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ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORTS OF THE VOLKSBU ND IN TRANSCARPAT HIA (1938–1944)

The study summarizes the activities and organizational efforts of the Volksbund (People's Association of Germans in Hungary) in Transcarpathia in the period between 1938 and 1944. The Volksbund was founded in November 1938 as an organization representing the interests of the German minority in Hungary. In 1939, the Hungarian government allowed the People's Union of Germans to operate only as a cultural organization, but according to the so-called Vienna Agreement on the Rights of National Minorities (August 30, 1940) between the Kingdom of Hungary and Germany, it became the only legitimate organization of the German minority in Hungary recognized by the state, and the association was granted full freedom of activity, including in spreading national socialist ideology.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the activities and organizational efforts of the Volksbund in Transcarpathia in 1938–1944. Documents kept in the Berehove District of the State Archives of the Transcarpathian Region of Ukraine were reviewed and processed. Among other things, the materials of the county government commissioners of Ung and Ugocsa, the documents of the Maramures Public Administration District and the records of the mayor of Uzhhorod county town were used. These funds included the part of the documents of the Volksbund groups operating in Uzhhorod and in the Maramures Public Administration District. The works of Norbert Spannenberger, Loránt Tilkovszky, Angela Gröber, Zsolt Vitári and Román Oficinskij provided an excellent theoretical and methodological framework for studying this topic.

Transcarpathia was part of the Kingdom of Hungary between 1938 and 1944, during which time around 13,000 Germans resided in the region. The Volksbund began organizing in Transcarpathia in 1939, and by 1941, its primary organizations were established in approximately thirty-eight settlements. However, little is known about the operation of the Volksbund in Transcarpathia. In historical works concerning the region, the history of the Transcarpathian German minority was long only briefly addressed in a few paragraphs.

Key words: Volksbund, Transcarpathia, German minority, National Socialism.

The first organizations of the Volksbund were founded on June 16, 1939 in the county of Bereg (Schoenborn, Palanok, Pavshyno) (Tilkovszky, 1967, p. 187). The organization was not unproblematic, in fact, it started against a strong headwind. First, disparaging articles appeared about the failure of the visit of the Volksbund's leaders. The *Nemzeti Újság* [National Newspaper] published an article with reference to the *Kárpáti Híradó* [Carpathian News] with the title «*Failure of Basch in Transcarpathi*» (NÚ-1). In the article, they dealt with the events in

Pavshyno, where, according to their claim, Ferenc Basch¹ and his followers had an unpleasant surprise, since only «a few young men in breeches greeted the Volksbund leader by shouting Sieg! Heil!», and the cheering crowd was brought with them from Budapest. One of the local papers summarized the visit of Ferenc Basch as follows: «The native German population living here has given countless signs of its loyalty to Hungary, and we believe that it will continue on the path it has followed so far. All the trouble of Basch and his companions is in vain» (NÚ-1). The government soon banned the operation of the Volksbund in Transcarpathia, and Philipp Böss was expelled from the region². After the outbreak of the Second World War, the government restricted the activities of associations and political parties, so the Volksbund could not establish new groups in Transcarpathia either (Marchut, 2020, p. 63).

While the operation of the Volksbund was banned, the activities of the Hungarian German Folk Culture Association were supported (Spannenberger, 2005, p. 195–196). László Pintér, member of parliament and president of the association, also visited Transcarpathia. During his visit, he tried to refute Basch's claim that Transcarpathian Germans were living in poverty: «The truth is that the Swabian population of Transcarpathia lives in prosperity and we can only talk about the misery of the Ruthenian people, who were completely impoverished by the Czechs» (KMH-1). Behind the anti-Volksbund measures was a well-considered government decision, the aim of which was to drive ethnic Germans living in Transcarpathia into the ranks of the pro-government Hungarian German Folk Culture Association. In the end, the efforts of both the government and László Pintér ended in failure. (Maruszics, 2024, p. 36–37). Based on the available sources, the Hungarian German Folk Culture Association started its operation only in Mukachevo, and its basic organizations were not established in other settlements (Eiler, 2019).

