

German Ethnic Identity in Chicago Before and During the First World War

Birinci Dünya Savaşı Sırasında ve Öncesinde Şikago'da Alman Etnik Kimliği

Ülkü GÜNEY*

Abstract

In the 19th century, disappointed by the failed Revolution of 1848, many Germans including artisans and intellectuals immigrated to the USA. One of the particular destinations for this transatlantic mass migration was the newly developing city of Chicago. Germans, who represented a majority in Chicago since then, not only were able to cope with the challenges of immigration but also became a powerful ethnic group that could establish its own cultural institutions and could shape the social and political landscape. The most important factor that efficiently preserved the German culture was the German language press. The German press not only enabled to uphold the German language for Germans but also facilitated, along with the German schools, to spread and broaden the influence of Germans and German culture over other ethnic populations. With the outbreak of the WWI, however, and the entry of the USA in the War as an opponent of Germany, the anti-German sentiment of other ethnic populations and the ruling classes became hostile. The nationalistic attitude of Germans and their support for Germany put them into a conflict of loyalty. The price they paid for their strong attachment to their culture and for their loyalty to their country of origin turned out to be the loss of strong German cultural influence in Chicago. This article aims to disclose the process of the construction and dissolution of German ethnic identity in Chicago by means of tracing the German language press. The empirical material that is used in the study includes selected articles, reports and announcements from original newspapers in German language. The time period of the quoted newspapers covers publications in Chicago from the 1870s through the end of the First World War.

Keywords: WWI and Germans, German immigrants, German ethnic identity, Germans in Chicago, German newspapers.

Öz

19. yüzyılda, 1848 Devrimi'nin başarısız olmasından kaynaklanan hayal kırıklığı sonucunda aralarında zanaatkarların ve entelektüellerin bulunduğu birçok Alman ABD'ye göç etti. Bu Atlantik ötesi toplu göçlerin hedeflerinden biri de özellikle yeni gelişmekte olan Şikago şehriydi. Bu dönemden itibaren uzun süre Şikago'da çoğunluğu temsil eden Almanlar sadece göçün getirdiği zorluklarla başetmekle kalmamış, aynı zamanda kendi kültürel kurumlarını oluşturarak ve sosyal-politik yaşamı belirleyerek güçlü bir etnik nüfus oluşturmuşlardır. Alman kültürünün etkin bir biçimde korunmasının arkasındaki en önemli neden Almanca basın olmuştur. Almanca basın sadece Almanlar için dillerini yaşatmanın bir yolu olmamış, aynı zamanda Almanca eğitim veren okulların da katkısıyla Almanların ve Alman kültürünün etkisinin diğer etnik gruplar arasında yayılmasını sağlamıştır. Ne var ki, Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın başlaması ve ABD'nin Almanya'ya karşı savaşa katılmasıyla, diğer etnik nüfusların ve yönetici sınıfların anti-Alman duyguları düşmanlığa dönüşmüştür. Almanların milliyetçi tutumları ve savaşta Almanya tarafını desteklemeleri onları sadakat çelişkisine sokmuştur. Almanlar, kültürlerine ve anavatanlarına

* Assist. Prof., Abant İzzet Baysal University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Sociology Department, guney.ulk@gmail.com

olan güçlü bağılıklarının bedelini, Şikago'daki Alman kültürel etkisinin kaybı şeklinde ödemişlerdir. Bu makalenin amacı Şikago'daki Alman etnik kimliğinin inşa edilme ve çözülme sürecini ve nedenlerini Alman gazeteleri ışığında ortaya koymaktır. Çalışmayı oluşturan görgül kaynaklar arasında, dönemin gazetelerinde yer almış makaleler, haberler ve duyurulardan seçmeler bulunmaktadır. Alıntılanan gazeteler, Şikago'da 1870'lerden başlayarak Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın sonuna kadar olan dönemin yayınlarını kapsamaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve Almanlar, Alman göçmenler, Alman etnik kimliği, Şikago'da Almanlar, Alman gazeteleri.

