej ústredne (Central Intelligence Department), c. 139, Zús 16/16/2.

12 BArch Berlin, ehem. BDC, PK-Akte Tibor K. and PK-Akte Karl K.

13 BArch Berlin, NS 19/218, Bl. 27. Memorandum of the Personal Staff of the Reich leader of the SS to Berger from 15 June 1939; NS 34/86. Bl. 17-18. Kaltenbrunner’s letter to Schmitt from 13 June 1941. Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1918–1945 (hereinafter ADAP). Serie E: 1941–1945, Band V, Göttingen 1978, document 19, p. 36.

14 SCHVARC, Michal. „Úderka a výchovný nástroj hnutia“ – Freiwillige Schutzstaffel – Dobrovoľné ochranné oddiely Deutsche Partei. (“The attack and educational instrument of the movement” – the Freiwillige Schutzstaffel – the voluntary para-military units of the Deutsche Partei.). In *Vojenská história*, 2009, year 13, no. 1, p. 58. ISSN 1335-3314.

15 BArch Berlin, R 142/2a. Memorandum of the central command of the SA from 13 Nov 1939.

16 See ALY, Götz. „Konečné řešení“. *Přesun národů a vyhlazení evropských Židů*. (“Final solutions.” The movement of nations and the extermination of the European Jews.). Prague: Argo, 2006. ISBN 8072038338.

Waffen-SS.¹⁷ As a result of limitations from the High Command of the Armed Forces (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht – OKW), these units had to be recruited mainly from ethnic Germans from outside the borders of the Reich and members of the so-called Germanic nations: Netherlanders, Flemings, Danes, Norwegians and Swedes. In this way, they avoided any control by the Wehrmacht, and represented a rich reservoir for Himmler's idea of the Waffen-SS as a counter-weight to the conservative army. After the occupation of the countries of Western and Northern Europe, the foreign policy obstacles fell away, and intervention in the sovereignty of the satellite and allied states of Central and South-Eastern Europe was no longer seen as a serious problem.

The recruitment of ethnic Germans into the Waffen-SS is closely connected with the person of Gottlob Berger chief of the Recruitment Office at SS Headquarters and from 1 April 1940 chief of the SS Main Office.¹⁸ Although he joined the "black order" relatively late (in 1936), he quickly established himself in its hierarchy, and rose ever higher. "General Virvar",¹⁹ as both colleagues and opponents called him, became one of people closest to Himmler. It was precisely Berger, who directed the attention of the chief to this human potential and endeavoured to use it for the needs of the Waffen-SS.²⁰ He earned Himmler's favour with quick results, and this was shown not only by appointment to further functions,²¹ but also by high military and party honours. In mid 1943, Adolf Hitler awarded him the German Cross in Silver for the recruitment of "Volksdeutsche" and volunteers among "Germanic" Europeans.²²

Gottlob Berger started the task of gaining ethnic Germans from South-East Europe for the armed units of the SS soon after the invasion of Poland. The first phase of recruitment, lasting until the turn of 1941/1942 occurred in an officially illegal way. The open form was not possible, because Himmler and Berger lacked

17 On the origin of the term Waffen-SS see WEGNER, ref. 6, pp. 127–129.

18 SCHOLTYSECK, Joachim. Der »Schwabenherzog« Gottlob Berger, SS-Obergruppenführer. In KISSNER, Michael – SCHOLTYSECK, Joachim (eds.). *Die Führer der Provinz: NS-Biographien aus Baden und Württemberg*. Konstanz: Universitätsverlag, 1997, p. 77. ISBN 3879405662; REMPEL, Gerhard. Gottlob Berger. »Ein Schwabengeneral der Tat«. In SMELSER, Ronald – SYRING, Enrico (eds.). *Die SS: elite unter dem Totenkopf. 30 Lebensläufe*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000, pp. 47–48. ISBN 3506785621.

19 WEISS, Hermann (ed.). *Biographisches Lexikon zum Dritten Reich*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2002, p. 38. ISBN 3596130867

20 HÖHNE, Heinz. *Der Orden unter dem Totenkopf. Die Geschichte der SS*. Augsburg: Weltbild Verlag, 1992 (9th edition), pp. 424–425. ISBN 3893505490. See also LONGERICH, Peter. *Heinrich Himmler. Biographie*. Munich: Pantheon, 2010, p. 516. ISBN 9783570551226.

21 For more details see SCHOLTYSECK, ref. 18 and REMPEL, ref. 18.

22 BArch Berlin, ehem. BDC, SSO-Akte Gottlob Berger. Himmler's telegram to Berger from 30 June 1943.

the official consent of the relevant governments. Recruitment of foreign citizens of German ethnicity for seasonal work in the Third Reich served as a cover for the SS. Ethnic Germans resident in the territory of Germany represented a further source of reserves. After registration, they had to be quickly made available to the “SS-Verfügungstruppe”.²³ In this way, citizens of Yugoslavia,²⁴ Hungary,²⁵ Rumania²⁶ and occasionally also Slovakia²⁷ entered the formations of the SS in autumn 1939. Around the turn of the years 1939/1940, more Carpathian Germans joined but this time already in different circumstances.

After the failure of his original plan for Slovakia, Himmler with Karmasin’s timid agreement²⁸ decided to use the government decree with force of law no. 311/1939 Slovak Statute Book on the FS from the end of December 1939, specifically section 1§ 4. This allowed the formation of Einsatzgruppe (ET) intended to fulfil unspecified “*special tasks*”.²⁹ The vaguely formulated passage enabled H. Himmler with Berger’s active cooperation to shape this unit initially existing only on paper over less than a year into a battalion, and use it as a reserve unit for the Waffen-SS. Commanders sent directly from Germany supervised it. These two commanders (Ernst Fuß and Heinz Riegler) were SS officers,³⁰ who reliably fulfilled instructions from Berger or Kaltenbrunner. During more than two years of service in Slovakia, Heinz Riegler made the ET battalion into an obedient instrument of the SS. He introduced the racial criteria of the “black order” for candidates for membership, and members could marry only with the approval of Himmler or the SS Race and Settlement Main Office (RuSHA).³¹ At the same time, he deliberately eliminated Karmasin’s growing opposition caused

23 IfZ, Fd 33/I, Bl. 4. Decree of the county leadership of the NSDAP Niederdonau no. 21/39 from 9 Sept 1939.

24 LONGERICH, ref. 20, p. 518

25 SPANNENBERGER, Norbert. *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938–1944 unter Horthy und Hitler*. Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 2005 (2nd edition), p. 310. Compare TIL-KOVŠZKY, Loránt. Die Werbeaktionen der Waffen-SS im Ungarn. In *Acta Historica Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 1974, vol. 20, p. 139.

26 MILATA ref. 6, pp. 50–51, 55.

27 BArch Berlin, ehem. BDC, RuSHA-Akte Wilhelm U. Biography from 8 Oct 1942. RuSHA-Akte Gustav A. Biography from 26 Oct 1944.

28 Slovenský národný archív (Slovak National Archives) Bratislava (hereinafter SNA), f. Alexandrijský archív, microfilm II. C. 982, 9 401 950-951. Report of the SD branch Bruck/Leitha SD-LA Vienna from 21 Dec 1939.

29 Vládne nariadenie s mocou zákona (Government decree with force of law) no. 311/1939 Sl. z. (Slovak Statute Book) o Freiwillige Schutzstaffel a Deutsche Jugend from 21 Dec 1939.

30 BArch Berlin, ehem. BDC, SSO-Akte Ernst Fuß; SSO-Akte Heinz Riegler.

31 BArch Berlin, R 142/2a. Riegler’s request to RuSHA from 18 Jan 1941; NS 2/88, Bl. 66. Memorandum to Sippenamt from 7 Aug 1941. SNA, f. 116-5-2/240. Riegler’s decree on the conclusion of marriage by members of the ET from 13 May 1941.

by the ever more visible exclusiveness of the ET.³² His actions repeatedly earned praise from his superiors in Vienna and Berlin.³³

The above mentioned government decree had scarcely been issued before Berger began to very intensively seek new possibilities for recruitment. He was not hindered by the fact that a large proportion of the potential recruits were in Germany, and Karmasin had practically nothing useful to offer.³⁴ That did not hinder the chief of the Recruitment Office of the Waffen-SS at all. In January 1940 he people screened 109 men from Slovakia, 52 of whom had volunteered, while another six were assigned to the “SS-Verfügungstuppe”.³⁵ Training of a large part of the first group (42 persons) occurred in the framework of the 4th “SS-Totenkopfstandarte” in Prague. In March 1940, Berger planned to undertake another recruitment directly in Slovakia. From 400 applicants,³⁶ 20–30 went to Prague for training at the end of March 1940,³⁷ with another 73 volunteers following in mid April.³⁸ At the beginning of May, the Waffen-SS recorded 83 Germans from Slovakia,³⁹ but their number was really higher, as confirmed by the cited documents. It is possible to suppose that the statistics did not include people who completed the eight week training courses and then returned to Slovakia,⁴⁰ or those who had gained citizenship of the Reich.⁴¹

Rapid recruitment continued in spite of Karmasin’s opposition. It was enabled by improved functioning of the ET, the coming of Berger’s representative Fuß to the unit in mid May and his appointment as commander at the end of August 1940.⁴² Himmler’s order to build up the ET to battalion strength also had far-

32 BROSZAT, Martin. Heranziehung von slowakischen Staatsbürgern deutscher Volkszugehörigkeit zum Dienst in der Waffen-SS. In *Gutachten des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte*. Munich: Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 1958, p. 414.

33 BArch Berlin, ehem. BDC, SSO-Akte Heinz Riegler. Berger’s memorandum to W. Schmitt from 15 Oct 1941. Nageler’s personal evaluation from 25 Sept 1942. Memorandum from VoMi to the Central Personnel Office of the SS from 17 June 1943. Lorenz’s letter to Querner from 31 Dec 1943.

34 SNA, f. 116-40-3/70. Karmasin’s letter to Berger from 23 Dec 1939.

35 BArch Berlin, NS 19/3520, Bl. 229. Berger’s memorandum to Himmler from 30 Jan 1940.

36 BArch Berlin, NS 19/3888, Bl. 152. Berger’s memorandum to Himmler from 21 Feb 1940.

37 IfZ, Nürnberger Dokumente, NO-3364. Telegram from the Vienna Recruiting Office of the Waffen-SS 4. „SS-Totenkopfstandarte“ in Prague from 30 March 1940.

38 BArch Berlin, NS 19/3888, Bl. 132. Berger’s report to Himmler from 16 April 1940.

39 KLIETMANN, Kurt-Gerhard. *Die Waffen-SS. Eine Dokumentation*. Osnabrück: Verlag „Der Freiwillige“, 1965, pp. 499–501.

40 See Archiv bezpečnostních složek (Archive of Security Forces) Praha (hereinafter ABS), Z-10-P-15/1/21. Karmasin’s memorandum to Berger from 1 March 1940.

41 See BArch Berlin, NS 19/3521, Bl. 271. Berger’s memorandum to H. Himmler from 20 April 1940.

42 SNA, f. 116-40-3/69. Karmasin’s declaration to Berger from 15 May 1940; f. 116-4-1/170.

reaching consequences.⁴³ These steps were pre-determined by its mission as a reserve formation to supplement the Waffen-SS. They were precisely in harmony with Berger's proposals from the beginning of August 1940, to draw more on the German minorities not only in South-East Europe, but also in other continents.⁴⁴ Therefore, it is necessary to see the further growth in the number of Germans from Slovakia serving in the armed SS units in this context. By the end of September 1940 there were 93 of them in the basic units of the Waffen-SS. Apart from them, 117 members of the ET had completed two month training courses with the SS reserve units in Prague, Vienna and Brno. Another 24 students had trained in Kraków. A further 30 ET men were preparing to join the volunteer Waffen-SS rather than the Slovak army,⁴⁵ because apart from their own "units" Germans in the Slovak army were also assigned to unpopular military labour service or to units mostly drawn from the majority population.⁴⁶

The ever increasing number of citizens of Slovakia of German nationality serving in the Waffen-SS caused ever more problems. Perhaps the most pressing was the illegal departure of men of draftable age across the frontiers of the state. According to the valid provisions especially of the Defence Act,⁴⁷ they were regarded as deserters and threatened with the highest penalty. For this reasons, Berger pressed indirectly through his contacts at the German Embassy, to obtain the tacit agreement of Bratislava to the recruitment and to get service in the Waffen-SS considered equivalent to service in the Slovak army.⁴⁸ After a series of meetings, minister Ferdinand Čatloš finally agreed to the SS demands, and declared a "general pardon" for the men who had left. However, after returning

Order of the regional command of the FS F/1-40 from 23 Aug 1940. BArch Berlin, ehem. BDC, SSO-Akte Ernst Fuß. Memorandum of the Central Personnel Office of the to the Central Command Office of the SS from 14 Dec 1940.

