

THE SOCIAL SITUATION OF ETHNIC GERMAN MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES OF EASTERN EUROPE

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The data on which the author relies were established when he wrote a doctor's thesis on parliamentary representation of the German minority in east central Europe in 1919–45. This was strongest in the spring of 1927, on the peak of postwar economic growth, when ethnic Germans held 219 mandates throughout the Parliaments and representative bodies of the region. For the entire period, the author was able to prove the existence of 636 mandates held by Germans in this area. The present article statistically analyzes, with the ČSR as its principal object, the data on the biographies – occupation, place of birth, ethno-cultural background – of the deputies belonging to the German minority, and presents some interesting results concerning the social and cultural makeup of this group. Almost without exception these parliamentary delegates were of male gender. Typically for minorities, there was only a fairly small percentage of civil servants. As to occupation, in the ČSR this group consisted mainly of party officials and functionaries of various bodies and organizations, whereas overall delegates with an agricultural background took first place. Ethnic German deputies in the ČSR normally did not speak Czech. With respect to the national-cultural background, the composition of the political élite was more heterogeneous (e.g. social-democratic and liberal leaders of Germano-Jewish origin) than has been realized in previous research. Analysis of the residences and places of birth of the German deputies and of the geographic disposition of their constituencies gives irrefutable evidence that members of German minorities chose fellow Germans of high repute who lived nearby to represent them in legislative bodies. Non-locals, even if they were Germans, stood only a small chance. A good deal of the prominent nationalist German deputies in the ČSR lived in the immediate vicinity of a linguistic boundary or came from one of the speech enclaves.