Introduction

As per the U.S. Census, 58 million US Americans have ancestors of German origin as compared to 39 and 33 million Americans who have Irish and English antecedents, respectively.¹ During the second half of the 19th century, Chicago experienced a rapid growth of population due to massive influx of immigrants. Among many other immigrant groups like the Irish, the Polish and the Italian, the Germans constituted the largest and most powerful ethnic group in Chicago. The superiority of Germans was due to their large community and concentration in certain areas of Chicago. At the beginning, like the other immigrant groups, the Germans chose geographical areas in proximity of their fellow countrymen and many of them settled in the North Side of Chicago. They organised themselves in social, political and economic ethnic neighbourhoods. In this way, the emerging German institutions catered to the needs of the fellow immigrants hailing from their country of origin. The Germans were not only superior due to their large numbers but were also experienced and able to build organisations, which empowered them among the other ethnic immigrant groups. These networks of German organisations were founded upon and reinforced an ethnic identity based on work, family life, and the ethnic neighbourhood. It can be stated that the German ethnic identity in Chicago was constructed on four pillars: German language schools, economic success, good handicrafts, political organisations and activities. However, the important factor for prevalence of the Germans was the promotion of German language by the German press besides the schools. Language was an important element of the culture among German-Americans. In the year 1890 alone, 70 different German newspapers used to be published at daily and/or weekly frequencies in Chicago. Yet, this strong ethnic identity went through fundamental changes just prior and during the World War I (WWI). The German influence on political, cultural and economic life of the city began to disappear and the anti-German sentiment, during the WWI, diminished the power of the Germans in Chicago.

Thus, the main aim of the present paper is to examine the historical development and cessation of the German ethnic identity in Chicago along the cultural, political and social lines. Discussions have been made in the paper pertaining to the strengthening of the German ethnic identity through political and cultural institutions, which were built upon and maintained through a common language, where the German press played a crucial role. The anarchist intellectuals and artisans significantly helped to build a strong German ethnic presence in Chicago due to their strong attachment to their culture and ethnic identity. At the same time, however, this rigid German nationalism combined with the anti-anarchist reactions of the establishment and provoked an anti-German attitude during the WWI. Undeniably, the two major issues which affected the dissolution of the German ethnic identity were

1 U.S. Bureau of the Census (1993). Statistical Abstract of the United States.

the anti-anarchist (many of whom were German) attitude of the ruling classes in Chicago and the overt nationalism of the Germans. The paper is predominantly based on empirical material in the form of selected newspaper reports, articles and announcements in German language published in Chicago prior and during the WWI.

The following text comprises a short account of the methodology used in this article, followed by a theoretical frame for the discussion of ethnic identity. In the fourth part of the paper, the German press has been outlined to highlight its importance in foundation and maintenance of cultural and political institutions, which played a central role in strengthening German ethnic identity. The next part discusses the formation of German ethnic identity. The final section argues the ways in which an anti-German feeling began by targeting German anarchist labour movement leaders and subsequently the dissolution or the assimilation of Germans during the WWI.

The Concept of Ethnicity

Ethnicity, as a form of social grouping, has raised different definitions among the social scientists. Friedrich Heckmann (1992) defines ethnicity as something ‘which bonds a relatively large group of people through assumed common origin, commonality in culture, history and actual experiences, [that] have a certain awareness of identity and solidarity and is a fact that is meaningful for individual and collective actions’ (56). At the same time, Heckmann states that the members of ethnic groups can collaborate and organise among themselves or with the members of other ethnic groups on different bases. Heckmann differentiates between ‘ethnic groups’ and ‘ethnic minorities’ by defining ethnic groups as a ‘fraction of the overall population that is composed by a state; these fractions are ethnic collectives different from the majority population’ (1992, p.57). ‘Ethnic groups become minorities when the majorities are constituted as nations’ (1992, p.38). According to Heckmann (1992), ethnic minorities are ethnic groups who are disadvantaged, discriminated against and stigmatised within a system of ethnic stratification. Development of an ethnic culture often is a response to a commonly experienced discrimination. Through strengthening of the group and the ethnic culture, the members provide mutual support to each other. It is a protection against discrimination and a tool for resistance (Heckmann, 1992).