43 KAISER, Johann. *Die Politik des Dritten Reiches gegenüber der Slowakei 1939–1945. Ein Beitrag zu Erforschung der nationalsozialistischen Satellitenpolitik in Südosteuropa*. Dissertation. Bochum 1969, p. 437.

44 WEGNER, ref. 6, p. 311; LONGERICH, ref. 20, p. 516.

45 SNA, f. Alexandrijský archiv, microfilm II. C. 982, 9 401 965. Fuß's report to the extraordinary representative of the Reich leader of the SS and chief of German police to the German ambassador in Bratislava Ludwig Hahn from 25 Sept 1940.

46 BAKA, Igor. Vznik a výstavba slovenskej armády (Origin and construction of the Slovak army) (marec 1939 – október 1940). In PEKÁR, Martin – PAVLOVIČ, Richard (eds.). *Slovensko medzi 14. marcom 1939 a salzburskými rokovaniami*. Prešov: Universum, 2007, pp. 216–217. ISBN 9788080686697; BAKA Igor. *Politický systém a režim Slovenskej republiky v rokoch 1939 – 1940*. (The political system and regime of the Slovak Republic 1939–1940). Bratislava: Vojenský historický ústav, 2010, p. 212. ISBN 9788096937592.

47 Branný zákon (Defence Act) Slovenskej republiky no. 20/1940 Sl. z. from 18 Jan 1940.

48 KAISER, ref. 43, p. 437.

to Slovakia, they still had to serve an additional four months in the army.⁴⁹ This agreement served as a basis for recruiting until the end of October 1942.

The second, no less serious problem proved to be relation with the Foreign Office (Auswärtiges Amt). The Foreign Minister of the Reich Joachim von Ribbentrop regarded illegal recruitment activities in the allied countries of South-Eastern Europe as deliberate by-passing of his ministry. The gradual infiltration of the ministry by the SS, the lack of respect for defined responsibilities and the arbitrary activities of Himmler's extensive organization abroad visibly disturbed mutual cooperation.⁵⁰ The tension culminated especially around the turn of the years 1940/1941, when the SS played a significant role in the attempt of Horia Sima's Iron Guard to seize power in Rumania.⁵¹ Conflicting interests also appeared in Slovakia. The Foreign Office repeatedly made clear to the SS who was the leading actor of German policy in the "defended" state. Although von Ribbentrop reacted very sensitively to intervention in his field of activity, he did not dare to get into an open conflict with Himmler's obviously more influential empire.⁵²

Karmasin's stubborn position, also held by the regional FS commander Walter Donath, also complicated the situation. Both saw in the ET a dangerous precedent starting the process of disintegration of the armed force of the Deutsche Partei. They also feared that they could entirely lose control over the development of the battalion, and they endeavoured to use the proliferating complaints about violation of discipline by its members to weaken the influence of the SS. The leader of the Germans in Slovakia did not hesitate to threaten to dissolve the ET,⁵³ which led to extraordinarily sharp criticism from the chief of the central office of the SS. According to Berger, Karmasin had unambiguously sabotaged the effort to build up the ET as a basic unit of the Waffen-SS.⁵⁴ Foreseeing the possibility from sharpening the dispute, Karmasin adopted the same position towards Himmler's actual highest subordinate as in the summer of 1939. On one

49 ŠA Banská Bystrica, f. Štátny policajný úrad (State Police Office) Zvolen, c. 3, Vec 407/2578/40 prez.

50 WEITKAMP, Sebastian. *Braune Diplomaten. Horst Wagner und Eberhard von Thadden als Fuktionäre der »Endlösung«*. Bonn: Dietz Verlag, 2008, p. 121. ISBN 9783801241780.

51 ANGRICK Andrej. V závětrí 11. armády. Operační skupina D. (In the lee of the 11th army. Operation group D). In PAUL, Gerhard – MALLMANN, Klaus-Michael (eds.). *Gestapo za druhé světové války. „Domáci fronta“ a okupovaná Evropa*. Prague: Academia, 2010, pp. 520–523; WILDT, Michael. *Generation des Unbedingten. Das Führungskorps des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition HIS Verlag, 2008 (2nd edition), pp. 398–399. ISBN 3930908751.

52 WEITKAMP, ref. 50, pp. 129–132.

53 SNA, f. 116-4-1/76. Karmasin's record from 21 Oct 1940 intended for W. Donath.

54 IfZ, MA 306, 2 593 718. Berger's memorandum to Himmler from 12 Dec 1940.

side, he approved the training and recruitment of people for the SS, but on the other he regarded Berger's plan as a sensitive limitation of the sovereignty of Bratislava.⁵⁵ It did not really matter to him in principle, he only used it as shield he could hide behind when necessary. In the end, the fight had no winner. In relation to the conflict with the Foreign Office, the Reich leader of the SS had to accept the status quo.⁵⁶ Only the commander of the ET changed. The energetic Fuß was replaced from 1 January 1941 by the even more vigorous Riegler.⁵⁷ The young Austrian, a member of the illegal NSDAP since 1929 and of the SS since November 1932,⁵⁸ had to be a guarantee of the preservation of the autonomous position of the unit and of overcoming Karmasin's obstruction.

As soon as he came to Slovakia, Riegler put great energy into fulfilling his task. He skilfully outmanoeuvred Karmasin and subordinated the ET to the interests of the SS. The obligatory "Verlobungs- und Heiratsbefehl" was already introduced for members of the ET in January 1941.⁵⁹ In practice, this meant that from this moment their engagements and marriages were decided by Himmler or the RuSHA.⁶⁰ Strict racial criteria began to be applied to recruitment to the ET and Waffen-SS. Recruitment was done quarterly. Politically reliable men aged 17 – 32 or later 35, at least 168 – 170 cm tall, without any health handicaps were sought. Screening did not have to be limited to members of the FS, but had to cover the whole male population of German nationality and the required age.⁶¹ The recruitment effort brought gains: In the second half of 1941, 127 volunteers joined the Waffen-SS, while a further 117 candidates satisfied the racial and health requirements and were awaiting call up.⁶² People employed in the Reich were not left out. By the end of February 1942, 932 Germans from Slovakia were serving

55 KRÁL, Václav (ed.). *Die Deutschen in der Tschechoslowakei 1933–1947. Dokumentensammlung. Acta occupationis Bohemiae et Moraviae*. Prague: Nakladatelství ČSAV, 1964, document 330, pp. 435–436.

56 KAISER, ref. 43, pp. 439–440.

57 BArch Berlin, ehem. BDC, SSO-Akte Ernst Fuß. Berger's memorandum to the Central Personnel Office of the SS 12 Dec 1940; SSO-Akte Heinz Riegler. Kaltenbrunner's memorandum to Schmitt from 23 Dec 1940.

58 BArch Berlin, ehem. BDC, RuSHA-Akte Heinz Riegler. Biography from 9 Oct 1938.

59 BArch Berlin, R 142/2a. Riegler's request to the RuSHA from 18 Jan 1941.

60 On »Verlobungs- und Heiratsbefehl« see SCHWARZ, Gudrun. Das SS-Herrenmenschenpaar. In KRAMER, Helgard (ed.). *Die Gegenwart der NS-Vergangenheit*. Berlin: Philo, 2000, pp. 304–313; HEINEMANN, Isabel. »Rasse, Siedlung, deutsches Blut«. *Das Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamt der SS und die rassenpolitische Neuordnung Europas*. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003, pp. 50–59. ISBN 9783892446231; LONGERICH, ref. 20, pp. 371–378.

61 SNA, f. 125-27-4/43. Donath's memorandum to Gross from 18 Feb 1941; f. 116-5-2/304-305. Battalion order ET 5/41 from 20 Feb 1941; f. 116-5-2/259-260. Battalion order ET 12/41 from 28 July 1941; f. 116-5-3/62-63. Battalion order ET 19/41 from 17 Dec 1941.

62 SNA, f. 116-16-2/204-211. Riegler's report on the 2nd half of 1941.

in the Waffen-SS, including 532 members of the ET and 400 volunteers recruited directly in Germany. The statistics also already include negative numbers: 23 dead and 51 injured.⁶³ According to Berger, Riegler deserved recognition for his actions, and his promotion was proposed.⁶⁴ He entirely fulfilled the expectations of his superiors and he was expected to show his ability again in the recruitment actions at the end of 1942.

The failure of lightning war and the transition to a prolonged resource-draining war around the turn of the years 1941/1942 forced the leaders of the National Socialist regime to mobilize ever larger human reserves. This applied especially to the Waffen-SS, which suffered heavy losses during the first phase of the attack on the Soviet Union.⁶⁵ Therefore, Himmler's attention was ever more concentrated on the German minorities of Central and South-Eastern Europe. The framework of preparations for the wider recruitment in this region were indicated by their leader in rough outlines probably at the beginning of November 1941.⁶⁶ Further details in relation to the required 60,000 volunteers with foreign citizenship had to be agreed with Ribbentrop's Foreign Ministry, whether they liked it or not. They preliminarily agreed on the following modalities: persons serving in the Waffen-SS had to be assigned to an established unit, new volunteers did not have to lose their original citizenship, Germany had to provide support payments for family members, the leaders of minorities had to be responsible for recruitment, but recruitment belonged to the SS, and an agreement on recruitment in an individual country needed to have the character of an inter-state treaty.⁶⁷

The Foreign Office, or specifically the Undersecretary of state Martin Luther, did not see any great obstacles to making these demands in talks with the governments of the countries of the Danubian and Carpathian region. The possibility of applying more diplomatic pressure was expected only in the cases

63 SNA, f. 116-37-3/59. Statistical review of persons of German nationality doing active military service from 23 Feb 1942.

64 BArch Berlin, ehem. BDC, SSO-Akte Heinz Riegler. Berger's memorandum to Schmitt from 15 Oct 1941. Riegler himself could state with satisfaction after a year of activity with the ET: *"Although we have experienced many unpleasant disputes, we have successfully created a firm organization for the attack battalion. We have removed all substantial obstacles and our position is, as it appears, firm. Uncompromising pursuit of our aims ... has paid off."* (SNA, f. NS, Tn I'ud 13/1946 – Otomar Kubala, microfilm II. A 922. Riegler's diary entry from 3 Jan 1942).

65 WEGNER, ref. 6, p. 283.

66 WITTE, Peter – WILDT, Michael – VOIGT, Martina – POHL, Dieter – KLEIN, Peter – GERLACH, Christian – DIECKMANN, Christopf – ANGRICK, Andrej (eds.). *Der Dienstkalender Heinrich Himmlers 1941/42*. Hamburg: Hamburger Edition HIS Verlag, 1999, entry from 6 Nov 1941, p. 256. ISBN 9783767213296.