The further organization of the Volksbund was delayed until the spring of 1940, when the Teleki government allowed the formation of other groups in the country again (Spannenberger, 2005, p. 211). In the background of the concession, foreign policy reasons played a role, and it spoke more to the Third Reich than to the Volksbund itself. On the eve of the Second Vienna Award, the Hungarian government did everything in order to win the support of Germany against the Romanian side. The expansion of the Volksbund now extended to the territory of the so-called Governorship³, and between May and July 1940, many new groups were formed. Nine in the territory of the Bereg Administrative District⁴, and three in Maramures⁵, on various settlements (Eiler, 2019). The previously banned Philipp Böss and Volksbund management member Alois Sárközy were present at all the founding assemblies. As a result of the organizational work carried out, it can be mentioned that on August 12, 1940, at the Volksbund's assembly in Hidas, local Germans were also

¹ Ferenc Antal Basch (1901–1946), president of the Volksbund.

² Deputy national press chief of the Volksbund, national press chief from 1944.

³ Between 1938 and 1944, the territory of today's Transcarpathia did not form a unified administrative unit. Pursuant to the First Vienna Award made on November 2, 1938, the territories annexed to Hungary were included in the Hungarian county system. Three counties were created in the territories annexed in 1938: Ung, Bereg and Ugocsa. In the territories acquired during the military action in 1939 (this is actually the mountainous area of today's Transcarpathia), a new administrative unit was created, the Transcarpathian Province, which was divided into three districts: the Ung District, the Bereg District, and the Maramures District. After the Second Vienna Award, the county of Maramures was organized.

⁴ Chynadiiovo, Syniak, Kuchava, Berezynka, Drachino, Lalove, Verkhniy Koropets, Sofia, Munkácsváralja.

⁵ Ust-Chorna, Nimetska Mokra, Ruska Mokra.

represented: «The German population of Baranya, Tolna, Somogy, Bácska, Pestvidék, Western Hungary, and Transcarpathia are represented here» (PH-1).

The documents relevant to the topic are very fragmented, which is why fond 162 kept in the Berehove District of the State Archives of the Transcarpathian Region of Ukraine is particularly valuable, which, although unorganized, also contains information about the Volksbund groups operating in the Maramures Administrative District. However, it is important to mention that even in this case it is only a matter of source fragments, it nevertheless provides partial information and supplements, as it contains (with the exception of three settlements) the list of groups established in the given administrative area, their roster (who were the leaders of the local and youth groups), the members' occupation, etc. The Volksbund was founded on three settlements in 1940 (Ust-Chorna, Nimetska Mokra, Ruska Mokra), and on five more settlements in 1941 (Dubove, Teresva, Rakhiv, Khust, Bushtyno). We currently do not know what proportion of the local Germans joined the Volksbund. According to the 1941 census data, there were 3,759 people living in the territory of the Maramures Administrative District who declared themselves to be of German nationality (KSH-1). The organizations founded in 1941 gathered 174 people, but this number only included members who joined during the general founding assemblies (table 1).

Table 1

**Volksbund groups formed on the territory
of the Maramures Administrative District**

Settlement	Date of registration	Group leader	Members	Number of Germans in the settlement	Proportion of Germans in the settlement, %
Ust-Chorna	1940	N/A	N/A	1250	61,9
Ruska Mokra	1940	N/A	N/A	544	31,9
Nimetska Mokra	1940	N/A	N/A	976	83
Dubove	5.01.1941	József Eib	46	173	2,8
Teresva	23.03.1941	Balázs Holzberger	28	46	1,3
Rakhiv	9.02.1941	Gyula István Faltinsky	24	114	0,9
Khust	9.02.1941	Miklós Gerhardt	36 (+8) ⁶	334	1,5
Bushtyno	31.06.1941	Ede Zauner	32	18	0,5
			Total	Total	
			174	3 465	

Source: ДА30-2, арк. 1–141.

