German Labor Sports Movement in Slovakia and Its Orientation in Period 1918-1938

Miroslav Bobrik
Slovak Technical University, Bratislava, Slovak Republic

This is a study of German Labor Sport organizations and unions in Slovakia in the time parameters area 1918-1938. German workers living in Slovakia started to found their own union after 1918. They got a strong support from similar organizations of German workers living in Sudety. The coordinating role was played by the German Socio-Democratic party in Slovakia. The major concentration of these unions was in Bratislava and Eastern Slovakia. Concerning their specialized field, they can be divided into tourism-practising, physical and sport ones. However, the union activities were strongly influenced by political parties. Activities of every union were regional and therefore a strong mutual isolation existed.

Keywords: German minority in Slovakia, sports activities, influence of political parties on sport, years 1918-1938

The German ethnic minority never exceeded 5% of the Slovak population in 1918-1945. While in sheer number the Germans did not constitute a significant minority, they played a major role in the politics and business of Slovakia until 1945. Slovak history literature omits German workers’ organizations, be it political, social or artistic (ranging on the left from socialist to communist). The study of these organizations and our awareness of them would certainly round up our understanding of the history of this minority in Slovakia and, furthermore, they would provide an unbiased portrait of this minority particularly in 1918-1945.

Dislike of the newborn Czechoslovak Republic was in 1918 characteristic of the German minority both in Slovakia and in the Czech lands under the First Republic.

In October 1918, the Karpathen Post, the German Carpathian weekly, expressed the views of Spis bourgers as follows: “We were German and are German and we want German to stay! ... We speak German and Hungarian feel and it will remain so!”¹ Such attitude to the new state was in 1918 characteristic of all the German political parties, extreme right through social democratic.

As late as December 1918, German social democrats in Bratislava rejected the Czechoslovak state and proposed the federal structure of the Hungarian Lands.² To understand better why the German Slovaks were leaning towards Hungary we briefly discuss the development of the German ethnic minority prior to 1918.

Germans in Slovakia and in the Czech lands differed from the native peoples in the number and way of

¹ Karpathen Post, 24.10.1918, p. 1. “Wir waren Deutsch und sind Deutsch und wollen Deutsch bleiben!...Wir sprechen deutsch und fühlen ungarisch und es soll also bleiben!”
² Pressburger Zeitung, Morgenblatt (newspapers Bratislava Germans), 17.12.1918, p. 1.
settlement. By the time of the birth of the Czechoslovak Republic, the Sudeten Germans had been through decades of ethnic battles frequently marked by nationalism. They had built a network of well-organized political, business and artistic institutions as well as interest groups.

At the Prague meeting of 1919, social democrats established a party on the ethnic principle forcing Germans and Hungarians into political and ethnic isolation. A reformist policy of the leaders of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party was in the final analysis injurious to labor’s cause calling for a political unity, and resulted in ethnic separatism among its members.

As a result, in 1919 the German Hungarian Social Democratic Party was formed in Slovakia, nonetheless short-lived. Due to internal differences about conducting the strike of February 1919 and about the Hungarian Republic of Councils, the party broke up in late 1920.\(^3\) German social democrats of Slovakia in the end joined the German Social Democratic Labor Party in the Czechoslovak Republic with its headquarters in Teplice.

Differences within the German Social Democratic Party of Slovakia were exploited by the reformists who assumed leadership in early 1920’s (Wittich & Maszar). As a result of growing tensions in the international labor movement, the communist-leaning faction of the German social democrats sent out feelers as early as 1920, after the December strike, to like-minded forces in Slovakia. Following the constitution of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in 1921 some left-wing ethnic Germans in Slovakia joined its ranks.

Worries of Hungarian and German Slovaks inspired demands of the Slovak People’s Party for an autonomous Slovakia which was perceived as another threat to the well-being of ethnic minorities. Wittich, social democratic member of parliament, responded to the Slovak People’s Party’s demands with the so-called austro-marxist autonomist arrangement. The plan assumed delimitation of single language districts with guaranteed ethnic, cultural and language rights under self-rule of which institutions were to be elected by the inhabitants of the region. The government answered the demands with parceling the districts to prevent minorities from gaining a majority. The debate of Wittich’s plan of protecting minorities only worsened the ethnic issue. The Pressburger Presse newspaper said about the issue: “You, Slovaks will be allowed to keep your cherished joy of your own parliament but Prague will decide which things will be effected.”\(^4\)

The short-sighted policy of the German Social Democratic Party’s reformists narrowly focused on ethnic problems boomeranged in parliamentary elections of 1925. German social democratic ground was lost to the Czechoslovak Communist Party and Christsoziale Landespartei (Christian Social Country’s Party), especially in the language islands of Nemecke Pravo-Kremnica and Spis (particularly in the Gelnica area).

All this was bound to affect the process of forming German workers’ athletic organizations and clubs in Slovakia inspired and funded by the German Social Democratic Party.

In early 1919, to mark a class struggle, local chapters, as directed by the party bosses, were to start German workers’ athletic organizations and clubs in all three German language areas. The development in German workers and sports movement in Slovakia in between the two wars was influenced not only by the political development of German minority and workers’ movement but also by variations of three separated German language islands. It was no later than in spring 1919 that German social democrats in Bratislava strove to revive

---

3 Jahn, E. K.1971. Die Deutschen in der Slowakei in den Jahren 1918-1928 (The Germans in Slovakia in the years 1918-1928), Munich and Vienna 1971.
4 Pressburger Presse, 27.6.1921, p. 1.
activities of the German workers’ tourist clubs Naturfreunde, one of the oldest tourist clubs in Slovakia.\(^5\) Augustín Maszár, one of its founders and at the same time one of the senior officials of the German Social Democratic Party in Slovakia, representative of the right wing in this party, became a chairman. This fact considerably influenced activities of the club in 1920s. Leading officials of the club started contacting the largest and oldest German tourist club in Slovakia Karpatheverein with its head office in Kežmarok. The main reason behind this agreement was an attempt to unify the procedure against the Czechoslovak Tourists’ Club (CSTC) concerning cottage construction, tourist pathway marking and nature protection\(^6\) and an interest in maintaining the tourism hegemony in Small Carpathian Mountains and High Tatras.