67 SPANNENBERGER, ref. 25, p. 315; MELZER, Rudolf. Wehrdienst der Karpatendeutschen in der Waffen-SS von 1939 bis 1945. In *Karpaten Jahrbuch*, 1995, vol. 46, pp. 60–61.

of Hungary and Rumania, which had the largest numbers of ethnic Germans. The question of granting citizenship of the Reich would be definitively solved after the war. He expected support for families at the level valid in the Reich, a condition that complicated talks with Hungary and Slovakia. Berlin expected to obtain the largest numbers of future soldiers from Hungary and Rumania, with Croatia and the occupied Serbian Banat coming next. Luther saw “*nothing in the way*” of recruitment in Slovakia, as he wrote in a paper for Minister von Ribbentrop.⁶⁸

At the beginning of 1942, recruiting in Slovakia was still happening on the basis of the tacit agreement with the state authorities from the second half of November 1940. The tacit tolerance of service in the Waffen-SS by Tuka’s cabinet meant that the ET could continue to fulfil its role as a reserve unit. However, at the turn of the years 1941/1942 it began to strike against its limits. This was also a reason why H. Himmler decided to extend his great recruiting activity also in Slovakia. The leader of the Deutsche Partei was no longer overflowing with enthusiasm for this idea, and inclined more to the alternative of limited recruitment. He feared that otherwise there would be a serious “*weakening of the national group*”,⁶⁹ which would essentially play into the hands of the strongly nationally coloured Ludák regime. The Foreign Office with its continuing policy of supporting and maintaining individual German minorities in South-Eastern Europe⁷⁰ initially placed itself on Karmasin’s side. It not only approved maintenance of the existing status quo, but in conflict with the plans of the SS,⁷¹ it did not support the recruiting of Germans from Slovakia employed in the Third Reich.⁷²

However, the position of Ribbentrop’s ministry gradually changed in the course of 1942. A decision of the OKW from May 1942 had a substantial influence on the thinking of the Wilhelmstrasse. From this moment, recruiting of Germans from South-Eastern Europe was exclusively the responsibility of the Waffen-SS.⁷³ Starting from military orders, there was nothing to stop Himmler using the centre for directing the activities of German minorities – the Volksdeutsche

68 Politisches Archiv Auswärtigen Amtes Berlin (hereinafter PAA), R 100981. Luther’s record from 2 Jan 1942.

69 PAA, R 101 012. Ludin’s telegram AA from 21 Jan 1942.

70 ADAP, Serie E, Band V, document 19, p. 36.

71 BArch Berlin, NS 31/154, Bl. 379. Memorandum of the Recruiting Office of the Waffen-SS concerning the assignment of ethnic Germans to the Waffen-SS from 4 Feb 1942.

72 PAA, R 101012. Luther’s telegram to the German Embassy in Bratislava from 29 Jan 1942.

73 SUNDHAUSSEN, Holm. Zur Geschichte der Waffen-SS in Kroatien 1941–1945. In *Südost-Forschungen*, 1971, year 30, p. 182; CASAGRANDE, Thomas. *Die volksdeutsche SS-Division »Prinz Eugen«*. *Die Banater Schwaben und die nationalsozialistischen Kriegsverbrechen*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2003, p. 199. ISBN 9783593372341.

Mittelstelle (VoMi) to force the individual leaders to actually introduce military service in the SS from July 1942: *"It must be clear to the German national groups in the south-east as a whole that the obligation to undertake military service does not derive from legislative norms, but from the iron rule of national allegiance, and from the age of 17 to 50, and when necessary to 55."*⁷⁴ This opened the way to extensive recruiting also in Slovakia. As the cited text shows, the proclaimed voluntary nature of recruitment remained as an empty pretext. The Foreign Office undertook all the necessary diplomatic steps to ensure the success of the recruitment. However, at first it stood aside because Berger started preparations without the knowledge of the Foreign Ministry of the Reich.

The plan of the SS leadership to recruit 5,000 Germans from Slovakia aged 18–40⁷⁵ during August and September 1942 could be obstructed again by Karmasin. Although the VoMi passed on Himmler's order to him, he remained clearly surprised by the planned extent of the recruitment. He immediately informed the embassy, German military mission and VoMi, pointing to the threat of the *"total dismantling"*⁷⁶ of the economic position of the German minority at the expense of the Slovaks⁷⁷ as a possible result of the action. The soldiers of German nationality actively serving in the Slovak army should be taken into account first, with the justification that *"even with the strictest combing of the national group"*⁷⁸ the SS recruiting commission would not achieve the expected result. These basic comments forced the relevant authorities in Berlin to seek the most practical solution. The Foreign Office, SS Main Office and VoMi finally accepted his proposal and decided to extend it to conscripts and reserves aged 17–40.⁷⁹

As in the cases of Croatia and Hungary, the task of sounding out the position of the Slovak authorities fell to the diplomatic service of the Reich. However, this did not mean that G. Berger remained inactive. On the contrary, through his various channels, he put pressure on Ribbentrop's ministry,⁸⁰ demanding

74 SUNDHAUSSEN, ref. 73, p. 184. See also MELZER, ref. 67, p. 61.

75 PA AA, R 101 012. Besendorfer's record from 1 Aug 1942.

76 SNA, f. NS, Tn ľud 17/1947 – F. Karmasin, microfilm II. A 946. Karmasin's memorandum to VoMi from 4 Aug 1942.

77 LIPTÁK, Ľubomír. *Franz Karmasin opäť na scéne*. (Franz Karmasin again on the scene). Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry, 1962, pp. 43–44; KOVÁČ, Dušan. *Nemecko a nemecká menšina na Slovensku*. (Germany and the German minority in Slovakia) (1871–1945). Bratislava: Veda, 1991, p. 180. ISBN 9788022401555.

78 SNA, f. NS, Tn ľud 17/1947 – F. Karmasin, microfilm II. A 946. Karmasin's memorandum to VoMi from 4 Aug 1942.

79 SNA, f. NS, Tn ľud 17/1947 – F. Karmasin, microfilm II. A 946. Memorandum from VoMi to F. Karmasin from 6 Aug 1942.

80 PA AA, R 101012. Luther's record intended for von Ribbentrop from 17 Aug 1942.

the quickest possible implementation of the recruitment plan. He counted on it being launched in mid August.⁸¹ When things moved in the wrong direction, and the latest deadline of 1 September 1942 for the recruitment irresistibly came closer, he again urged, intervened and threatened.⁸² However, he achieved the opposite effect. The foreign minister of the Reich unexpectedly entirely stopped the work of the recruiting machinery of the SS Main Office, also in connection with Berger's arbitrary actions in Croatia.^{83 84} The highest representative of the VoMi Werner Lorenz also very probably had a share in Ribbentrop's decision. Lorenz perceived Berger's activity among the "Volksdeutsche" as weakening the position of his own office, so he strove to regain the initiative he had lost.⁸⁵ The brief episode ended with an agreement concluded on 29 August 1942 between Berger and Lorenz on the modalities of recruiting members of the German minorities in South-East Europe into the Waffen-SS.⁸⁶ The chiefs of the VoMi and the diplomats were promised better control over the activities of the Waffen-SS.

The agreement also formed a platform for Slovakia. Soon after, the Foreign Office mediated talks with Tuka's cabinet through its representatives in Bratislava. To achieve better coordination between the Wilhelmstrasse and the SS Main Office, the two institutions chose extraordinary representatives. The Foreign Office of the Reich chose Hans Gmelin, right hand man of Ambassador Hanns Elard Ludin, while Berger selected his protégé, head of the Waffen-SS South-

81 BArch Berlin, NS 19/1629, Bl. 23-24. Berger's telegram to Himmler's personal staff from 14 Aug 1942.

82 PA AA, R 100993. Berger's memorandum to Luther from 25 Aug 1942. BArch Berlin, NS 19/1629, Bl. 43. Berger's telegram to Wolff from 21 Aug 1942; Bl. 44. Berger's memorandum to Himmler from 26 Aug 1942.

83 SUNDHAUSSEN, ref. 73, p. 185.

84 SNA, f. NS, Tn l'ud 17/1947 – F. Karmasin, microfilm II. A 946. Gmelin's record from 28 Aug 1942. See also SNA, f. 116-7-4/159. Decree of the Central Organizational Office of the DP from 29 Aug 1942. On 26 Aug 1942 Berger instructed Nageler "to discuss and prepare all recruiting measures with the leaders of the German national group in Hungary and Slovakia, so that when agreement is reached, they can start immediately and volunteers can travel to the Reich as soon as possible". (PA AA, R 100993.)

85 SUNDHAUSSEN, ref. 73, p. 185. Compare IfZ, ZS-1181/1. Lorenz's interrogation at Nuremberg from 2 March 1948.

86 According to it the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle was authorized to order the beginning of recruiting. The actual recruiting had to be done by the leadership of the minority and the Recruiting Command of the Waffen-SS South-East. The leader of the relevant minority had the right to prepare lists of "irreplaceable" persons. The volunteers recruited according to the agreement would be subject to the command of the Head Office of the SS. The conclusion states that "the leader of the national group bears full responsibility for providing as many volunteers as possible". (PA AA, R 100993. Compare LIPTÁK, ref. 77, p. 43.)

East Recruitment Command and adviser to the Hlinka Guard Viktor Nageler.⁸⁷ Their framework agreement from 7 September⁸⁸ became the basis for the German proposal, according to which Berlin asked Bratislava to release almost five year groups of ethnic Germans, those born 1918–1922, from service in the Slovak army, whether they were already at the front or in the rear, so that they could join the Waffen-SS, and for recruiting of volunteers among the ethnic German male population aged 17–35. Germany committed itself to pay support to the family members of men recruited into the Waffen-SS. However, the Slovak side had to secure the necessary exchangeable currency.⁸⁹

On 10 September 1942, when Ambassador Ludin left for Trlinok to meet Vojtech Tuka, he did not guess that the talks would drag on for six weeks. The point concerning care and support for family members became a subject of dispute. The prime minister opposed the Reich financing it. The reason was simple: the German rates were much higher than those paid by the Slovak military authorities. Tuka's position was dictated by fear that this substantial difference, in some cases as much as ten-fold, could provoke social discontent and give the impression that Slovaks "*are degraded to second class citizens*" in their own state.⁹⁰ He was not persuaded by Ambassador Ludin or by Karmasin, who was included in the German group. Nageler's expectation that the project would be launched by 21 September⁹¹ proved to be unrealistic under the influence of the circumstances.

Tuka's "No" also caused complications in Berlin. Himmler and Berger finally retreated from their original plan to take the members of the Slovak army of German nationality into the Waffen-SS, and apply the voluntary principle instead. This meant preserving the rates of payment valid in the Reich.⁹² Tuka accepted this German counter-proposal. Further talks only clarified individual points in the bi-lateral agreement. It contained the following points: 1. The Slovak government agreed to the voluntary recruiting of Slovak citizens of German nationality aged 17–35 into the Waffen-SS. 2. Bodies of the Deutsche Partei and a commission of the Recruitment Command of the Waffen-SS South-East were authorized to carry out the recruiting. 3. The German Reich would take responsibility for social security. 4. The Slovak government promised to pay

87 MELZER, ref. 67, p. 62.

88 PAAA, R 100993. Nageler's record from 7 Sept 1942.

89 PAAA, R 29738, R 101 012. Ludin's telegram to the AA from 10 Sept 1942.

90 SNA, f. NS, Tn Iud 17/1947 – F. Karmasin, microfilm II. A 946. Dollmann's record of the talks with Tuka from 16 Sept 1942.

91 PAAA, R 100993. Nageler's memorandum to Berger from 7 Sept 1942.

92 BArch Berlin, NS 19/1629, Bl. 52. Berger's memorandum to Himmler from 14 Oct 1942. See also PAAA, R 101012. Luther's telegram to Ludin from 15 Oct 1942.

expenses of 697,680 crowns each month for each 500 volunteers.⁹³ The embassy sent the agreement to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 5 November 1942 in the form of a verbal note. The Foreign Ministry sent a positive reply 15 days later, namely on 20 November.⁹⁴ The recruiting project was launched three days later.⁹⁵

It was preceded by a propaganda offensive from the DP. An appeal from Karmasin was read at party meetings and published in the German language press. The appeal represented a mixture of threats and half-truths. The “Volksgruppenführer” endeavoured to convince his compatriots that the main aim of the recruitment was to gain “*an overview of the armed strength of our national group*”. He urged all men aged 17–35 “*to appear before the commission without being invited*”.⁹⁶ The speakers at recruiting assemblies repeated the same ideas. While the newspapers emphasized that Himmler was allowing voluntary enlistment in the Waffen-SS at the request of the leadership of the DP,⁹⁷ the party agitators on the ground appealed to an order from Adolf Hitler.⁹⁸ Confidential instructions were also sent to the leaders of the local organizations of the DP and units of the FS. They had to ensure that the year groups 1907–1925 were entirely subjected to military recruitment. Voluntary application for front-line service was automatically expected from members of the FS and ET. “*Epileptics and criminal convicts*”⁹⁹ excluded from the construct of the national socialist “Volksgemeinschaft” were not considered as potential volunteers.