⁶ Eight members of the youth group were not included in the membership list submitted to the authorities.

With the exception of one settlement (Bushtyno), it can be seen that in the other municipalities (where we have sources) the German population mostly stayed away and did not join the Volksbund. However, these conditions reflect only the period of July 1941. Regarding the occupation of the members, women almost without exception ran the household, while the majority of the men did some small industrial activities, but there were also night watchmen, restaurateurs, locomotive engineers, and a photographer. Office work was carried out by very few members, and there was a complete lack of intellectuals, such as pastors and teachers (the latter were particularly lacking in Transcarpathia) (ДІАЗО-2, арк. 1–35). The existence (or education) of the intellectual class and the organization (or maintenance) of mother-tongue education are cornerstones that are also the keys to the survival of a community, and this was one of the main efforts of the Volksbund to prevent assimilation, or even reverse it. Perhaps the results of this policy of dissimulation could be observed in Bushtyno as well. The local group had a total of 32 members, but according to the 1941 census, only 18 Germans lived in the village (ДІАЗО-2, арк. 137). This result may seem very modest at first sight, but when viewed in its own context, it is no longer negligible. In order for the Volksbund to be established in a given settlement, at least 20 members were needed, so the loss of some people could even lead to the group's termination (a good example of this is the case of the Uzhhorod group, which will be discussed later).

Through the groups established in the territory of the Maramures Administrative District, the local German population actually entered the bloodstream of the Third Reich. This is well-illustrated by the events when Volksbund members living in the territory of the branch asked the authorities to issue them a group passport so that they could travel to Germany on a «study trip» (ДІАЗО-2, арк. 112). The number of travellers is unknown, however, the events of the study trip have already been covered in the literature. The trip advocated by the Volksbund was originally supposed to last three weeks, but the participants were soon surprised upon arrival, as many were forced to join the Waffen-SS after the first week. The men who were conscripted were sent to Finland, to the Karelian Front, from where they could not even write a letter home for seven months (Kovács, Számvéber, 2001, p. 24). The fate of the people who left the territory of the Maramures Administrative District is unknown, but they certainly did the same as the majority of those who took part in the trip.

With the Second Vienna Award, not only the territory of the country increased, but also the powers of the Volksbund. The Vienna Convention on People's Groups, signed on August 30, 1940, enabled the right to freely profess the National Socialist worldview, and the Volksbund became the only organization that could represent the smaller interests of Germans in Hungary (Eiler, 2023, p. 4). On September 21, 1940, the central leadership of the Volksbund created two territories in the lands that returned to Hungary between 1938 and 1940: the Northern Transylvanian territory⁷, and the Szatmár Region together with Upper Hungary. The counties of Bihar, Szatmár, Szilágy, Ugocsa, Maramures, Bereg and Ung were included in the Szatmár Region and Upper Hungary, as well as the Germans living in the Transcarpathian Province (Marchut, 2012, p. 57–60). The centre of the area was Carei, and its leader was Martin Jüssli (Vitári, 2015, p. 148).

Between October and November 1940, new groups were also formed in the area of the Bereg Administrative District⁸, which is striking that in some villages the founding

⁷ Az Észak-erdélyi területhez a következő vármegyék tartoztak: Kolozs, Szolnok-Doboka, Beszterce-Naszód és Maros-Torda vármegyéket.