In early twenties the local Naturfreunde branches worked in Košice and Prešov with majority of Hungarian members. This fact explains the connection with one of the head offices of this international tourist organization—the head office in Budapest. The Bratislava Naturfreunde branch was connected to the international head office in Vienna. A positive feature of Naturfreunde activities was the fact that the membership base was organised based on the international principle, a significant positive element in the time of controversies between nations. Members of Naturfreunde were Germans, Hungarians, Slovaks as well as Jews—mostly belonging to lower and middle social classes. The initiatives aimed at forming German workers’ sports organisations and clubs in Slovakia at the beginning of twenties bore all the features of unresolved relations in the German Social Democratic Party, or social democratic movement in Slovakia.

In twenties leaders of the Social Democratic Party in Slovakia did not succeed in laying basis of the German workers’ sports movement in the German language island Nemecké Pravno-Kremnica and in Dolný Spiš, though the percentage of workers in the social structure of German citizens in these areas was significant. It was only a logical consequence of this situation that left-wing part of the German minority in these areas who lived in a difficult social economic conditions of permanent unemployment, started to actively profess communism. Under the communist influence, the Germans in this territory started to enter sports organisations founded under patronage of Czechoslovak Communist Party (CCP), e.g. Federation of Workers’ Sports Unions (FWSU) founded in 1921 and Federation of Proletarian Sport (FPS) founded in 1926. The membership base in these organisations was organised based on principle of internationalism and proletarian union, regarding the fact that sports was considered to be a good means of struggle between classes.

It was no later than in 1920 that a group of left-wing oriented German social democrats in Horný Spiš considered an idea of establishing German workers’ sports organisation. The situation, mainly in dominion of Spiš Germans—Kežmarok, required a rapid respond of German social democrats. It was already in 1918 to 1921 that such sports organisations as Sokol, Jewish sports club Hagibor and German tourist club Karpathenverein were established here, and in Spiš a German sports movement with nationalistic orientation Deutscher Turnverband started to lay its roots here in a dangerous manner. All these organisations tried to attract the Spiš inhabitants on the sports field concentrating predominantly on young people not determined nation-wise and

---

\(^5\) Slovak National Archives (SNA), Fond police headquarters (FPR), registry (Mat.) 18—Naturfreunde Bratislava founded on 8th April 1908 as a section of the International Tourist Organization with head office in Vienna. Statute of MPS approved in conditions of CSR on 1st September 1921, No. 5033/1921. The office of the Association was in Ústí nad Labem.

\(^6\) Grenzbote (newspapers Bratislava Germans), 29th March 1922.
In February 1921, the first German workers’ sports union in Slovakia—Work’s Sports Club Vorwärts Kežmarok (ASV Vorwärts) was established in Kežmarok based on the initiative of left-wing oriented German social democrats. Michal and Pavol Krajóák, Jozef Grünbaum and others were among those who formed this club as well as ones who established the local CCP organisation and FWSU in the Spiš Germans’ dominion. At the beginning of twenties a group of left-wing oriented German social democrats in Bratislava, supported by representatives of sports district Arbeiter Turn- und Sportverband (ATUS—German Worker’s a sports federation) Břeclav tried to establish ATUS club in this town. While this movement had its tradition in the Czech Republic, in Slovakia no branch of this organisation was in operation and political tutor was German Social Democratic Workers’ Party in the Czech Republic. The necessity of establishing German ATUS sports clubs in these area was fully justified also by the fact that German nationalists founded DTV sports club in 1921 with a lot of help from Deutscher Turnverband (DTV—German gymnastics Association) and Deutscher Kulturverband (DKV—German Cultural Association) to which they tried to attract the German workers’ youth as well.

Due to above mentioned unsettled relations within the Sudet-German social democracy in Slovakia, as well as due to the negative attitude of A. Maszár, official of this party and Naturfreunde Bratislava club to the issue of ATUS club establishment in Bratislava, these attempts were unsuccessful until the May 1928. The activities of German workers’ sports organisations necessarily reflected all these problems which German social democracy in Slovakia tried to fight. It could not have turned out otherwise since the above mentioned hobby organisations were connected to, or fed by the political placenta, even though officially, every hobby organisation claimed in its statutes that it is apolitical. Naturfreunde tourist clubs divided their spheres of jurisdiction in Slovakia into two working territories—western (Bratislava) and eastern (Košice). In the western territory (Small Carpathian Mountains), Naturfreunde (Friends of Nature) Bratislava club, being the only German workers’ tourist club in this territory during the pre-Munich CSR times, carried out its activities. In the eastern territory Naturfreunde Košice was the most active club which also established their branches in Kežmarok, Matejovce, Poprad and Gelnica in the early 1920s. However, both the working territories worked isolated and due to the dominant Karpathenverein position on the field of mountaineering, skiing and tourism in Slovakia, their main goal was to cover above mentioned regions and therefore prevent CCST from gaining a dominant position. For the Naturfreunde Bratislava activities the buy of old house in Modra Piesky in 1923 was very important. Club volunteers managed to rebuild it and later it became a club chalet. It was opened on June 26, 1926 with presence of club members and workers’ singing and educational clubs Magnet and Liedesfreiheit. The club activity contained the work of individual sections: tourist guide section; chalet section; winter sport section; musical section; section of work with youth.