The SS started its long awaited recruiting project in the early hours of 23 November 1942. Two recruiting commissions of the Recruitment Command of the Waffen-SS South-East were expected to travel through almost the whole of Slovakia in the course of a little less than a month.¹⁰⁰ The first worked in Bratislava, where 1025 men came for recruiting up to 28 November 1942.¹⁰¹ The second, operating in central and south-eastern Slovakia considered 1390 persons from whom 767 were classified as suitable between 29 November and

93 PA AA, R 29738, R 101012. Ludin’s telegram to the AA from 29 Oct 1942.

94 SNA, f. NS, Tn řud 56/1946 – H. E. Ludin, microfilm II. A 934. Undated record under the title *Citizens of Slovakia – recruitment to the Waffen-SS*.

95 PA AA, R 101012. Ludin’s telegram to the AA from 25 Nov 1942. ABS Prague, Z-10-P-15/4. Riegler’s report on the activity of the ET in the 2nd half of 1942. See also SNA, f. NS, 13/1946 – O. Kubala, microfilm II. A 923. Riegler’s diary entry from 17 Nov 1942.

96 SNA, f. 125-3-7/112. Appeal of the leader of the national group for recruiting to the Waffen-SS from 20 Nov 1942.

97 BArch Berlin, NS 19/3397, Bl. 6. Press notice from Bratislava from 21 Nov 1942.

98 SNA, f. 116-19-4/19-21. Notes for speakers at recruiting assemblies.

99 řA Bratislava, f. Ľudový řud v Bratislave, (People’s Court in Bratislava), Ls 283/1948. Decree of Central Organizational Office of the DP no. O-19/42 from 20 Nov 1942.

100 SNA, f. Deutsche Partei 1935–1945, c. 40. Plan for recruiting from 23 Nov to 19 Dec 1942.

101 SNA, f. NS, 13/1946 – O. Kubala, microfilm II. A 923. Riegler’s diary entry from 27 Nov 1942.

18 December 1942.¹⁰² About 7,000 Germans from Slovakia of the required age went before the recruiting commissions in the first phase.¹⁰³ How many of them finally satisfied the criteria of the Waffen-SS or Wehrmacht cannot be determined because of the lack of information on the results of the first commission. The calculations of the organizers, namely 2,700 according to Berger¹⁰⁴ and 1,800 according to Ludin,¹⁰⁵ were very probably accurate. In January / February 1943 the recruiting continued. The number considered by the commission constantly grew, reaching 9,200 by the time of a pause at the end of February.¹⁰⁶ By this time, there were already 6,464 men recorded as volunteers. The rest had to be released for the needs of the Waffen-SS in the course of 1943. The leadership of the DP identified only 1,264 people as "irreplaceable" (*Uk-gestellt*).¹⁰⁷ Additional recruiting brought another 633 candidates into the field uniform of the SS.¹⁰⁸

When enough men had been recruited, transport to Waffen-SS training units could be organized. The first 329 men left Bratislava on 15 January 1943.¹⁰⁹ By the middle of the same year, the number grew to 4,688, by January 1944 to 4,907 and by the beginning of June 1944 to 5,450. Together with those joining through the ET, 6,331 men served in the Waffen-SS as volunteers by that date.¹¹⁰ However, in relative terms, in comparison with other German ethnic minorities, Slovakia fell behind other countries in south-eastern Europe apart from Hungary.¹¹¹ This was another reason for the leadership of the SS to seek other possibilities to draw on the existing reserves as comprehensively as possible. The result of these efforts was a bilateral German – Slovak agreement on "*the military service of citizens of Slovakia in the German armed force – the Waffen-SS*" signed in Bratislava on 7 June 1944.¹¹²

102 SNA, f. NS, 13/1946 – O. Kubala, microfilm II. A 923. Riegler's reports from 9 and 19 Dec. 12. 1942. Riegler's diary entry from 18 Dec 1942.

103 ABS Prague, Z-10-P-15/4. Riegler's report on the activities of the ET in the 2nd half of 1942.

104 BAArch Berlin, NS 19/3397, Bl. 4. Berger's report to Himmler from 1 Dec 1942.

105 PA AA, R 101012. Ludin's telegram to the AA from 16 Oct 1942.

106 SNA, f. NS, Tn l'ud 17/1947 – F. Karmasin, microfilm II. A 945. Karmasin's report to the VoMi from 3 March 1943. If we take into account that there 30–32 thousand men aged 17–50, then 28.75% of this group in the German population of Slovakia participated in recruiting.

107 SNA, f. NS, Tn l'ud 17/1947 – F. Karmasin, microfilm II. A 945. Record of the Central Organization Office of the DP from 26 Feb 1943 prepared for Karmasin.

108 SNA, f. NS, Tn l'ud 17/1947 – F. Karmasin, microfilm II. A 945. Karmasin's report to the VoMi from 3 March 1943.

109 MELZER, ref. 67, p. 64

110 PA AA, R 101012. Ludin's reports to the AA from 16 Aug 1943, 26 Jan and 1 Aug 1944. SNA, f. 116-5-3/104. Declaration of the Office of the DP for Military Assistance from 3 June 1944.

111 IfZ, Nürnberger Dokumente, NO-2015. Ethnic Germans in the Waffen-SS, 28 Dec 1943.

112 For more details see MELZER, ref. 67, pp. 73–75.

The recruiting did not happen entirely without obstacles. The enthusiasm of the Germans in Slovakia was far from being as “extraordinary” as Karmasin had described it in reports to his highest superiors Himmler and Lorenz.¹¹³ While in June 1942 soldiers of German nationality in the Slovak army still expressed interest in service in the Waffen-SS,¹¹⁴ less than half a year later, the situation began to change under the impact of developments on the Eastern and North African fronts. Oral spreading of news from soldiers at home on leave about the far from ideal relations prevailing in the SS also had a significant influence on public opinion. Although “Volksdeutsche” had a privileged position among foreigners serving in the German armed forces at least on paper,¹¹⁵ the practical reality often looked rather different. Reich Germans often regarded them as racially inferior “*unbalanced half-breeds*”,¹¹⁶ “*second class Germans*”. The superior attitude led to various forms of discrimination by commanding officers and non-commissioned officers.¹¹⁷ The problem acquired such huge dimensions that Himmler himself had to intervene with a threat of harsh sanctions.¹¹⁸

DP propaganda could not eliminate the impact of these factors effectively enough. This appeared especially during the first phase of recruitment. In contrast to the party leaders, people interpreted volunteering as their own free decision. As a result of events on the battlefields, willingness to be recruited was not very high. Men directly faced with being recruited to some degree ignored calls on them. Only a few people came before the commissions in various places.¹¹⁹ Tendencies appeared to leave the DP or to change nationality.¹²⁰ Since a fiasco threatened, the competent functionaries of the party and the FS progressed to the use of psychological pressure. However, apart from a few municipalities,

113 SNA, f. S-426-9/58-60. Karmasin's report to Himmler from 1 Dec 1942; f. 116-17-6-/67-68. Karmasin's letter to Lorenz from 2 Dec 1942.

114 IfZ, MA 209, 5 504 263 – 268. Report from the military attaché H. Becker to the General Staff of Land Forces from 30 June 1942.

115 IfZ, Fd 33/I, Bl. 9-10. Memorandum from OKW on the treatment of ethnic Germans from 15 July 1941.

116 BArch Berlin, NS 2/57, Bl. 187-189. Hofmann's record of an inspection of the Waffen-SS units in Prague from 23 May 1941.

117 CÜPPERS, Martin. *Wegbereiter der Shoah. Die Waffen-SS, der Kommandostab Reichsführer-SS und die Judenvernichtung 1939–1945*. Darmstadt: WBG, 2005 (2nd edition), p. 89. ISBN 9783896787583.

118 SNA, f. 116-5-3/115. Himmler's order on treatment of ethnic Germans from 6 Dec 1942.

119 SNA, f. NS, 13/1946 – O. Kubala, microfilm II. A 923. Riegler's report from 19 Dec 1942; f. 209-761-3. Report of the district chief in Prievidza on national groups from 5 Jan 1943; f. NS, Tn fud 49/1945 – P. Starinský, microfilm II. A 873. General political report for November 1942; f. Ministerstvo hospodárstva (Ministry of the Economy) 1938–1945 (hereinafter MH), c. 25, Prez-P-dôv-944. IfZ, MA 652/3, 9 427 715-717. SD report from 28 Dec 1942.

120 KOVÁČ, ref. 77, pp. 180–181.

the January recruitment did not bring a significant improvement,¹²¹ although Karmasin threatened people with concentration camp if they did not do their duty.¹²²

Pressure from the DP continued to increase. The results included breaking the windows of men who were reluctant to participate in recruiting, psychological terror against hesitating parts of the population, economic blackmail and so on. Communities were sometimes divided into two camps, and quarrels leading to violence were an everyday occurrence.¹²³ Karmasin's closest associates went even further: They used Goebbels proclamation of total war and threatened everybody who refused to join the Waffen-SS with physical assault.¹²⁴ Massive pressure finally worked and a large proportion of the men submitted to the will of the party.¹²⁵ Additional recruiting brought the sort of numbers the DP had originally expected. By the end of 1943, party bodies recorded almost 12 thousand participants in recruiting.¹²⁶

In fact not all the men considered capable of military service in the SS units accepted the call up orders. Their passive resistance could not be broken even by repression from the DP. The party produced exact records of so-called shirkers, counting about 1,500 of them by April 1944.¹²⁷ Such views also emboldened a handful of small opposition groups. The German National Committee distributed illegal leaflets, demanding that men who had not volunteered should not join the Waffen-SS but the Wehrmacht.¹²⁸ Some sought refuge in the mountains,¹²⁹ where they joined the growing partisan movement.

121 ŠA Nitra, pracovisko Bojnice (Bojnice Branch), f. Okresný úrad v Prievidzi (Prievidza District Office) 1923 – 1945 (hereinafter OÚ Prievidza), c. 77, 1671/1942 prez. SNA, f. NS, Tn ľud 49/1945 – P. Starinský, microfilm II. A 873. General political report for January 1943 1943. BArch Berlin, R 142/122, Bl. 102, 110. Weekly reports from the secretary of the Nemecké Pravno branch of the DP from 4 and 19 Jan 1943.

122 IfZ, MA 652/3, 9 427 844. SD report on the mood of the population from 12 Jan 1943.

123 ŠA Nitra, pracovisko Bojnice, f. OÚ Prievidza, c. 24, 215/1943 prez. ŠA Banská Bystrica, f. Pohronská župa 1940 – 1945 (hereinafter PŽ II), c. 41, I. g 71/1944 prez.; c. 32, III. d 682/1943 prez. SNA, f. NS, Tn ľud 49/1945 – P. Starinský, microfilm II. A 873. General political report for February 1943; f. 209-761-4. Report of the district chief in Prievidza on national groups from 5 March 1943. BArch Berlin, R 142/122, Bl. 112. Weekly report from the secretary of Nemecké Pravno DP 1 Feb 1943.

124 ŠA Banská Bystrica, f. PŽ II, c. 32, III. d 682/1943 prez.

125 SNA, f. NS, Tn ľud 49/1945 – P. Starinský, microfilm II. A 873. General political report for March 1943.

126 SNA, f. 125-26-6/1-3. Report of the Central Organizational Office of the DP for 1943.

127 MELZER, ref. 67, p. 72.

128 SNA, f. Alexandrijský archív, microfilm II. C 995, 9 417 250. Text of a leaflet from the German National Committee.

129 PREČAN, Vilém (ed.). *Slovenské národné povstanie. Nemci a Slovensko. Dokumenty.* (The

The pressurized form of recruiting provoked unease in the German community of Slovakia. Sharp criticism fell on the leadership of the DP, especially in relation to the fact that the majority of functionaries of the party and associated organizations, as well as people from the higher social groups stayed at home. This was pointed out not only by family members, but also by the soldiers themselves in letters secretly smuggled home.¹³⁰ The tension was increased by men on leave sharing their negative experiences in the SS with the people closest to them. In conflict with Himmler's instructions, bullying, contempt and verbal abuse towards "*stupid Slovaks*" did not stop.¹³¹ Therefore, dissatisfaction logically turned against the DP with some soldiers not hiding their inclination "*to settle accounts with Karmasin and the other party bosses*".¹³² That they really meant it is shown by an incident in Handlová, where nine men broke into the flat of the leader of the local DP group and forced him to either enlist or resign from his function. He later stepped down at a public assembly.¹³³ In spite of these unpleasant and certainly not marginal incidents, satisfaction with the course of the second phase of recruiting more or less prevailed among its organizers, who considered it an "*undeniable political success*".¹³⁴

The only more serious remaining open question was the recruiting of officers of German nationality serving in the Slovak army. Paradoxically, Tuka's government itself came up with an offer to transfer them to the Waffen-SS.¹³⁵ The

Slovak National Uprising. Germans and Slovaks. Documents). Bratislava: Epocha, 1970, document 65, p. 152.