The differentiation of ethnic groups and ethnic minorities is important as it negates the direct implication of ethnicity with disadvantage. However, neither ethnic groups nor ethnic minorities, as per Heckmann’s definition, seem to be relevant in case of Germans’ situation in Chicago. Germans, as an ethnic group, were not discriminated against; rather they had the power over the other ethnic groups, at least for a period of time. This leads us to the second issue that Heckmann did not provide a definition of ‘majority population’ in his explanation of ethnic groups. The question that remains unanswered here is how a ‘majority population’ is constituted and whether it is or can be homogenous indeed. Is it, for example, represented by one ethnic group or, as in the case of Chicago, composed of several ethnic groups? In spite of the useful theories on ethnicity and ethnic groups provided by Heckmann (1992), neither the statement about disadvantage nor the theory of an oppressive minority in power, can be employed for the case of Germans in Chicago. As a gradually emerging state system, the US society doesn’t seem to be falling into the conventional categories of ethnic minorities which have been recognised in most parts of Europe.

According to Stow Persons (1987), who rather provides an American-specific approach to the notion, ‘ethnicity in its American form is a product of the circumstances of American life’ (1987, p.3-5). Distinguishing between ethnic groups and immigrants, he mentions that *only when ‘immigrant’ became identified as American it was transformed into ethnic.*² A further characteristic of ethnicity, for Persons, is the social status of a minority. He states that ‘The achievement of a functional ethnic unity that meant something more than a mere sense of sentimental identification was always complicated by differences of social and economic status within the group’. However, Persons also asserted that ‘Ethnicity was more durable basis of identity than class, (...)’ (Persons, 1987, p.20). Usage of the term ‘ethnic minority’ for Germans in Chicago, in terms of Persons’ theory, would be misleading, since they (and their offspring) made up the largest group in Chicago during the late 19th century (U.S. Census 1900, cited in Harzig, 1991). Moreover, the definition of ethnic minority, by transforming from immigrant to American, does not seem to be applicable to the Germans in Chicago, as precisely their resistance against ‘becoming American’ was the reason for their exclusion by the other groups.

The definition of Chris Barker seems to be more useful for our purpose in understanding the German immigration in the historical context. Barker, from a *Cultural Studies* approach, defines ethnicity as something that is closely linked to ‘race’ but cultural in its implications. Ethnicity is centred on common cultural beliefs and practices. An ethnic group is the one that supposes a shared culture developed under particular social and political contexts. This, in turn, gives people a sense of belonging. Barker suggests that ‘[t]he significance of the concept of ethnicity lies in its *acknowledgment of the place of history, language and culture* in the construction of subjectivity and identity (2004, p.63).³ Nevertheless, ethnicity is not static but a relational concept that is constructed through self-identification and social ascription, i.e. identity is not only dependent on what we think we are but also what we think we are not (Barker, 2004). Hence, the meaning of ethnicity may change within a society in the course of time, or it may become intensive, may decrease or even become invisible (Heckmann, 1992). The latter is the case when a group is assimilated. As per Heckmann, assimilation, for a certain group, means ‘the disappearance of ethnicity as a principle of social organisation and point of reference’ (1992, p.32). Yet, the ethnic awareness, under certain circumstances, can be raised again.

Methodology

For the Germans, newspapers were one of the most important media in the 19th century, not just to maintain their German identity but also to gain power over other ethnic groups through dispersion of the German language. The German press helped in establishment and reinforcement of the German language and therewith the much defended German hood, which they observed at the centre of their ethnic identity.

The most common and widely distributed German newspapers were the *Chicagoer Freie Presse* (Chicago’s Free Press, published from the year 1874 onwards), the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* (Illinois State-News, published between the years 1862-1922) and the *Abendpost* (Eveningpost, published between the years 1889-1950). The *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* was the second largest newspaper in the city. Between the years 1850 to 1890, ten newspapers in German language used to get published every week in Chicago (Arndt and Olsen, 1955, cited in Schied, 1993).