In 1927 the club had 343 members (275 adults and 68 youths), it was a member of Naturfreunde Association in CSR seated in Ústí nad Labem, however due to the significant geographic distance of the Association Office,  

7 Reminiscence of E. Klein, a member of the Bratislava Naturfreunde. on the field of nature this club reconstructed natural springs on Pekná cesta (in 1922), on Devínska Kobyla (in 1924), etc. (A record from the interview deposited in the author’s archive).
8 ŠOKA (State District Archives) Poprad, OÚ (district Office) Kežmarok—ASV Vorwärts Kežmarok Statute approved on 8. 6. 1922 by the decree of the Ministry of Interior in Prague No. 3134.
9 Volkstimme (newspapers German Social Democratic Party in Slovakia), 19.5.1938, p. 6—reminiscence of the head of ATUS Břeclav sports district on occasion of the club foundation 10th anniversary.
the club made employed methods from the international head-office in Vienna. In 1927, the tourist guide section organised 94 hiking trips attended by 852 members; the winter sports section organised 10 skiing trips to Small Carpathian Mountains. The club regularly organised a first aid course and map reading course. After the nationalistic euphoria died out, the co-operation with CCST started. The result of this co-operation was an establishment of four rescue stations in the Low Carpathian region (in Devínska Kobyla, Millieni’s house, in Modra on Piesky and in Sklenná chata). In the late twenties two main tendencies started to appear in the club Naturfreunde Bratislava—transition to club leadership positive attitude to state power and gradually increasing influence of marginal left-wing oriented club members on club members. The members formed organisations with politics and ideology close to CCP (e.g. Ferdinand Zimbauer in Red Trade Unions, Ernest Klein, Jozef Rompf in Liedesfreiheit and Magnet). They concentrated on work with youths whose education after reformists’ orientation on issues of nation, was concentrated on idealistic conception of tourism.

In their club activities, members of Naturfreunde Bratislava with pro-communism orientation laid more emphasis on educational work. On educational sessions as well as during hiking trips, lectures, they conducted talks about current forms and methods of class struggle, they studied Marx's, Engels's and Lenin's thoughts. Ever increasing social economical and political problems gradually brought class and political radicalisation of membership base. It has to be emphasised that this process was not welcomed by A. Maszár and his sympathizers, because it could cause a dissolution of the membership base or the end of club and his ideals to which he devoted his whole life, mainly on the field of tourism. While in late twenties, Bratislava Naturfreunde club was gradually getting over the ideological and political influence of pro-Hungarian oriented officials, Naturfreunde club in the eastern part still kept its pro-Hungarian orientation and stayed under the influence of Karpathenverein. The activities of ASV Vorwärts Kežmarok were oriented on development of various sports (soccer, cycling, track and fields and handball). A cycling department organised trips do Kežmarok connected with exercises in the nature; a part (on which a great emphasis was laid) of the trips was covered by educational work with youths led by CCP members J. Grünbaum and M. Krajnák. Topics of the training covered mainly current issues of the workers’ fight against bourgeois class; these activities were co-ordinated with sports part of CCP FWSU Kežmarok.

In this content a logic question comes up, why were both the local organisations not merged together after FWSU was established. An important fact was FWSU’s negative attitude to sports and one-sided preference of mass exercises and performances, which was, however understandable, if one considers the aims of CCP, or FWSU. No less significant was the fact that ASV Vorwärts gathered German youths together and it was right in the centre of Horný Spiš where the national issue played an important role. Considering the activities of political parties in Kežmarok, or Horný Spiš, even though the Nitsche’s Spiš German Party (ZDP) had a dominant position, CCP gained 10.8% of the German votes in Horný Spiš Communal elections in 1923. It was not the type of politics which was supposed to attract youths into the ASV Vorwärts on the outside, but a well organised sports activity which was always suitable and mainly natural means of young person’s personal growth. Among ASV activities in 1920s, cycling and tracks and fields always had its firm position. The cycling team was the organiser

10 Volkstimme, 28. 1. 1928, p. 8.
11 Kantorková, M. 1965. The History of the Workers’ Revolutionary Movement in Kežmarok and its surrounding (thesis). Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Comenius University Bratislava 1965, p. 73. Kollárová, Z., Jančeková, M. 2014. 500 years of sports in Kežmarok. JADAQ 2014. ISBN 978-80-89426-28-7.
12 Jahn, E. K. 1971, p. 118, 134.
of famous cycling races with following route: Kežmarok-Tatry-Levoča-Kežmarok, while women had their special circuit around Kežmarok. The track and field team was active mainly in the early 1920s when it organised various manifestation runs and tracks and field competitions. A development of sports in Horný Spiš relied predominantly on a long lasting good work of primary and secondary school sports. These were the traditions that the ASV Vorwärts officials tried to follow in their activities and open way to its activities for Kežmarok youths. In 1925 a female handball team was established in ASV Vorwärts which due to good training and organising work of Bedoich Vilèinský belonged among the best in the Eastern Slovak region in late 1920s together with the teams of Krompachy, Hágy and CSSC Košice. However, the sport number one in the ASV Vorwärts was soccer attracting the greatest number of members, especially from among the young workers. At the beginning of its activities, the soccer team created two senior sub-teams and in the half of 1920s a youth team as well. Similarly to other workers’ organisations at that time, ASV Vorwärts also had to struggle with financial and material problems. For instance the costumes for matches were handmade. At the beginning, ASV players paid irregularly, which was partially caused by the fact that it was no earlier than in 1921 that the team participated in some competition.