130 BArch Berlin, R 70 Slowakei/354. SD report on the mood of the population from 26 April 1943. SNA, f. 116-35-3/102-103. Undated (probably July 1943) report of the Head Office of the SS on the mood of members of the German minorities in the Waffen-SS; f. Alexandrijský archív, microfilm II. C 995, 9 417 133-134. SD report on the departure of Germans from Slovakia to join the Waffen-SS from 11 March 1943.

131 SNA, f. 116-11-4/23. Karmasin's memorandum to the VoMi from 16 Oct 1943; f. 116-21-2/163. Declaration of the Trnava organization of the DP from 28. 9. 1943. BArch Berlin, R 70 Slowakei/249, Bl. 42-43. Letter from Hans D. to the regional office of the DP in Bratislava from 13 May 1943.

132 SNA, f. Alexandrijský archív, II. C 995, 9 417 260-261. Wahl's report for the Vienna SD on the views of members of the Waffen-SS from 24 March 1944.

133 ŠA Nitra, f. Župa Nitrianska III (1940 – 1945), c. 62, 361/I-ŠB-1943. Report of the district chief in Prievidza on national groups from 2 Nov 1943. Compare LIPTÁK, Ľubomír. Nemecská a maďarská menšina v slovenskej politike a odbojovom hnutí. (The German and Hungarian minorities in Slovak politics and the resistance movement). In BRANDES, Detlef – IVANIČKOVÁ, Edita – PEŠEK, Jiří (eds.). *Vynútený rozchod. Vyhnanie a vysídlenie z Československa 1938-1947 v porovnaní s Poľskom, Maďarskom a Juhosláviou*. Bratislava: Veda, 1999, p. 90. ISBN 9788022405868

134 AA, R 100388. Preliminary draft of Ludin's letter to Berger from 11 Dec 1943.

135 PA AA, R 101012. Verbal note from the Foreign Ministry to the German Embassy from 27 Nov 1942.

proposal from Bratislava rather surprised the German side, which did not give a prompt reply because the relevant people in the Reich did not have a unified view on the matter. Already in October 1942, the military mission expressed a very critical view on the original recruitment plan, expecting it to “*significantly weaken the fighting strength and training*”¹³⁶ of the Slovak army.

Although the Wehrmacht stuck to its position,¹³⁷ also in relation to the prepared regrouping of the Fast and Security divisions,¹³⁸ the Ministry of National Defense (MND), leadership of the DP, SS Main Office and Foreign Office did everything to ensure that as many officers as possible could transfer to the Waffen-SS.¹³⁹ While the German side was mainly interested in “*human material*”, the motivation of the Slovak actors was entirely different: getting rid of unwanted “*informers*”.¹⁴⁰ The whole problem was finally solved by the bilateral agreement of 7 June 1944.

Around the turn of the years 1943/44, the reservoir of the second recruitment action gradually began to be exhausted. This was clear not only to the chief of the SS Main Office, who emphasized the need to more intensively use the German minority for the Waffen-SS,¹⁴¹ but also to DP leadership and the German embassy. All the participating parties intensively sought ways to achieve increased quotas for the needs of the SS. The primary aim of Berger’s apparatus was to secure compulsory military service for men of German nationality born in 1908 or later, and in an extreme case to raise the age limit to 45. The chief of

136 MELZER, ref. 67, p. 69.

137 PA AA, R 101012. Memorandum of OKW to the AA from 24 Feb 1942. Memorandum of the Germanische Leitstelle to the AA from 18 March 1943. SNA, f. 116-39-3/98-99. Gmelin’s record from 14 July 1943. Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg (hereinafter BA-MA), RW 5/447. Schlieper’s memorandum to OKW/Ausland from 18 July 1943. Vojenský historický archív v Bratislave (hereinafter VHA), f. Ministerstvo národnej obrany (Ministry of National Defence) 1939–1945, dôverné spisy (confidential papers) (hereinafter MNO dôverné), c. 405, inv. no. 200, no. 266016/dôv.I-1943.

138 See BAKA, Igor. *Generál Čatloš a slovenská armáda na frontoch druhej svetovej vojny v rokoch 1943 – 1944*. (General Čatloš and the Slovak army on the fronts of the Second World War, 1943–1944). In BAKA, Igor – CSÉFALVAY, František – KRALČÁK, Peter a kol. *Ferdinand Čatloš – vojak a politik (1895 – 1972)*. Bratislava: Vojenský historický ústav, 2011, pp. 167–207. ISBN 9788097076801

139 PA AA, R 101012. Memorandum of the SS Main Office to the AA from 11 Jan 1943. Memorandum of the VoMi to the AA from 5 Feb 1943. SNA, f. 116-38-1/45. Memorandum of the MNO no. 263.219dôvI/3-1943 from 17 June 1943. VHA, f. MNO dôverné, c. 405, inv. no. 200, no. 266016/dôv.I-1943.

140 SNA, f. Alexandrijský archív, microfilm II. C 995, 9 417 274. Declaration intended for the Vienna SD from 17 May 1944. The head of the German military mission to Slovakia General Schliepper expressed himself in a similar spirit in his report from the end of March 1944. (PREČAN, ref. 129, document 23, p. 85.)

141 PA AA, R 100954. Berger’s memorandum to Ludin from 3 Jan 1944.

the SS Main Office and his subordinates calculated that in this way they could also catch people avoiding call up and bring into the Waffen-SS units a further 8–9 thousand men.¹⁴² The diplomatic representatives of the Reich in Bratislava essentially agreed with the proposal, but pointed to possible problems connected with employing the Slovak security organs in the process of capturing shirkers. However, they added that the introduction of compulsory military service in the Waffen-SS could bring serious financial and political complications.¹⁴³ At this time, the German debt to Slovakia was approaching five billion crowns. Equally, Berlin could not be entirely sure of the willingness of Tuka's cabinet to accept a relatively extensive intervention in the still at least formally accepted sovereignty of a "protected" state. There were also Karmasin's fears that increased recruitment would weaken the position of the German minority or deprive its leadership of influence on determining who did or did not have to undertake military service.¹⁴⁴ However, these obstacles did not prevent Berger acting quickly. He soon gained Himmler's agreement in principle, and as in summer 1942 he urged the Foreign Office to quickly negotiate with the Slovak representatives. He wanted to have an agreement on the table by the middle of March 1944 and start the widened recruiting.¹⁴⁵ In the end, this option failed. The Slovak government and its effort to achieve the ethnic homogeneity of its own armed forces, which included 2,388 ethnic Germans at the end of 1942, came into the game.¹⁴⁶

The tendency of the Slovak army to get rid of at least its officers of German nationality by means of their "voluntary" transfer to the Waffen-SS strengthened from the summer of 1943. The Ministry of National Defence (MND) presented its initiative in the statement: *"to enable officers of German nationality [...] to fight under German command in the ranks of their own tribe, and to show their solidarity with the German national community as clearly as possible"*.¹⁴⁷ From 36 active officers, who declared German origin¹⁴⁸ only one used this alternative

142 MELZER, ref. 67, p. 70.

143 PA AA, R 100954. Ludin's reply to Berger from 18 Jan 1944.

144 PA AA, R 100954. Gmelin's memorandum to the AA from 19 Jan 1944; Ludin's telegram to the AA from 10 Feb 1944. SNA, f. 116-40-3/258. Karmasin's declaration to the VoMi from 12 Feb 1944.

145 IfZ, Nürnberger Dokumente, NO-3066. Telegram from Himmler's personal staff to Berger from 21 Feb 1944; NO-2757. Berger's report to Himmler from 3 March 1944; PA AA, R 100 954. Berger's memorandum to the AA from 11 Feb 1944.

146 VHA, f. MNO dôverné, c. 405, inv. no. 200, no. 110996/dôv.III/15-1942.

147 VHA, f. MNO dôverné, c. 405, inv. no. 200, no. 266016/dôv.I/1943.

148 ŠIMUNIČ, Pavel. Národnostná otázka v slovenskej armáde a česko-slovenských zahraničných jednotkách 1939 – 1945. (The nationality question in the Slovak army and in the Czecho-Slovak units abroad 1939–1945). In *Z vojenskej histórie Slovenska 1918 – 1948*.

up to the beginning of 1944. However, the army did not allow him to leave because he had done specialized training. The rest showed minimal interest in joining the Waffen-SS.¹⁴⁹ The view of the German Military Mission, which unambiguously opposed the aim of the MND, gave their position some degree of support.¹⁵⁰ A new impulse eventually came at the end of October 1943 in the form of a request from Karmasin to Minister Ferdinand Čatloš to allow recruiting to the Waffen-SS among the members (officers, non-commissioned officers and ordinary soldiers) of the field units, labour units and the former Security Division.¹⁵¹ After considering the situation the Supreme Council for Defence of the State decided to accept Karmasin's proposal and even to go beyond it. All Germans actively serving in the army would be able to transfer to the Waffen-SS.¹⁵² The agreement in principle by the Slovak government brought great advantages to all the interested German offices with the exception of the German Military Mission, and the inter-penetration of the interests of the two sides became an advantageous basis for talks on the future agreement.

They began in mid March 1944, when Berlin turned to Bratislava with an official verbal note. Apart from the Slovak proposal, it included Berger's original request to introduce compulsory military service for men born in 1908 or later. Widening the range of persons to be recruited presupposed an increase in the cost of supporting their family members from 90 million Ks to 200 million Ks each year. It also demanded passing of legal norms to allow citizens of Slovakia to undertake military service in the Waffen-SS for the duration of the war. Recruiting of men actively serving in the Slovak army was expected to happen by 15 May, and of those born in 1908 or later by 15 June 1944.¹⁵³ The Slovak representatives agreed with the points and the first proposed agreement was produced at the end of March. It was based on the above mentioned provisions supplemented by a demand from Bratislava that a clause on reciprocity be included.¹⁵⁴ The agreement had to at least theoretically allow citizens of Germany of Slovak nationality to serve in the Slovak army. The Germans were rather surprised. After getting over the initial shock, the relevant authorities, namely the OKW and the Reich leader

Trenčín: Ministerstvo obrany SR, 1994, p. 93.

149 BArch Berlin, R 142/38. Hofer's report from 26 June 1943.

150 VHA, f. MNO, dôverné, c. 405, inv. no. 200, 266016/dôv.I/1943.

151 KOVÁČ, ref. 79, p. 187-188.

152 SNA, f. 116-44-5/53. Memorandum from the MNO to Karmasin) from 8 Jan 1944; VHA, f. MNO, dôverné, c. 432, inv. no. 231, 455411/dôv.I/1944; BArch Berlin, R 142/15, Bl. 79.

153 BArch Berlin, R 142/15, Bl. 82-83; PA AA, R 100954. Verbal note of the German Embassy from 15 March 1944.

154 PA AA, R 100954. AA record of a telephone conversation with Gmelin from 27 March 1944. Ludin's letter to von Ribbentrop from 15 May 1944.

of the SS with his apparatus, agreed to this untraditional insertion.¹⁵⁵ The only exception was Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, who did everything possible to sabotage the inclusion of the principle of reciprocity, seeing it as an impudent gesture from a German satellite. After repeated positive expressions from the OKW and an assurance from the Bratislava embassy that the Slovak side would not claim its application in practice, he finally agreed. This happened three days after¹⁵⁶ Tuka's cabinet approved the text of the inter-state agreement on 10 May 1944.¹⁵⁷

There was not a complete consensus on the Slovak side. The Ministry of Justice produced the most comments on the prepared document. It saw the agreement as an unconstitutional step because it forced citizens of Slovakia, to serve in the armed forces of a foreign state, even though they were of German nationality. Apart from this, according to the Minister of Justice Gejza Fritz, the agreement meant a substantial violation of Slovak sovereignty. *"By forcing its citizens into a foreign state, the state not only gives up part of its sovereignty, but also, precisely in the present time of war, valuable material, namely soldiers."*¹⁵⁸ as the ministry argued entirely logically. It also cast doubt on the reciprocity clause and its practical application on the German side. Possible problems with dual citizenship were also pointed out. Taking into account also the ethical dimension of the agreement, which was analysed as an instrument of pressure, the ministry did not recommend its acceptance.