⁸ Suskovo, Konoplivtsi, Puzniakivtsi, Hrabovo, Suskovo, Svaliava.

assemblies were already held in the presence of local district leaders (for example, Ferenc Zepezauer) and not chaired by board members from Budapest (Eiler, 2019). In practice, this actually meant that from the fall of 1940, the local or Szatmár leaders continued most of the organizational work. Although it is worth adding that the more prominent members of the Volksbund often visited Transcarpathia later on. Franz Basch, for instance, visited Ust-Chorna, Nimetska Mokra and Svaliava in October 1941 accompanied by Sepp Schönborn (Maruszics, 2024, p. 39). Parliamentarians of the Volksbund (Jakob Brandt and Eduard Keintzel) also visited the region on several occasions, and the German ambassador from Budapest, Otto von Erdmannsdorff⁹ also visited Transcarpathia (KH-1).

As a result of the territorial division of the Volksbund, the counties of Ung, Bereg, Ugocsa and Maramures, as well as the Germans living in the Transcarpathian Province, came under the control of Carei. The majority of Swabian Germans in Szatmár were divided during the period of the Second Vienna Award, and many saw in the territorial revision only the return of the Hungarian assimilation policy. The fact that the Germans living in the Transcarpathian areas came under the control of Carei is not a negligible factor, since the Swabians in Szatmár that joined the Volksbund formed a strongly anti-Hungarian and radicalized community. The Szatmár leaders regularly visited the groups in the region, and more than one group was founded in their presence. Martin Jüssli and Sepp Schönborn¹⁰ participated, among other things, in the general meetings of the groups formed in the territory of the Maramures Administrative District (ДІА3О-2, арк. 110), and in Uzhhorod (ДІА3О-1, арк. 2).

Volksbund groups were formed one after the other between 1940 and 1943 in Transcarpathia, and after the conclusion of the Vienna Convention on People's Groups, they were able to spread the National Socialist ideology freely among the Germans. The active and open organization, the major mass events, the regular visits of the Volksbund's central leadership to Transcarpathia – all of these did not escape the attention of the local authorities either. Although there were no serious incidents, on some occasions the activities of Volksbund members were obstructed, a good example of which is the case of the Uzhhorod group. The local group was founded in Uzhhorod on January 18, 1942 (ДІА3О-1, арк. 1). According to the 1941 census, 148 residents of German nationality lived in the city, (KSH-1) of which only 14,1 %, i. e. 21 people, joined the Volksbund. Nevertheless, the operation of the local group was far from easy, as the local authorities took steps to make the activities of the Volksbund impossible after its formation. First of all, based on the fact that three of the leading members did not have Hungarian citizenship, the mayor of Uzhhorod rejected the group's registration (ДІА3О-2, арк. 2). The local group overcame this problem by recruiting new members, but the city authorities continued to delay allowing the Volksbund to operate. The formation of the group was finally allowed only on May 30, 1942, thanks to the intervention of the Carei regional centre (ДІА3О-2, арк. 2).

After that, in principle, all problems were resolved, and the Volksbund could have operated freely in Uzhhorod, however, the authorities took further measures against the

⁹ The ambassador stayed in Transcarpathia between May 30 and June 2, 1941, and visited the salt mine in Solotvyno and also Rakhiv.

¹⁰ Sepp Schönborn was one of the most influential politicians of the German community in Szatmár. In 1939, he entered the Romanian parliament, where he represented Carei. After the Second Vienna Award, he became Chief of Staff of the Volksbund, and was later entrusted with the organization of the second Waffen-SS recruitment.

members of the group. For example, an investigation was initiated against Frigyes Pacher Theinburg, acting president of the Uzhhorod Volksbund, after he announced the address of the local group's new office. After the investigation, the Uzhhorod Police Department referred to Frigyes Pacher Theinburg as a person with no criminal record who could not be accused either from a moral or political point of view, but was considered unreliable in connection with Hungarian national loyalty: «... a Hungarian citizen with a strong German orientation is unreliable from the point of view of national loyalty» (ДАЗО-1, арк. 119). In the end, Frigyes Pacher Theinburg could not be removed from the head of the local group, in fact, after the German occupation of Hungary, on April 11, 1944, he was appointed the first representative of the Germans living in Ung county (ДАЗО-1, арк. 119).