In 1922, the German Football Association in CSR in Spiš created a Regional Football competition for teams admitting their German nationality. However, this national separation did not only concern Germans, in fact in Slovakia, there were Jewish, Hungarian, German and Slovak nationality soccer associations within the frame of Czechoslovak Football Association. As a matter of fact, this situation did not have to happen. After the CSR was created, the soccer players wanted to establish the Soccer Association for Slovakia which would gather all soccer clubs regardless of their nationality. Based on the direct influence of the Czechoslovak Football Association, the Ministry fully authorised to administer Slovakia, did not approve the Statute of this Association. Due to this situation, the Germans, Hungarians and Jewish were forced to create their own soccer associations based on the national principle which contributed to their national separation. Finally, in 1922 the Czechoslovak Football Association, Hungarian, German and Jewish ones were united in the Czechoslovak Football Association which at least partially united the interests. Besides city clubs, ASV Vorwärts played in this competition until 1927. It was the only form of regular competition that ASV could join. In the half of 1920s, the soccer players of this club belonged among the most favourite teams in Spiš. On the matches, the players wore dark red costumes with five-tip-star in the left corner. The Statute of the club stated that in case the club plays the match in a place where the workers’ demonstration takes place, club members and players are obliged to take part in it and fortify the workers’ movement that way. In 1927, the Spiš Soccer County, governed by the German Soccer Association in CSR fell apart and ASV team was included into the second class of the Middle Slovakian Soccer County, governed by the Czechoslovak Soccer Association. In 1928 a few years lasting attempt to establish the German Workers’ sports Club Arbeiter Turn- und Sportverein (ATUS) in Bratislava was accomplished. The Club started its activities named as the German Social Democratic Sports Club. Thanks to

---

13 Karpathen Post, 6. 5. 1922, p. 8.
14 For details see Perútka J., 1980. History of sports in Slovakia, Bratislava, Šport 1980.
15 The same source, 1980, p. 90
16 ŠOKA Poprad,OU Kežmarok 712/31 pres.
17 Grenzbote, 8.7.1928, p. 6, and SNA, FPR, Mat.19/36—ATUS Bratislava Statute approved on 19th May 1929 by the decreee of the Ministry of Interior, No. 27 292/29/6 in Prague.
enthusiastic trainers from the ATUS Breclav Sports region and their organisational and material assistance and eager officials of newly established club, ATUS Bratislava could present its first public sports academy in the Reduta Small Hall on December 8, 1928. The Academy consisted of floor exercises, apparatus work, wand exercises and exercises with clubs. Sports and ideological summit of the Academy was a pyramid made of sportsmen and sportswomen as a symbol of power and unity of the workers’ movement.\footnote{Volkstimme, 28.11.1928, p. 4.} The members of Naturfreunde Bratislava and Austrian ATUS participated in the Academy as well. Right from the beginning, the activities of the Bratislava ATUS club were oriented on workers’ unity and internationalism, mainly due to the left-wing oriented Naturfreunde members who became members of this club as well. National-wise and socially-wise, the structure of the club was identical with Naturfreunde club. What is striking about the comparison of German nationally oriented and workers’ sports organisations and clubs in Slovakia, is one common feature of their establishment. Both organisations, though with completely different political orientation, were not created because of the inner necessity of maintaining national existence, but from the initiative of particular Sudet-German organisations. However, the fact is that while in early 1920s, the most striking element of the two politically irreconcilable camps, was the issue of nationality, in late 1920s and mainly 1930s, their orientations are utterly different. The growth of economical and social difficulties related to the crisis was reflected on the activities of the political parties and neither cultural nor sports organisations managed to be left out.

At the beginning of 1929, ATUS Association in CSR sent two trained sports instructors to Slovakia to maintain permanent activity of ATUS in Slovakia. The trainers serving their military service in Bratislava assisted as trainers as well. The trainer’s question was finally solved in 1930. At that time, ATUS Bratislava was the only club of this kind in Slovakia and management of club activities from the methodical and organisational point of view was too difficult to be carried out from its office in CSR (Ústí nad Labem). Therefore, the Club contacted, based on recommendation of its Association, with 17th region of ATUS Vienna of ATUS Association in Austria. This sports district sent his skilled and experienced instructor, head of the district for women’s exercises, Johann Renczéš.\footnote{The same source, 17.1.1931, p. 7. Report from the 4th Plenary session of ATUS Bratislava Club presented by its Chairman, Karl Rössler.} This skilled official who was a member of the Social Democratic Party until the Austro-fasism started its way in Austria, entered Communist Party of Austria in 1934. As one of many young socialists, disappointed with situation in Austria and Communists’ procedure against Austro-fasists, he saw his future perspective among Communists even though the unity of social democrats could be broken down as on the partisan field, so on the field of workers’ sports in Vienna. His party colleagues from among the social democrats in Vienna characterised him in this way: Johann Renczéš can be described as a symbol of “Communist underground vagabondship”, as called by Donnert,\footnote{Franz Donnert, born 11th December 1907. Member of Wiener Arbeiter Turn- und Sportverein (WAT) since 1922, Mayor of WAT XXI. 1946-1982, Mayor of the regional ASKÖ Group 1946-1965 (Arbeiter Sportklub Österreich—Workers Sportclub Austria).} “renegade who left Socialist Party for the Communist Party”.\footnote{Sport frei! Arbeitesport in Wien 1945-1985 (Sport free! Work’s sport in Vienna). Sportservice Wien - Sport im Auftrag des ASKÖ - Landesverbandes Wien, p.19.}