In spite of the clear criticism in the expert report, the government only accepted the reservation concerning dual citizenship.¹⁵⁹ The others were left without consideration. At the same time, legislation was prepared to enable the signing of the existing text of the inter-state agreement. To be exact, it was a constitutional statute on concluding international agreements during military mobilization of the state. The government considered its immediate adoption necessary. According to the explanatory text of the proposal: *"cooperation with the friendly German Reich demands some deviations from the valid legal norms concerning the legal position of the armed forces and their members"*.¹⁶⁰

155 MELZER, ref. 67, p. 72

156 PA AA, R 100954. Altenburg's record for Wagner from 13 May 1944.

157 SNA, f. Tn ľud 8/1946 – Alexander Mach, microfilm II. A 898. Partial copy of the minutes of a government meeting from 10 May 1944.

158 SNA, f. Ministerstvo pravosúdia (Ministry of Justice) 1938–1945 (hereinafter MP), c. 123, 18491/44-9. Expert report from the Ministry of Justice intended for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 21 April 1944.

159 SNA, f. NS, Tn ľud 8/1946 – Alexander Mach, microfilm II. A 898. Partial copy of the minutes of a government meeting from 26 April 1944.

160 SNA, f. S-424-6/31-33. Proposed act from 28 April 1944.

Parliament passed the act on 11 May 1944,¹⁶¹ and there was no longer anything in the way of concluding the agreement. Working out the exact form of the final protocol was the subject of a further series of talks. The government approved its text on 6 June 1944,¹⁶² and on the next day in Bratislava, the representatives of the two countries signed the agreement on obligatory military service by citizens of Slovakia of German nationality in a German armed force – the Waffen-SS.¹⁶³ However, it became valid only after the exchange of ratification documents on 4 October 1944. The text of the agreement was published in the Slovak Statute Book only in the second half of October.¹⁶⁴

The newly signed document immediately in its first article actually satisfied Berger's demand, and even went beyond it. According to the agreement, Germans from Slovakia with no upper age limit had to fulfil their "*defence duty for the duration of this war*"¹⁶⁵ in the Waffen-SS. A person of German nationality was defined as a person who had declared German nationality in the December 1940 census.

The concluding protocol, subject to secrecy, was more extensive than the actual agreement. The agreement had five articles while the concluding protocol had ten.¹⁶⁶ It regulated various questions of an organizational or technical nature concerning the recruiting or transfer to the units of the Waffen-SS. It concerned retention of rank, maintaining the Slovak citizenship of enlisted persons, organization of call up or delay of military service.

Although the agreement only came into force with the exchange of ratification documents, the recruiting machinery began to move practically from the signing. The timing of the launch of recruiting a few days after the landing of the British and American armies in Normandy was not a very far-sighted step. Such considerations did not have much importance from the point of view of the SS. The order of the day was to quickly supplement the hard to replace losses suffered by the German armed forces. The need to quickly mobilize new human reserves from the Balkan and Danubian region is also shown by the lowering of

161 Slovenský zákonník (Slovak Statutebook) 1944, ústavný zákon (Constitution act) no. 49 from 11 May 1944, p. 234-235. According to SD reports the act was not passed unanim by parliament.

162 SNA, f. NS, Tn Iud 8/1946 – Alexander Mach, microfilm II. A 898. Partial copy of the minutes of a government meeting from 6 June 1944.

163 KOVÁČ, ref. 77, s. 188; MELZER, ref. 67, p. 72.

164 Slovenský zákonník 1944, Declaration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs no. 197 from 14 Oct 1944, pp. 450–453. The agreement was not published in the Statutebook of the Reich!

165 Slovenský zákonník 1944, Declaration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs no. 197 from 14 Oct 1944, p. 452.

166 PA AA, R 100954. The agreement from 7 June 1944 with concluding protocol.

the strict criteria applied to SS recruiting. Men with weak evaluations for racial suitability, scoring III – IV, which meant limited or unsatisfactory as a result of racial mixing, also had to be assigned to units.¹⁶⁷ It was similar with height. The recruiting commissions were instructed to accept men with at least 160 cm, in exceptional cases even 158 cm.¹⁶⁸

These circumstances are enough to explain why they quickly started the transfer to the Waffen-SS of ethnic Germans actively serving in the Slovak army. Berger's structures could count on strong support from the Bratislava government. Representatives of the Ministry of Defence and the "SS-Ersatzkommando Slowakei" already agreed on 9 June on a preliminary timetable for transferring members of the Slovak army of German nationality, 1,715 of whom had been identified up to 3 June 1944,¹⁶⁹ to training or combat units of the Waffen-SS. It was to happen in three stages from 22 June to 20 July 1944, and both sides expected about 1,150 men to be involved in this "transaction".¹⁷⁰ The reservists – 5,651 men and persons still not enlisted in the army – 4,603 men were not going to be exceptions.¹⁷¹ Only experts such as physicians, of whom there was an acute shortage as the Ministry of Defence was well aware, were to remain in the Slovak army.¹⁷² According to Karmasin's ideas, these officers had to fulfil the function of supervising or guaranteeing the maintenance of German influence in the Slovak army.¹⁷³ Men serving in the field units of the army did not avoid forcible transfer either. This is shown by the case of 300–350 Germans from Slovakia in the I. Technical Division, located in the territory of Rumania around the turn of August and September 1944. The German 8th Army immediately took them from their unit against their will and assigned them to the newly formed "Siebenburgen" regiment in the framework of the 8th SS "Florian Geyer" Cavalry Division.¹⁷⁴

167 IfZ, Fd 33/II. Memorandum from the Racial Office of the SS Race and Settlement Main Office from 17 July 1944. For more details on this problem see HEINEMANN, ref. 60, pp. 235–236; STRIPPEL, Andreas. *NS-Völkstumspolitik und die Neuordnung Europas. Rassenpolitische Selektion der Einwandererzentralstelle des Chefs der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD (1939–1945)*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2011, pp. 112–114. ISBN 9783506771704.

168 IfZ, Fd 33/II. Memorandum from the Racial Office of the SS Race and Settlement Main Office from 19 July 1944.

169 SNA, f. 116-5-3/104. Report on the number of persons of German nationality serving in the army up to 3 June 1944.

170 BArch Berlin, R 142/15, Bl. 144-147. Hofer's report from 22 June 1944.

171 SNA, f. 116-41-4/32. Report of the Central Organizational Office of the DP for July 1944 from 5 Aug 1944.

172 VHA, f. MNO dôverné, c. 432, inv. no. 231, 467428/dôv.II/11/1944.

173 BArch Berlin, R 70 Slowakei/3, Bl. 118. Böhrsch's record of a discussion with Karmasin from 23 May 1944.

174 ŠA Banská Bystrica, f. Okresný ľudový súd (District People's Court) (hereinafter OES) at Kremnica 1945–1947, T ľud 287/1946. Interrogation of Vojtech D.-D. from 20 March

If the recruiting effort around the turn of 1942/1943 had provoked the first signs of indignation among the Germans of Slovakia, the actual introduction of conscription into the Waffen-SS in June 1944 already brought expressions of opposition, growing into open protests in some places. The new wave of recruiting happened at a time when the Wehrmacht was retreating on all fronts and the defeat of National Socialist Germany already appeared to be only a matter of time. In these circumstances, Germans from Slovakia refused to shed their blood for a cause they had willingly supported three years before. Most of them were led to this position mainly by motives of personal survival. Those whose protest expressed a civil or political position of opposition were in a definite minority.

Reports about the talks on the inter-state agreement did not remain secret. They quickly filtered through to the public, and spread especially in the circles they directly concerned. The German population, which was gradually losing its hope of victory for the Third Reich,¹⁷⁵ reacted to rumours that the age limit for recruiting would be raised to 45 with considerable dissatisfaction.

The results included efforts to leave the DP and declare Slovak or Hungarian nationality. People also stated that as citizens of the Slovak state, they were willing to undertake military service in the ranks of the Slovak army but not in the Waffen-SS. For this reason, they also refused to accept citizenship of the Reich.¹⁷⁶

The publication of Karmasin's appeal for the "*possibility of being even more closely tied to the community of destiny of our mother nation*"¹⁷⁷ in the form of military service in SS units further worsened the declining mood in the German community. Enthusiasm could not be found even among the officers of German nationality themselves,¹⁷⁸ although in the end they fulfilled their "duty" towards the homeland of their ancestors. From 36 recorded officers either professional or reserve, 35 applied for transfer. The personnel office of the SS accepted 28 of them and gradually assigned them to combat, training or reserve units of the Waffen-SS. Most of them found themselves either in the training centre

1946. Biography of V. D.-D. from 26 June 1945. Supplement to the protocol from 8 Nov 1945. On the regiment see MILATA, ref. 6, p. 294.

175 SNA, f. 209-752-5/16-17. Report of the district chief in Gelnica for April 1944.

176 ŠA Banská Bystrica, f. PŽ II, c. 46, III d 1559/1944 prez. Report of the district chief in Kremnica for April 1944; III d 1886/1944 prez. Report of the district chief in Kremnica for May 1944; SNA, f. 209-755-13. Report from the district chief in Kežmarok on national groups for April 1944); BArch Berlin, R 142/81. Hofer's memorandum to the office of the leader of the nationality group from 9 June 1944.

177 *Deutsche Stimmen*, 1944, 24, p. 1.

178 SNA, f. Alexandrijský archív, microfilm II. C 995, 9 417 330. Böhrsch's record of a conversation with H. Gmelin from 8 July 1944. 9 417 275-276. Hlásenie dôverníka 116 (Report of secretary 116) from 11 July 1944.

for Panzergrenadiers at Kienschlag (Prosečnice in Moravia) or in the artillery training and reserve SS regiment in Prague.¹⁷⁹ From there, they were transferred either to the 14th Division Waffen-SS “Galizien”, moved at the end of September 1944 to Slovakia,¹⁸⁰ to the 23rd Mountain Division “Kama” or to the 22nd Cavalry Division “Maria Theresa”.¹⁸¹ Some were transferred to administrative posts in the central command structures of the Waffen-SS.¹⁸²

The non-commissioned officers, ordinary soldiers and persons who had avoided being caught by the recruiting machinery for a year and a half reacted to “transfer” to the Waffen-SS units with much greater vigour. Their position attracted the attention of the German public, and in some places found support. Expressions of opposition took various forms, but rarely went beyond the local level. The most frequent form of protest was not accepting the call up order, tearing it up or mass returning by post to the district recruiting command. Men subject to military service according to the concluded agreement, openly criticized the agreement, and publicly proclaimed their unwillingness to join the Waffen-SS. They did not obey calls from the Slovak police authorities and let themselves be escorted in handcuffs, for example, at Janova Lehota, to a place of concentration, pointing to their “free decision”. After arriving at barracks in Bratislava or Kežmarok, some succeeded in slipping away unnoticed. Some sought a way out of their dilemma by escaping to the forests, while some committed suicide. Small illegal groups such as the German National Committee became active, and called for men to ignore calls to join the SS. In some places, Church representatives joined the agitation against enlisting. They described the Waffen-SS as a “*pagan society*”.¹⁸³

179 VHA, f. MNO dôverné, c. 432, inv. no. 231, 465164/dôv.II/4-1944. BArch Berlin, NS 33/483. Memorandum of the Chief SS Personnel Main Office from 5 Sept 1944.

180 On the activity of the division in Slovakia see: ŠMIGEL, Michal. 14. divízia SS „Galizien“ na Slovensku (1944 – 1945): bojová a protipartizánska činnosť a represálie. (The 14th SS Division “Galizien” in Slovakia (1944–1945): combat and anti-partisan activity and repression). In SOKOLOVIČ, Peter (ed.). *Prezekúcie na Slovensku v rokoch 1938 – 1945*. Bratislava: Ústav pamäti národa, 2008, p. 213-214. ISBN 3930908751.