The organization of the Transcarpathian groups¹¹ was not only of symbolic importance, but they also worked actively and tried to unite the local German community in many ways. Various cultural programmes were organized, for example folk dance and folk music vocational trainings were held in Verkhniy Koropets, in which 300 German youths from Transcarpathia participated in December 1940. In Mukachevo, in the fall of 1941, the victims of the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923 and World War I were commemorated. In April 1942, Germans living around Mukachevo celebrated Adolf Hitler's birthday together in Verkhniy Koropets. These cultural events primarily aimed to strengthen German self-awareness, and on the other hand, served as a common forum for young people living in different areas (Eiler, 2019).

The Volksbund also placed great emphasis on educating young people for ideological and military service, which its youth wing, the Deutsche Jugend (hereinafter: DJ), was responsible for providing. The DJ was founded in June 1941, but received an operating license only on April 1, 1942 (Tilkovszky, 1981, p. 191). Its role really became important when the recruitment of Hungarian Germans for the Waffen-SS began. The DJ operated in at least ten settlements in Transcarpathia¹², and Mukachevo was one of the twenty National Socialist educational institutions in the Kingdom of Hungary. These boarding schools were organized on the model of Adolf Hitler's imperial schools, and were perhaps the only purely National Socialist institutions (Vitári, 2015, p. 244). It is not by chance that Zsolt Vitári singled out the fact that the DJ became that section of the Volksbund where the National Socialist worldview eventually gained the most ground (Vitári, 2012, p. 372). Little is known about the DJ's activities in Transcarpathia, but it is certain that in the spring of 1942 vocational training was held twice for local group leaders in Verkhniy Koropets, and in 1943 a sports competition was organized in Lalove, which was personally observed by the head of the national youth leadership of the DJ (Eiler, 2019).

Within the Volksbund, active organizing work was also carried out among women, especially as the war escalated, a more serious role was assigned to them. Bea Czucz-Lindner was the regional female leader of the Szatmár Region and Upper Hungary area, and Lisbeth Hütter was the youth female regional leader (Vitári, 2015, p. 148). Bea Czucz-Lindner,

¹¹ Based on available sources, a total of thirty eight groups were formed in today's Transcarpathia, namely in the following settlements: Senborn, Hrabovnytsia, Suskovo, Barbovo, Lalovo, Yabluniv, Bushtyno, Dovhe, Dubove, Duby, Verkhniy Koropets, Kobalevytsia, Khust, Synyak, Konoplivtsi, Ust-Chorna, Mukachevo, Pidhorod, Vynohradiy, Kuchava, Nimetska Mokra, Berezinka, Ruska Mokra, Pavshyno, Rakhiv, Puzniakivtsi, Zhdeniievo, Chynadiiovo, Hrabovo, Svaliava, Teresva, Drachino, Uzhhorod, Kliucharky, Palanok, Sofia, Zhdeniievo, Stavne.

¹² The DJ was active in the following settlements in Transcarpathia: Lalove, Verkhniy Koropets, Ust-Chorna, Nimetska Mokra, Konoplivtsi, Bukovynka, Ruska Mokra, Rakhiv, Drachino, Sofia.

who worked as a German teacher in Mukachevo, played a major role in the organization of women's groups. In the spring of 1940 she gave a lecture as a guest speaker at the opening ceremony of the Volksbund House in Palanok, and in 1942 she founded the women's organization of the Vynohradiv group (Gröber, 2021, p. 177). During 1943, in the villages of Dubove, Ust-Chorna, Nimetska Mokra, and Chynadiiovo, she spoke about the role of the hinterland and the role of women in all-out war (Márkus, 2022, p. 356). For the most part, there were regular vocational training courses for women. In 1942, a ten-day cooking course was first held in Nimetska Mokra for 35 women, and then a three-day training was organized for the women's groups of the Maramures district. In January 1943, a larger three-day vocational training took place, in which a total of 60 women from 19 settlements participated. The youth female leader, Lisbeth Hütter, visited the Transcarpathian groups in the same way as the female leader, and in January 1943, she gave a lecture on the annual tasks at Ust-Chorna and Ruska Mokra (Eiler, 2019).