Even though he changed his party shirt, the myth about him being earnest worker and popular still
accompanied him even after the war. Another top official of the Austrian workers’ sports movement of the pre-war and post-war period is L. Stipkovich characterised him this way, “People who voted for him, definitely were not all Communists, but Renczéš’s followers, since he was a popular and very diligent official for many years”. It was important to mention this closer characteristics of Renczéš because he not only influenced the whole generation of young German enthusiastic workers-sportsmen in Bratislava, but mainly he significantly influenced their political and overall orientation in life as well as further political orientation of ATUS Bratislava club. From 1930 to 1938 he conducted trainers’ courses, club training and lessons, too. The political orientation of Naturfreunde, especially after A. Maszár’s death in 1930 was apparently under influence of the left wing F. Zimbauer, Š. Halma, and E. Klein. The main emphasis in ATUS Bratislava activities was laid upon sports and education. While the sports part was concentrated mainly into the eastern and summer months, when the club could make use of the largest gym—the nature, the educational part had all-year-round character, while the major part was carried out in winter. In 1930, a men’s, women’s, youths and pupils’ teams were already active in ATUS Bratislava and their number was 80 altogether (out of that 62 were pupils). From the organisational viewpoint, the club was included in the 2nd region (Brno) 3rd district (Bøeclav) of the ATUS Association. The result of trainers’ good work and functioning organisation was a participation of 10 ATUS Bratislava members on the 2nd ATUS Sports celebrations of the Association in 1930 in Ústí nad Labem. It was actually for the first time that members of the German sports club from Slovakia participated in the celebrations of the Association where sportsmen from the Bratislava club took part in mass performances within the frame of the 3rd ATUS Breclov district. The club trainers took part in trainers’ courses in Znojmo, Breclav and Brno (G. Monarth, L. Pláteník, & A. Renczéšová). The Austrian Association sent the 1st Head of the Association Krátky to conduct the trainers’ course which should have served as a preparation for the 2nd International Workers’ Olympiad taking place in 1931 in Vienna.

The year 1931 was declared a Year of the Youth by the German Social Democratic Party. ATUS Bratislava concentrated all its efforts into the recruitment of working youths in order to prevent these young people from being recruited into the German nationally oriented sports clubs. One of such events was a recruitment march organised on 17th March 1931 attended by ATUS, Naturfreunde, Magner, and Freiheit workers’ clubs as well as by the Association of the Socialist Youth. The march which led from Ružinov part to the city had got a great attention of Bratislava inhabitants and was attended by 300 members of above mentioned clubs. As regards the educational work with youths, higher attention was needed to be paid to seeking new form of sports activities attractive for youths. Since in 1930s, there was a permanent lack of material and space, ATUS Bratislava carried out these activities: gymnastics, rhythmic exercises (since 1931), track and fields, swimming, winter sports, mountaineering, soccer (since 1933), chess and table tennis. The evenings devoted to education and walks in nature organised mainly by the Naturfreunde members played an irreplaceable role in club activities. Their topics were updated and as a result of such education, the club members participated in various protest actions and marches. One of such events was a march against war which took place on June 29, 1931. Members of ATUS,

22 Leopold Stipkovich, born 2nd January 1910, Mayor of WAT in Vienna, central Mayor of WAT (1956), Mayor of ASKÓ Association (1962), member of Austrian Executive Sports Committee.
23 Sport frei! W.c., p. 19.
24 Volksstimme, 17.1.1931, p. 7.
25 The same source, 23.5.1931, p. 7.
Rote Ralken, Naturfreunde and the Association of the Socialist Youth marched from Bratislava to Hainburg where they joined a protest demonstration together with the Lower Austria youth.26

The establishment of ATUS club in Petržalka in 1931 was also a reflection of stronger and stronger workers’ movement even among the German minority in Bratislava.27 To enable the club to carry out its activities, it was officially called a sports section of ATUS Bratislava club. It was only on the basis of the decision made by the General Assembly of the Bratislava ATUS club taking place on 25th February 1934 that the Petržalka club gained its independence in order to co-ordinate its members on a more operational basis. Further and very significant reason for this decision was a fact that in Petržalka the nationalistic movement began to spread out dangerously even on the field of German sports due to Deutscher Turnverein. Their ideology became more and more attractive for the German youths, which German social democrats in Petržalka fought to prevent by creating interesting forms of young persons’ leisure time use. According to census carried out in 1930, the overall population of Petržalka contained 24.1% of German population.28 Political and economic situation in Slovakia at the beginning of 1930s and high unemployment rate contributed to radicalisation of the German right-wing as well as left-wing. As regards sports, higher emphasis was laid on ideological and political maturity of trainers. Comparing to the past, the trainers had to undergo exams which were supposed to prove that the trainer is no longer only a technical official. During exams, the trainer should show more thorough knowledge of workers’ movement, principles of the socialist education and work, knowledge from the field of workers’ and bourgeois sports, international workers’ movement as well as deeper knowledge of sports science.29 Events organised e.g. by ATUS Bratislava had their ideological content just slightly different from the content of events organised by CCP departments within the sports field. A part of the mass performances and sports academies were choreographic images depicting the fight of proletariat emphasising their mass character, popularity and ideology. These three attributes can be found in the content of activities by German sports organisations with nationalistic orientation. However, the content and ideological fulfilment of these attributes and the way of understanding the notion mass character in practice. While turners from the German national sports movement of DTV present their mass character only by the participation of sportsmen from among the German minority, the events of German workers’ clubs were regularly attended by other national workers’ clubs.

In 1933, when the Fascist NSDAP party led by A. Hitler gained power, the activities of ATUS Association in Germany were forbidden. A defence of peace became an urgent issue. Common actions of all the people with progressive thinking against the totalitarian practices and fascism spreading had never been so important before. One of these actions which should have served as evidence of the wide front of progressive forces, was an event of ATUS Bratislava club on September 23, 1934 on occasion of the 25th anniversary of ATUS Association establishment in CSR. Members of WSU I. Bratislava, WSU Karlova Ves, WSU Trnava, WSU Nitra, cyclists from Arbeiter Rad und Kraftfahrerverein (ARUK – Workers wheel and driver club) Bratislava, Rote Nelke and UPS Vörös Baratság Bratislava with its Chairman, communist Štefan Szabó were all invited to this event, too. The front of the parade marching from the city to Tehelné pole, stadium WSU was made up by communist clubs