181 BArch Berlin, ehem BDC, SSO-Akte Ludwig K., Emil-Johann S., Edmund-Karl S., Karl S., Karl Wildner, Ludwig, L., Johann Rudolf P., Franz C., Gustav H. (14th Division) Robert S., Ladislaus S., Michael A., Anton D., Friedrich H., Stefan N., Franz Gustav S. (23rd Division) Ladislaus R., Johann Wilhelm S., Julius T. (22nd Division).

182 BArch Berlin, ehem. BDC, SSO-Akte Wilhelm G., Ludwig W., Rudolf Z.

183 BArch Berlin, R 142/15, Bl. 177. Anton’s declaration from 14 July 1944; Bl. 181-184. Hofer’s report from 19 July 1944; Bl. 188-191. Böhrsch’s record from 28 July 1944; Bl. 192-196. Vogl’s report from 8 Aug 1944; Bl. 198-199. Vogl’s report from 14 Aug 1944; R 142/90, Bl. 87. Copy of a leaflet of the German National Committee from 13 June 1944. SNA, f. Alexandrijský archív, microfilm II. C 1007. Report from the chief for press and propaganda at Janová Lehota from 12 July 1944; f. 116-20-2/209. Declaration of the DP secretary for Lower Spiš

Local offices of the state administration strove to calm enflamed public opinion, but they did not always succeed. On the other hand, interventions by gendarmes only poured oil on the fire. Reports from district chiefs point to growing tension, escalating into conflicts, but they only rarely intervened in favour of the Germans people. Only the district chief in Kremnica was not afraid to describe the conscription as illegal with the observation that the agreement had not been published in the Statute Book.¹⁸⁴ The Defence Ministry and bodies subordinate to it willingly cooperated with the DP, while the Ministry of Justice remained silent after critical comments.¹⁸⁵ The top politicians were more or less indifferent to the fate of ordinary citizens. This is shown by the attitude of the Office of the President of the Republic to the anonymous letter from “German mothers” erroneously thanking President Jozef Tiso for protecting their sons by not signing the agreement.¹⁸⁶ However, Tiso did not consider it at all, and he signed the ratification documents on 21 July 1944.¹⁸⁷ His office deposited the letter as a matter considered settled. The aim – to produce an ethnically homogeneous army – was largely achieved by this route.

The leadership of the DP confronted the situation by strengthened propaganda associated with the use of means of coercion. In this, it gratefully cooperated with the Ministry of Defence, as well as the Ministry of the Interior and its apparatus. The circumstances required firm, radical action, because the issue concerned the prestige of the party and in the end also maintenance of the authority of the German Reich.¹⁸⁸ However, in relation to the delayed ratification of the agreement, it was not simple. Karmasin found himself between two millstones. On one side there was justified fear of weakening of the German minority, while on the other, there was Himmler’s categorical order not to consider temporary “loss of substance”.¹⁸⁹ In the given circumstances, the Reich leader of the SS

from 15 July 1944; f. 209-752-5/35. Declaration of the district chief in Gelnica on the situation in June 1944; ŠA Banská Bystrica, f. PŽ II, c. 46, III d 2462/1944 prez. Declaration of the district chief in Kremnica on the situation in July 1944. ŠA Banská Bystrica, pracovisko Kremnica, f. Okresný úrad Nová Baňa 1923 – 1945, c. 37, D1-651/1944. LACKO, Martin (ed.). *Situačné hlásenia okresných náčelníkov január – august 1944*. (The situation reports of district chiefs, January – August 1944). Trnava: Katedra histórie Filozofickej fakulty UCM, 2005, p. 226, 239–240, 244, 246–248. ISBN 8089220010.

184 ŠA Banská Bystrica, f. PŽ II, c. 46, III d 2462/1944 prez. Declaration of the district chief in Kremnica on the situation in July 1944. LACKO, ref. 183, p. 240.

185 VHA, f. MNO dôverné, c. 432, inv. no. 231, 474872/dôv.II/4-1944. SNA, f. MP, c. 123, 18491/44-9. Record of the Ministry of Justice from 22 July 1944.

186 SNA, f. S-424-3/17. Anonymous petition from 9 June 1944.

187 Slovenský zákonník 1944, Declaration of the Minister of Foreign Affairs no. 197 from 14 Oct 1944, p. 450.

188 BArch Berlin, R 142/15, Bl. 188-191. Böhrsch’s record from 28 July 1944.

189 KOVÁČ, ref. 77, pp. 188–189.

noticed that Karmasin had particular problems and did not have matters entirely under control. In reply, he tried to play down the statements of the head of the SS. He stated in his defence: *"It is at most a matter of 25–30 men... In the immediate future, the majority will be captured and made available to the Waffen-SS."*¹⁹⁰ This statement satisfied Himmler.

However, the actual balance of the conscription process looked entirely different. Its final phase did not fulfil the original expectations as a result of the growing unwillingness of the German population. If the leadership of the SS Main Office reckoned on a further 8–9 thousand men, it must have been really dissatisfied with the actual result. Up to 3 June 1944, four days before the conclusion of the inter-state agreement, the number of Germans from Slovakia in the Waffen-SS reached 6,631 persons,¹⁹¹ and by 1 September it had grown to 7,824 men. With great probability it was a matter of former soldiers from the Slovak army, where 665 of them remained on that date.¹⁹² In areas where the influence of the DP remained sufficiently strong, its bodies recorded relatively solid success of recruiting.¹⁹³ But with increasing distance from Bratislava, the number of conscripts declined.¹⁹⁴ The Slovak security forces intervened in cases of refusal to obey call up orders. By the beginning of August, about 400 persons were forcibly escorted to the departure places.¹⁹⁵ This significantly damaged the trust of the Germans in their own leaders.

The rate of recruiting significantly slowed after the outbreak of the Slovak National Uprising. A large proportion of the conscripted men had to be assigned to the newly formed Heimatschutz. A further 398 men left them for the Waffen-SS by mid January 1945. A third recruiting effort up to 15 January 1945 brought 1,591 persons,¹⁹⁶ significantly fewer than expected by its promoters: Berger, Karmasin and Ludin. However, this number is certainly not final. In mid January Himmler ordered the release of men born in 1910 or later for the needs of the Waffen-SS.¹⁹⁷ Men and teenagers evacuated to the territory of the

190 PREČAN, ref. 129, document 65, p. 152.

191 SNA, f. 116-5-3/104. Report on the number of persons of German nationality in military service up to 3 June 1944.

192 SNA, f. 116-5-39/185. Report on the number of persons of German nationality in military service up to 1 Sept 1944.

193 SNA, f. 116-29-9/42-45. Report of the leader of the DP in the District of Bratislava-Land from 18 Aug 1944.

194 BArch Berlin, R 142/15, Bl. 181-184. Hofer's report from 19 July 1944.

195 SNA, f. 116-41-4/32. Report of the Central Organizational Office of the DP for July 1944 from 5 August 1944.

196 BArch Berlin, R 142/15, Bl. 205-206. Undated summary of the number of persons of German nationality doing military service (mid January 1945).

197 BArch Berlin, R 142/15, Bl. 204. Copy of a telegram from the Personal Staff of the Reich leader of the SS to Höfle from 11 Jan 1945.

Third Reich from autumn 1944 also did not avoid being recruited. The apparatus of the “Reich Commissioner for Strengthening of Germanism” introduced the necessary measures to ensure that persons aged 16–48 were caught in the net of the SS recruiting command. Men born in 1919 or later, who fulfilled the racial criteria of the SS and were at least 166 cm tall, had to be immediately assigned to units of the Waffen-SS. Others were expected to be active reserves, who would be assigned according to current needs. Men with less than 166 cm in height would be assigned to police units.¹⁹⁸ How many people got into the formations of the Waffen-SS or police in this way cannot be ascertained because of the incompleteness of the sources. However, one thing is certain, the recruiting of Germans from Slovakia ended with the recruiting in the territory of Germany and the release of members of the Heimatschutz younger than 25 in January 1945.

The surviving archive documents enable quite a detailed reconstructions and analysis of the mechanisms of recruitment. The situation is worse with the assignment of the Germans from Slovakia to specific units of the Waffen-SS, police and guard units at individual concentration camps. Some individuals could be found in the first “elite” divisions of the Waffen-SS, such as “SS-Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler”, “Das Reich”, “Totenkopf” or “Wiking”.¹⁹⁹ The initial illegal phase of recruiting mainly concerned the “Totenkopf” regiment, the SS infantry brigade and the SS cavalry brigade. For example, in May 1941, five 18–19 men from central Slovakia joined the 2nd Cavalry Regiment of the SS.²⁰⁰ Less than two months later, they participated as part of this unit in the mass killing of Jewish communities in the area of the Pripet marshes in the Soviet Union.²⁰¹ One of its members became an eye-witness of the liquidation of Jews in the small town of Davidgrodek in Bielorus.²⁰² Another man joined the unit at the end of 1941.²⁰³ Precisely at that time, the Soviet army broke through the front near Rzhev and the cavalry brigade in cooperation with Wehrmacht units had to help to fill the gap at the cost of huge losses.²⁰⁴

198 IfZ, Fd 33/II. Memorandum of the VDA from 4 Nov 1944. Memorandum of the Einsatzführung VoMi Munich – Upper Bavaria from 12 Feb 1945.

199 NA Praha, MV-L, c. 119, 2-11-18b. “Volksdeutsche” from the Slovakia, 22 Feb 1945. SNA, f. 116-11-4/25. Karmasin’s letter to the VoMi from 14 July 1943. ŠA Bratislava, f. OLS Bratislava, T řud 284/1946. ŠA Bratislava, f. OLS Bratislava, T řud 380/1945. Staatsarchiv (StA) München, Staatsanwaltschaften 34835/4, Bl. 879-800. Interrogation witness K. S. 26 May 1967. BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/1836, Bl. 1-7. Interrogation of S. W. 27 July 1959.

200 BArch Berlin, ehem. BDC, RuSHA-Akte Adolf M. Letter from A. M. to the 2nd SS cavalry regiment from 9 May 1941.

201 CÜPPERS, ref. 117, pp. 151–165.

202 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/2328, Bl. 1242-1305. Case of the state representatives in Braunschweig against Franz Magill from 13 May 1963.

203 BArch Ludwigsburg, B 162/5544, Bl. 272-273. Interrogation of witness O. B. 18 Feb 1968.

204 CÜPPERS, ref. 117, p. 240.

Germans from Slovakia were not assigned only to Waffen-SS units. Even during the first phase, the Reich Main Security Office recruited about 60 drivers in May 1941, just before the invasion of the Soviet Union.²⁰⁵ We can find at least two of them in the "Einsatzgruppen" of the Security Police in the Soviet Union,²⁰⁶ where they had on their consciences tens of thousands of victims. Another served in a not definitely specified order police unit at Rivne in Ukraine, where it was involved in conflict with partisans.²⁰⁷ Some persons were assigned to the Prague Central Agency for Jewish Emigration. Gejza T. and Mathias S. held positions that involved active participation in the persecution and deportation of Jews in Greece and Hungary.²⁰⁸

The recruits of the first phase also occasionally got into guard units at concentration camps. They were mostly men who suffered serious injuries during training, which led to them being re-assigned to a lower level of assignment. This was the case for Franz Marko from Handlová. After healing, he was assigned to the Auschwitz concentration camp at the end of December 1941. At first he served in the first guard unit, and later in the political section of the camp (Gestapo). During interrogations he thrashed prisoners. Twenty years later, in connection with preparation of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial, he defended himself with the claim that he was acting on orders from his superiors,²⁰⁹ but it did not sound very convincing from his mouth.

The number of concentration camp guards from Slovakia increased significantly during the second phase of recruiting. Robert Schwantzer, convicted by the Bratislava district people's court for a murder in Edlgasse, stated in his testimony that in February 1943 about 175 men went from Bratislava to Auschwitz with him.²¹⁰ How many stayed there and how many were transferred elsewhere by the SS Main Economic and Administrative Office is unknown. The Polish historian Aleksander Lasik has written about 80 persons assigned to various concentration camps including Auschwitz in March and April 1943.²¹¹ They did not serve only

205 SNA, f. Alexandrijský archív, microfilm II. C 1007, 9 431 612-622. Report of the high command of the FS from 9 June 1941.