The trainings organized by the Volksbund's National Agricultural Office were also regular. In November 1942, lectures were given on the possibilities of increasing crops in Shenborn, Barbovo, Lalove, Verkhniy Koropets, Kuchava and Chynadiiovo. Between April 2 and 4, 1943, Fritz Metzger, the national agricultural leader of the Volksbund, visited the local groups and informed them about the war situation and the duty of the hinterland. At other times, lecturers were sent from the Carei centre. For instance, on November 14, 1942, Ferenc Einholz, a member of the Volksbund from Carei, gave a lecture in Khust in the following topic: «*Extending the increase in production to oil and vegetable crops. Economic care and the application of commercial objects*» (ДІАЗО-3, арк. 54). The aforementioned events were organically aligned with Volksbund's «Homeland War Economic Service» programme, announced in the spring of 1942. The essence of the initiative lay in the fact that the work of men of German origin who were serving in the military had to be done by those who remained in the hinterland (Vitári, 2021, p. 10–12).

Another initiative in which Transcarpathian Germans were involved was the so-called winter aid campaign. The winter aid taken over from the Third Reich was a nationwide institution, and its primary task was to help fellow citizens in need (Maruszics, 2024, p. 43). Later, collections were organized not only for the needy Germans in Hungary, but also for the German army (Vitári, 2015, p. 128). In November 1942, Volksbund members were called on donate in Lalove, Verkhniy Koropets, Kuchava and Bukovynka by Otto Gärtner, regional manager of the Volksbund, in Palanok by Martin Koch, regional representative of the German People's Aid, and in Vynohradiv by Wilhelm Horbas, regional organization leader (Eiler, 2019). The local authorities did not accept kindly the fundraising, but at the same time they did not seriously intervene, they just kept the events under observation. In February 1940, for example, Károly Köszörű, the Chief Magistrate of the Uzhhorod district of Ung county, asked all district clerks to pay more attention to the fact that the members of the Volksbund collected wool within the framework of the winter aid campaign, from which they wanted to knit socks and winter underwear for the German army (ДІАЗО-4, арк. 9).

The events between 1938 and 1944 basically determined the further fate of the German minority in Transcarpathia. Joining the German Armed Forces caused serious demographic changes, as nearly a thousand men between the ages of 18 and 30 lost their Hungarian citizenship. This definitely became a fault line among the German minority, taking into account only the reproduction aspects. The events of the Waffen-SS recruitment, the Transcarpathian organizations of the DJ, and the Swabian influence in Szatmár lead to

the conclusion that the members of the Volksbund in Transcarpathia were also radicalized and that there was a receptiveness to the National Socialist worldview, especially in the case of the younger generations. The consequences of the Second World War affected all Germans, whether they were members of the Volksbund or not. As the front approached, the German units in Transcarpathia began to evacuate the residents of German nationality in the fall of 1944, and within the framework of this, approximately 2–3 thousand people left the region (Gröber, 2021, p. 189).

The Red Army and the NKVD, following the principle of collective guilt, also obliged the German minority to «three days' work». The German population was deported from Transcarpathia in three waves between 1944 and 1946. According to some sources, from November 18 to December 16, 1944, the NKVD squads arrested a total of 22,951 thousand people of German and Hungarian nationality.¹³ Unfortunately, we do not have exact data on the proportion of Germans. During the preparation of the second wave of deportations on December 5, 1944, 4,355 people of German nationality were registered by the Soviet authorities in 93 settlements. In January 1946, the so-called «compromised» families were ordered to be deported to Siberia. The forced evacuation applied to the German residents of Transcarpathia who were members of the Volksbund, joined the Waffen-SS, or fled to Germany with the retreating German troops and then returned to their homes. In many cases, it was enough to deport someone if one of their family members belonged to one of the mentioned categories. In March 1946, 2,670 residents of Transcarpathian German nationality were finally resettled in Siberia and Kazakhstan. The leaders of the Volksbund groups and the members of the Waffen-SS who remained in the area were executed by the SMERSH counterintelligence squads (Molnár, 2017, p. 250, 254, 258).