26 The same source, 13.6.1931, p. 7 and reminiscence of ATUS Bratislava members Ludvík Pláteník and Jozef Rompf.
27 SNA, FPR, Mat. 19/36, K 111—Statutes of ATUS club Meteor Petržalka approved by the Regional Office in Bratislava on 11th March 1935, No. 72337/8-1934. The club was a branch of ATUS Bratislava.
28 Jahn, E. K. 1971, W.c., p. 155.
29 Volkstimme, 30.1.1932, p. 3.
ATUS and Vőrös who called out, “Long live Soviet Republic, long live unified front!” The SWU members separated from the parade and Communists of both clubs were not allowed to the stadium. The actions of ATUS members in fact caused a temporary interruption of contacts between SWU and ATUS Bratislava. Behaviour of ATUS members was not in harmony with political orientation of ATUS Association. The ATUS Association in CSR was a member of Lucern Sports International (called also a Socialist sports international, SSI) founded in 1920 as the highest international body of the social democratic national workers’ sports organisations. After the controversy in international workers’ movement, the national workers’ sports organisations with communist orientation created its international centre in Moscow in 1921 and named it the Red Sports International (RSI). After the CCP was founded, its members and officials in certain towns fought for more radical orientation of the ATUS movement. The fight was the most significant in Liberec region where pro-Communist left-wing had majority. In 1930s, the ATUS Association management succeeded in excluding the Liberec region.

In 1931 the II. International Workers’ Olympiad took place in Vienna. It was organised by LSI. For the first time, the 25 adult sportsmen from ATUS Bratislava took part in it. They participated in the mass sports performances as a part of the unit by the ATUS Association in CSR. The Olympiad in Vienna took place from July 26th to 29th, 1931, however it was already on July 19, 1931 that mass sports performances and sports competitions of pupils were presented; among them 20 children from Bratislava ATUS led by J. Renczěš. This top international event was preceded by the participation of 80 ATUS members on the district sports celebrations in Breclav from June 21-22, 1931. It was for the first time that Bratislava ATUS members participated in district sports celebrations. Growing international tension and resistance against more and more obviously presented fascism in Germany caused the membership in Slovakia to be stronger and stronger. Members of the German Social Democratic Party managed to establish local ATUS clubs in Handlová and Horný Turček in half of 1930s. The establishing General Assembly of ATUS in Handlová took place on December 12th, 1933 in an inn called by Schuster, where Michael Wohland was elected the Chairman. The first activities of ATUS club in Horný Turček were carried out only in 1935. Due to the current lack of archive sources we can only assume that they were established as a response of the German social democrats in this region to the establishment of the German national sports clubs DTV (in Handlová DTV was established in 1933 and in Horný Turček in 1935). An evidence of the fact that 1930s meant a boom in growth of the membership in German workers’ sports clubs is e.g. ATUS Bratislava. While in 1930 the club had 62 members, in 1934 it was already 109, in 1937—210 members and in 1938 the number of members grew to 227 (out of this number there were 96 pupils and 53 youth members).

In the second half of 1930s, the management of ATUS Association in CSR became more and more distant from the left-wing in its Association as well as in contact with other organisations of similar political orientation. Under the threat of exclusion from ATUS Association, ATUS club was forbidden to meet other sports organisations with communist orientation inclined to the CSI on the sports field. Despite the prohibition, ATUS

---

30 SNA, FPR, Mat. 16/36, No. 11541/34.
31 Volkstimme, 27.6.1931, p. 6 and reminiscence of ATUS member L. Pláteník.
32 SNA, FPR, Mat. 19/36, K (carton) 111. ŠOKA Prievidza, zv. sp. (volume file) 1659/1935—Statute of ATUS Handlová club approved by the Regional Office in Bratislava on 18th June 1935, No. 10363-8/1935.
33 SNA, FPR, Mat. 19/36, K 111.
members from Bratislava and Petržalka kept on meeting with communist oriented FPT clubs in Bratislava. After the soccer section of ATUS Bratislava and Petržalka were created in 1933 a soccer meeting of federates from Prievoz and both above mentioned clubs took place not only in adult category, but also in pupils’ category, on the ŠK Slávia playground. Regular sports contacts were maintained also between ATUS members and German workers’ clubs of ARUK (German Worker’s Union cyclists and drivers) in Bratislava and Union of Proletarian sports Vörös Baratság (Hungarian Association Forward in Bratislava). From July 3rd to 4th 1936 the third and at the same time the last celebrations of ATUS Association in CSR took place in Chomutov. These celebrations took form of fight against the Sudet-Henlein nationalism and fascism and 40 sportsmen from ATUS Bratislava participated there out of the total number 50,000 celebration participants. The participants of this celebration send a greeting to the President T. G. Masaryk and E. Beneš as an expression of loyalty of Germans, members of ATUS Association to CSR. When the assembly of Proletarian Sports Federation approved the organisation of Folk Games from August 1st to 9th 1936 in Prague as an expression of disapproval with Hitler’s Germany organising Olympic Games, this challenge was supported also by some ATUS clubs (especially clubs from Liberec district). As a protest against the Olympic Games organised by Germany, folk Olympics were supposed to take place in Barcelona, however it did not actually happen due to the Franco’s putsch on the evening before its opening. Twelve members of ATUS Bratislava participated in Prague Folk Games thanks to the money collection of other club members. The Folk Games were not attended only by anti-Fascist oriented sportsmen from CSR but also from abroad (USA, France, Sweden etc.). In 1937, eight ATUS Bratislava members took part in the 3rd International Workers’ Olympics in Antverps organised by LSI—inclining to the Socialist International. At the Wall of Communards in Paris, where one-day-trip was organised, the participants expressed their resistance against the “brown plague” by silent protest. The last significant action of Bratislava ATUS members was a demonstrative march of German workers’ sports, tourist and sports clubs in Bratislava streets in August 1938. More than 300 members of ATUS, ARUK and Naturfreunde showed their disapproval of Nazism in Germany as well as dissatisfaction with Henlein and Karmasin followers in CSR.