206 IfZ, NSG-Datenbank (Finger, Noßke).

207 ŠA Bratislava, f. OLS Bratislava, T I'ud 225/1945.

208 ŠA Bratislava, f. OLS Bratislava, T I'ud 360/1945; f. OLS Pezinok, T I'ud 63/1946.

209 Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Wiesbaden (hereinafter HHStAW), Bestand 461, Nr. 37638/51, B. 8982-8990. Interrogation of F. Marko from 26 May 1961. See also KLEE, Ernst (ed.). *Täter, Gehilfen, Opfer und was aus ihnen wurde. Ein Personalexikon*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuchverlag, 2018 (2nd edition), p. 269. ISBN 9783596197859.

210 ŠINDELÁŘOVÁ, Lenka. *Finale der Vernichtung. Die Einsatzgruppe H in der Slowakei 1944/1945*. Darmstadt: WBG, 2013, p. 161. ISBN 9783534259731.

211 LASIK, Aleksander. *Sztafety ochronne w systemie niemieckich obozów koncentracyjnych. Rozwój organizacyjny, ewolucja zadań i struktur oraz socjologiczny obraz obozowych załóg*

in the main camp designated I, but also in the extermination section at Birkenau (II) or in the Monowitz camp (III),²¹² where prisoners worked in inhuman conditions in a factory for synthetic rubber and liquid fuel. In the Auschwitz – Birkenau camp complex, they could come into contact with the small number of survivors from the Jews deported from Slovakia in 1942. One female witness, later assigned to the central camp administration, soon after the war remembered two SS men from Bratislava, one of whom had participated in selections.²¹³ Another more numerous group went to the Stutthof concentration camp near Gdansk. Men from Slovakia came to this concentration camp on two dates: 2 March and 15 April 1943.²¹⁴ Apart from Stutthof, Germans from Slovakia could be found at the Neuengamme concentration camp near Hamburg,²¹⁵ and in the camp complexes at Dachau,²¹⁶ Buchenwald,²¹⁷ Flossenbürg,²¹⁸ Groß Rosen,²¹⁹ Mauthausen²²⁰ and the special camp at Hinzert.²²¹

Men with a lower classification were assigned to police units. Most of them were trained at Dortmund or at Gumbinnen in East Prussia. Then they were assigned to units at various places in occupied Europe. For example, L.W. from Bratislava served in the occupied southern zone of France.²²² At least 18 young

SS. Osvienčim: Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau w Oświęcimiu, 2007, p. 382. ISBN 9788360210321.

212 ŠA Bratislava, f. OLS Bratislava, T Iud 142/1946, T Iud 228/1946. ŠA Banská Bystrica, f. OLS Kremnica, T Iud 195/1946, T Iud 135/1946, T Iud 120/1946, 133/1946. SNA, f. 125-36-4/61-68. List of members of the SS in the district of the NB command in Spišská Nová Ves from 25 March 1946.

213 Yad Vashem Archive (hereinafter YVA), M 5/127. Testimony of E. B. from 4 July 1945.

214 BArch Berlin, NS 4 – ST/6 – 38.

215 KOVÁČ, ref. 77, pp. 175–176; ŠA Bratislava, f. OLS Bratislava, T Iud 348/1945. SNA, f. 125-31-3/53. Letter from guards at the Neuengamme concentration camp on *Grenzbote* from 11 April 1943.

216 SNA, f. 125-30-9/35, 48-49. Letters from guards at the Dachau concentration camp on *Grenzbote* from 17 Feb and 22 Feb 1943.

217 SNA, f. 125-30-9/68-69. Letter from guards at the Buchenwald concentration camp on *Grenzbote* from 6 March 1943. BArch Berlin, NS 3/392, Bl. 17. Telegram from Buchenwald concentration camp on the WVHA/D from 6 Dec 1944.

218 SNA, f. 125-31-1/1. Letter from guards at the Flossenbürg concentration camp on *Grenzbote* from 23 April 1943.

219 SNA, f. 125-31-1/61. Letter from guards at the Groß Rosen concentration camp on *Grenzbote* from 6 May 1943.

220 SNA, f. 125-31-3/64. Letter from guards at the Mauthausen concentration camp on *Grenzbote* from 29 March 1943. F. 125-31-5/47. Letter from guards at the Mauthausen concentration camp on *Grenzbote* from 1 April 1943. ŠA Bratislava, f. OLS Bratislava T Iud 157/1945.

221 SNA, f. 125-31-2/67. Letter from guards at the Hinzert special camp on *Grenzbote* from 25 May 1943.

222 ŠA Bratislava, f. OLS Bratislava, T Iud 204/1946.

men aged 17–23 were assigned to the I. battalion of the SS police regiment. In the second half of August 1943 they participated in the liquidation of the Białystok ghetto and the deportation of its Jewish inhabitants to the extermination camps at Treblinka and Auschwitz-Birkenau.²²³ At least 12 men in the same age group became members of the II. battalion of the 26th SS police regiment, which participated in the killing of 3,000 Jews in the ghetto of the town of Hlybokaye (*Głębokie*) in Bielarus on 20 August 1943.²²⁴

Men with inadequate height were assigned, along with many Germans from Rumania, to the 7th SS division "*Prinz Eugen*".²²⁵ Under the pretext of fighting partisans, this unit became notorious for its war crimes against most civilian inhabitants of former Yugoslavia. At the end of 1943, 662 men from Slovakia served in this unit.²²⁶ The elite divisions included dozens of recruits from Slovakia. After June 1944, former members of the Slovak army of German nationality were mostly assigned to forming, often incomplete divisions of the Waffen-SS.

Recruitment into and service in the Waffen-SS had its sequel after the end of the Second World War in the field of criminal law. Not only the organizers of recruiting such as Karmasin, Ludin and Berger, but also hundreds of former soldiers, policemen and concentration camp guards found themselves facing the courts. The Czechoslovak security authorities pursued them zealously. Some members of the Waffen-SS were captured in the territory of the revived republic, others were sent back to their old homeland from Allied prisoner of war camps. Around the turn of 1945/1946, the Czechoslovak authorities established a special internment camp at Malacky for former members of the Waffen-SS. There were 209 persons in it by the beginning of January 1946.²²⁷ Meanwhile, the Slovak people's judiciary considered the question of how to solve the problem of the military service of Slovak citizens of German nationality in the Waffen-SS. Judgements were directed by the verdict of the Command of the 4th district in Bratislava from the beginning of August 1945. The soldiers already recommended

223 IfZ, NSG-Datenbank (Rehdantz). On the liquidation of the ghetto see STOLL, Katrin. *Die Herstellung der Wahrheit. Strafverfahren gegen ehemalige Angehörige der Sicherheitspolizei für den Bezirk Białystok*. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2012. See also KLEMP, Stefan. „Nicht ermittelt.“ *Polizeibataillone und die Nachkriegsjustiz. Ein Handbuch*. Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2011 (2nd edition), pp. 41–42. ISBN 9783837506631

224 IfZ, NSG-Datenbank (Thiermann). See also KLEMP, ref. 223, pp. 42–43.

225 MILATA, ref. 6, p. 258.

226 CASAGRANDE, ref. 73, p. 211.

227 SNA, f. Úrad predsedníctva Slovenskej národnej rady (The Office of the Presidium of the Slovak National Council, sign. Šmidke-36, c. 128. Report of a representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross on a visit to the camp at Malacky 6 Jan 1946.

a distinction between the three phases of recruiting, with the final, third phase defined as defence obligation.²²⁸ The relevant district and local people's courts generally took this recommendation into account.

Former members of the Waffen-SS came before the courts on the basis of decree of the Slovak National Council 33/1945, § 5. They were mostly men recruited into the SS in the framework of the second and third phases of recruiting. When charging members of the first group, the courts imposed penalties of one year or more on the basis of the proven facts. In especially serious cases, they gave sentences of 10 years or more in prison. In the case of the second group, trials ended with the men either freed or subject to public reprimand, if they had not been proved guilty of war crimes or crimes against humanity.

A large proportion of those convicted and of those freed by the Czechoslovak authorities were assigned to forcible resettlement, the terminology of the time for deportation.²²⁹ How many of the total of 1,095 persons of German nationality convicted by the people's courts²³⁰ were former members of the Waffen-SS remains a subject of research. However, one thing is certain: the Czechoslovak security authorities remained interested even after the end of immediate retribution.²³¹

Where the main organizers of recruiting were concerned, most of them went before Czechoslovak or Allied courts. An exception was the former leader of the Deutsche Partei Karmasin, who succeeded in hiding in the post-war chaos and living under a false identity. The National Court sentenced him to death for his recruiting activity, but this was never carried out. The former ambassador of National Socialist Germany to Slovakia Ludin was sentenced to death in his presence by the same court for his recruiting activities among other things. Himmler's chief organizer of recruiting Berger fell into the hands of the Allies and was placed before the Nuremberg military tribunal. In the eleventh trial, that of highly placed representatives of the German administration, known as the *Wilhelmstrasse-Prozess*, the American judges sentenced him to 25 years in prison. However, at the end of 1951 he was released as a result of the worsening international political situation. West German justice took no further action against him. The same applied to almost all the former members of the Waffen-

228 ŠA Bratislava, f. OLS Bratislava, Prez. ľud 3/1945.

229 ŠA Bratislava, f. OLS Prievidza, Prez. ľud 10/1947.

230 GABZDILOVÁ-OLEJNÍKOVÁ, Soňa – OLEJNÍK, Milan. *Karpatskí Nemci na Slovensku od druhej svetovej vojny do roku 1953*. (The Carpathian Germans in Slovakia from the Second World War to 1953). Bratislava: SNM-Múzeum kultúry karpatských Nemcov, 2004, p. 88. ISBN 8096762192.

231 ABS, f. 325-62-5. List of wanted persons of German nationality from Slovakia 31 Dec 1948.

SS from Slovakia, who lived in the Federal Republic of Germany after 1949. Only the Demjanjuk case brought a substantial change in judicial practice.

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„JEDER DEUTSCHE DIESER JAHRGÄNGE HAT SICH UNAUFGEFORDERT
DEN KOMMISSIONEN ZU STELLEN.“

WERBUNG UND DIENST DER SLOWAKEIDEUTSCHEN
IN DER WAFFEN-SS 1939–1945

MICHAL SCHVARC

Als 2012 der Fall des ehemaligen KZ-Wachmanns in Auschwitz, Johann Breyer, publik gemacht wurde, tauchten in den Medien zahlreiche Artikel über Hintergründe seines Waffen-SS-Werdegangs sowie seiner Beteiligung am Mord an ungarischen Juden 1944 auf. Allerdings nur wenige setzten sich mit dem breiteren Kontext seiner SS-Laufbahn auseinander. Werbung und Dienst der Karpatendeutschen in der Waffen-SS während des Zweiten Weltkriegs stellen bis dahin einen der wenig erforschten Fragenkomplexe der Geschichte dieser Bevölkerungsgruppe in der Slowakei im 20. Jahrhundert dar. Mehr als 8 200 Männer wurden in die bewaffnete Truppe der SS insgesamt in drei Phasen herangezogen: illegalen, scheinbar freiwilligen und schließlich als Zwangspflicht. Nicht alle betroffenen Personen meldeten sich aufgrund ihrer eigenen Überzeugung, ein Teil der Männer befand sich an den Orten der Schreckensherrschaft der Nationalsozialisten gegen ihren Willen. Der Aufsatz behandelt den Mechanismus der Werbung und analysiert die Motivation des Waffen-SS-Beitritts männlicher Angehöriger deutscher Volkszugehörigkeit in der Slowakei. Darüber hinaus fokussiert er den Dienst sowohl in einigen Waffen-SS-Einheiten als auch in Konzentrationslagern. Dies alles in einer vergleichenden Perspektive. Dennoch zu ähnlichen Vorgängen kam es fast in allen Staaten des Donau-Karpatenraumes – Ungarn, Rumänien, ehemaliges Jugoslawien. Zum Schluss

bietet der Aufsatz einen kurzen Ausblick auf die Frage strafrechtlicher Verfolgung ehemaliger Waffen-SS-Männer in der NachkriegsTschechoslowakei an.

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