After the ethnic cleansing, according to a census taken in November 1946, 2,338 residents of German nationality remained in Transcarpathia (Oficinskij, 2010, p. 178). On December 13, 1955, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union issued a decree: «On the settlement of the legal situation of forcibly displaced Germans and their families, on the lifting of restrictions» (Váradi, 2019, p. 107). Pursuant to this decree, Transcarpathian Germans were allowed to return home, but their confiscated property was not returned, thus putting many in an impossible situation (Váradi, 2019, p. 108). The situation of the returning Germans was not made easier by the local authorities either, and in 1959 many were refused to register their address (Molnár, 2017, p. 259). As a result of Waffen-SS recruitment, war losses, the evacuation in 1944, and the deportations between 1944 and 1946, the number of Germans in the region eventually decreased by nearly 10,000. According to the census conducted in independent Ukraine in 2001, 3,478 people identified themselves as German.

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¹³ In the summer of 1945, almost 30,000 people of Hungarian and German nationality were held in Soviet captivity.

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РОЗГОРТАННЯ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЙНОЇ ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ НАРОДНОГО СОЮЗУ НІМЦІВ УГОРЩИНИ (ФОЛЬКСБУНДУ)

Представлено діяльність та організаційні намагання Народного союзу німців Угорщини (Фольксбунд) на Закарпатті в 1938–1944 рр. Зазначено, що Народний союз засновано в листопаді 1938 р. як організацію, що представляла німецьку меншину в Угорщині. Встановлено, що 1939 р. угорський уряд дозволив Народному союзу німців здійснювати свою діяльність лише як культурній організації, однак, згідно з т. зв. Віденською угодою про права народних меншин (30 серпня 1940 р.) між Королівством Угорщини та Німеччиною, він став єдиною легітимною організацією німецької меншини в Угорщині, визнаною державою, – об'єднанню було надано повну свободу діяльності, зокрема й у поширенні націонал-соціалістичної ідеології.

Метою дослідження визначено проаналізувати діяльність й організаційні намагання Фольксбунду на Закарпатті в 1938–1944 рр. Опрацьовано документи, що зберігаються в Берегівському відділі Закарпатського обласного державного архіву. Зокрема, використано записи головних єпископів Унгського й Угочанського

комітетів, документи Мараморської адміністративної експозитури, а також записи голови м. Унгвар. Констатовано, що в цих фондах міститься, наприклад, частина документів груп Народного союзу, які діяли в Ужгороді та Мараморському комітеті. Стверджено, що праці Н. Шпанненбергера, Л. Тілковського, А. Грьобер, Р. Офіцинського та Ж. Вітарі створюють теоретичну й методологічну бази для вивчення цієї теми.

Зазначено, що в 1938–1944 рр. Закарпаття входило до складу Угорського королівства, на той час у регіоні проживало приблизно 13 тис. німців, яких намагався завербувати Фольксбунд. Зауважено, що організаційна робота в регіоні розпочалася 1939 р., а до 1941 р. Народний союз створив свої базові організації у майже 38 населених пунктах Закарпаття, проте про його діяльність відомо небагато – тривалий час у працях, присвячених історії краю, про німецьку меншину лише згадували побіжно або ж розглядали в кількох абзацах.

Ключові слова: Народний союз, Закарпаття, німецька меншина, націонал-соціалізм.