In autumn 1938, the ATUS Bratislava club was dissolved due to the pressure of increasing fascist dictatorship and partially due to the annex of the seat of Association to Germany. However, activities of its members continued until the December 1938 within the frame of the Naturfreunde club. Cycling was another sports activity of the German workers in Slovakia in 1930s. At the beginning of 1930, former members of cycling club Deutsche Kulturverband who disagreed with nationalistic orientation of the club, established Rote Nelke club. This club gathered members of Bratislava workers with German or Hungarian nationality. The club became a member of the German workers’ cycling association seated in Teplice (ARUK—Arbeiter Rad und Kraftfahrerverband—Workers wheel and driver Association). This club was mainly oriented on cycling for recreation and tourist cycling. In 1931 another German workers’ cycling club was established called Falke and

34 Volkstimme, 3.6.1933, p. 7.
35 The same source, 11.6.1936, p. 7.
36 Reminiscence of ATUS Bratislava member, Jozef Rompf.
37 Perútka, J. 1981. Revolution Work’s Movement in Slovakia, Bratislava, Šport 1981, p. 93.
38 Reminiscence of ATUS Bratislava and Naturfreunde Bratislava members—L. Platenik, J. Rompf, V. Wiesenthonertová and E. Klein. (Recording of the interview is deposited in the author’s archive).
39 SNA, FPR, Mat. 19/36—ATUS Club Bratislava disappeared based on the decree on MI from 15th November 1940, No. 99 842/III.c—1940.
his founder was a social democrat Zdenko Štefan. This club became a member of ARUK Association in CSR, too. Its political orientation is clear from the guests’ participation in the club’s General Assembly in 1932 attended by representatives of cycling clubs Červená hviezda (Red Star) Prievoz, Tempo Karlova Ves, Napred (Forward) and Rote Nelke (Red clove)—clubs with which the club maintains good sports contacts. Due to difficult economic situation and unemployment of club members, Falke (Falcon) club fell apart in 1933. That same year, apart from sports club ATUS, German social democrats decided to establish a cycling club called Wanderlust in Petržalka.40 However, it should be mentioned that German workers’ clubs had less members and created just a modest, symbolic contribution to the German workers’ sports movement in Bratislava.

In 1930s, at the same, nevertheless completely isolated from Bratislava German workers’ clubs, the activities of the sports club ASV Vorwärts Kežmarok were carried out. The activities of this club were more related to the CCP activities in this region and were obviously marked by the influence of communist club members; a continuity with FWS Kežmarok was apparent especially on the field of mass sports. At that time, ASV sportmen tried to make use of sports meeting with city clubs as a means of “class struggle” which involved a charge of class demagogy.41 In 1931, the club celebrated its 10th anniversary. On this occasion, ASV Vorwärts organised a Chinese lantern parade through the city in evening May 24, 1931 which at the same time became a protest of the part of Kežmarok citizens against ever growing power of Fascist threat. Next day, a soccer tournament between ASV Vorwärts and KAC, AC Poprad and Jewish Hagibor teams took place. That evening there was a theatre performance performed by the club members.42 The soccer players were the only club’s activists in 1930s. Despite the significant financial and material difficulties, the ASV team participated in the 1st class of the Middle-Slovakian soccer county from 1931 to 1938. Besides sports activities, ASV members organised lectures with topics such as the struggle of the working class and struggle against the fascism. The workers’ sports activities in 1930s had their importance in Spiš because of the ever growing national-chauvinistic movement led by the Carpathian German Party (CGP), DKV and DTV. On December 16, 1938, the activity of ASV Vorwärts Kežmarok was stopped by the Kežmarok District Office43 and later the club was dissolved by the order of the Interior Ministry as it was in case of all left-wing clubs.44

The activities of Naturfreunde (friends of Nature) clubs in Slovakia in 1929-1938 picked up two different directions determined by the political orientation. While the Eastern-Slovakian group of the Clubs (Košice, Prešov, Matejovce) took a platform of the pro-Hungarian revolutionaries and was strongly influenced by Budapest and Karpatheverein, Naturfreunde clubs in Kežmarok and Bratislava, influenced by the economic crisis and ever stronger workers’ movement in these areas, became more and more politically influenced by the left wing. In 1930, after the club Chairman, A. Maszár died, Pavol Facinek—left-wing oriented social democrat, was elected a club chairman. The club activities were pretty successful in 1929 to 1938 in these spheres: tourist guides, chalets, mountaineering, tourism, winter sports, swimming, dancing, folk, music, kayaking, photographing and youth commission. From 1935 until its dissolution in 1938, Viktória Wiesenthonerová was the club chairman.

40 The same source, Mat.20/78—Statutes of Wanderlust club approved by MPS on 10th May 1935, No. 63144/8-1935.
41 Karpathen Post, 5.10.1929, p. 9.
42 ŠOKA Poprad, OU Kežmarok 712/31 prez.
43 The same source, 2892/38 prez.
44 The same source, 254/40 prez.—the club ASV Vorwärts was dissolved by the Interior Ministry decree, dated 13.11.1940, No. 143.
She was a daughter of one of the members who founded the Naturfreunde club in Bratislava in 1908, Ján Wiesenthoner. During this period, the club emphasised mostly work with youth, especially its ideological and political formation. From among the Naturfreunde Bratislava youth members, the following ones entered CCP in the autumn 1938: E. Klein, J. Rompf, A. Aufricht, Š. Halmo, and J. Machánek.\(^{45}\) Being members of German minority in Slovakia, their motivation for entering Communist Party was not only influenced by their philosophical orientation but also by the attempt to show that not all Germans are on the Karmasin’s side. During this period the hiking trips were attended not only by Naturfreunde Bratislava club members but also by its non-members because the activities at that time were obviously more politically than sports oriented.\(^{46}\) The youth section in this club was much more active during the time when CSR was threatened by the German Nazi. On August 1, 1938 the youth from Bratislava German workers’ sports clubs organised a demonstration in Modra—Piesky aimed at showing the fact that such Germans who reject Hitler’s politics embodied by K. Henlein and F. Karmasin do live even in Slovakia.

After October 9, 1938 the Karmasin’s Deutsche Partei fought to get Naturfreunde Bratislava club under its influence. After several weeks lasting preparation, the meeting was called for December 1, 1938 which aim, according to Karmasin’s plans, was to agree upon voluntary annex to Deutsche Partei and in November 1938 to its newly created sports section Deutscher Turn und Sportverband. To fortify his influence upon the Naturfreunde members’ decision, E. Karmasin attended the meeting personally, accompanied by W. Donath and Freiwillige Schutzstaffel (Volunteers Schutzstaffel) troops. The meeting took place in the Naturfreunde club room in the Grossling bath building and approximately 100 members were present.\(^{47}\) The meeting was very rough and F. Karmasin openly threatened Naturfreunde members who kept refusing to adopt his dictatorship. The Deutsche Partei’s shame was even worse since it happened in the time when Karmasin’s DP felt unlimited in pursuit of its power. At the end, Deutsche Partei had nothing else to do than order a police assisted dissolution of Naturfreunde club in 1938.

**References**

**Periodicals**
- Karpathen Post, 24.10.1918, p. 1.
- Pressburger Zeitung, Morgenblatt (newspapers Bratislava Germans), 17.12.1918, p. 1.
- Pressburger Presse, 27.6.1921, p. 1.
- Grenzbote (newspapers Bratislava Germans), 29th March 1922.
- Volkstimme (newspapers German Social Democratic Party in Slovakia), 19.5.1938, p. 6—reminiscence of the head of ATUS Breclav sports district on occasion of the club foundation 10th anniversary.
- Volkstimme, 28.1.1928, p. 8.
- Karpathen Post, 6. 5. 1922, p. 8.
- Grenzbote, 8.7.1928, p. 6.
- Volkstimme, 28.11.1928, p. 4.
- Volkstimme, 17.1.1931, p. 7.
- Volkstimme, 30.1.1932, p. 3.
- Volkstimme, 27.6.1931, p. 6.

\(^{45}\) The reminiscence of Bratislava Naturfreunde member E. Klein.

\(^{46}\) Sunday Pravda, 9.5. 1986, p. 4.

\(^{47}\) Reminiscence of E. Klein.
GERMAN LABOR SPORTS MOVEMENT IN SLOVAKIA

Volkstimme, 3.6.1933, p. 7.
Volkstimme, 11.6.1936, p. 7.
Karpathen Post, 5.10.1929, p. 9.
Sunday Pravda, 9.5.1986, p. 4.

Books
Jahn, E. K. 1971. Die Deutsche in der Slowakei in den Jahren 1918-1928 (The Germans in Slovakia in the years 1918-1928), Munich and Vienna 1971.
Kollárková, Z., & Jančeková, M. 2014. 500 years of sports in Kežmarok. JADAQ 2014. ISBN 978-80-89426-28-7.
Perůtka, J. 1980. History of sports in Slovakia, Bratislava, Šport 1980.
Sport frei! Arbeitesport in Wien 1945-1985 (Sport free! Work’s sport in Vienna). Sportservice Wien—Sport im Auftrag des ASKÖ—Landesverbandes Wien, p. 19.
Perůtka, J. 1981. Revolution Work’s Movement in Slovakia, Bratislava, Šport 1981, p. 93.

Thesis
Kantorková, M. 1965. The History of the Workers’ Revolutionary Movement in Kežmarok and its surrounding (thesis). Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Comenius University Bratislava, 1965, p. 73.

Archives
Slovak National Archives (SNA), Fond police headquarters (FPR), registry (Mat.) 18—Naturfreunde Bratislava.
ŠOKA (State District Archives) Poprad, OÚ (district Office) Kežmarok—ASV Vorwärts Kežmarok.
ŠOKA Poprad, OÚ Kežmarok 712/31 pres.
SNA, FPR, Mat. 19/36—ATUS Bratislava Statute.
SNA, FPR, Mat. 19/36, K 111—Statutes of ATUS club Meteor Petržalka.
SNA, FPR, Mat. 16/36, No. 11541/34.
SNA, FPR, Mat. 19/36, K (carton) 111.
ŠOKA Prievidza, zv. sp. (volume file) 11659/1935—Statute of ATUS Handlová club.
SNA, FPR, Mat. 19/36—ATUS Club Bratislava.
SNA, FPR, Mat. 20/78—Statutes of Wanderlust club.
ŠOKA Poprad, OU Kežmarok 712/31 prez.
ŠOKA Poprad, OU Kežmarok 2892/38 prez.
ŠOKA Poprad, OU Kežmarok 254/40 prez.—the club ASV Vorwärts.

Oral history
Reminiscence of E. Klein, a member of the Bratislava Naturfreunde. on the field of nature this club reconstructed natural springs on Pekná cesta (in 1922), on Devínska Kobyla (in 1924), etc. (A record from the interview deposited in the author’s archive).
Franz Donnert, born 11th December 1907. Member of Wiener Arbeiter Turn—und Sportverein (WAT) since 1922, Mayor of WAT XXI. 1946-1982, Mayor of the regional ASKÖ Group 1946-1965 (Arbeiter Sportklub Österreich—Workers Sportclub Austria).
Leopold Stipkovich, born 2nd January 1910, Mayor of WAT in Vienna, central Mayor of WAT (1956), Mayor of ASKÖ Association (1962), member of Austrian Executive Sports Committee.
Reminiscence of ATUS Bratislava members Ludvík Pláteník and Jozef Rompf.
Reminiscence of ATUS Bratislava and Naturfreunde Bratislava members—L. Pláteník, J. Rompf, V. Wiesenthonerová, and E. Klein. (Recording of the interview is deposited in the author’s archive).
The reminiscence of Bratislava Naturfreunde member E. Klein.