2 My italics

3 My italics

For this article, I analysed mainly the two largest daily German newspapers published in German language: the *Abendpost*, the *Sonntagspost* (the Sunday edition of the *Abendpost*), the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* and additionally some editions of the weekly newspaper *Frauenzeitung der Chicagoer Freien Presse* (Women News of Chicago's Free Press, published from the year 1893 onwards). The duration of the examination covered the interlude between the peak of the German immigration to Chicago and the WWI, i.e., the time between the beginning of the publishing dates and 1919. The preference of only German newspapers may be somehow limiting. For an extensive discussion of this topic, it may be useful to give an account of the newspapers of other ethnic groups.⁴ This would provide a broader and a multi-faceted view on the topic. However, due to the limits of space the focus here will be on German newspapers.

German Language Press in Context

The preservation of the German language and German customs was of utmost relevance to the community. According to Barker, '[t]he ...media are implicated in the selective provision of social knowledge and imagery through which we grasp our own world as well as that of others and as such are significant global resource for the construction of identity' (2004, p.117). When we consider the press (newspapers) as the only existing mass media of the 19th century then it can be argued that the German press was profoundly involved in the construction of the German ethnic identity. The press helped to form an articulate ethnic identity and gave the readers a feeling of a distinctive culture. Moreover, the German press was one of the most important media for preserving the cultural ties to the native country and to setup a sense of united *Deutschtum* (Germanness) (Keil and Ickstadt, 1988; Harzig, 1991). It can be said that the German press was the second backbone of the German culture, after the German language schools. The rising number of German speaking population and heterogeneity within the German community enabled a broad range of German publications (Harzig, 1991; Schied, 1993). The media were seen as an important tool for unification of Germans across the class interests. Apart from the daily newspapers, every society, church, lodge, etc. had their own publications.

Many publications in German language were propaganda organs of trade unions, labour movements or radical organisations. The press of the working class people, for example, *Chicagoer Arbeiterzeitung* (Chicago's Workers News) carried and shaped a specific German working class culture. The announcements for meetings and strikes were made in these 'workers' publications. The radical papers were often founded by 'Forty Eighters'. In the broader sense, they attempted to change and develop the reading habits of the working-class Germans, which comprised 70 percent of the German ethnic group in Chicago (Keil and Jentz, 1988). Although labour leaders sought to unify immigrants across ethnic boundaries, they were aware of their power as Germans, in terms of a larger group and of their cultural pride. They were 'continually voicing their pride in classical German culture and their conviction that it was superior to other traditions, leaders of the German labour movement in Chicago were often attacked for their ethnic arrogance, (...)' (Keil and Jentz, 1988, p.11). Many of the non-professional journalists were artisans, who were one the most influential groups among German immigrants (Schied, 1993). Equipped with cultural and artistic skills as well as political experiences,

4 For a broader discussion on immigrants' press see: Dirk Hoerder (1987). *The Immigrant Labor Press in North America, 1840s-1970s*. An annotated Bibliography. Volume 1: Migrants from Northern Europe. Greenwood Press.

which they collected in the course of the 1848 revolution, they were not only experienced in building and maintaining organisations such as the *Arbeiter-Vereine* (Workers' Clubs) but also able to generate political pamphlets and articles (see Schied, 1993). The *Arbeiter-Vereine* together with the *Arbeiter-Hallen* (Workers' Halls) was significant elements of the artisan culture. These *Vereine* and *Hallen* served not only as cultural centres and meeting places for workers and their families but also offered information in German language for the newly arrived immigrants. They provided mutual social aids, such as insurance and facilities, and reading rooms (Schied, 1993).

In 1870, Germans represented the majority in the Chicago's industry, and were organised 'to an unusually high degree and thus helped to establish the organisational structures to be used later by an emerging national and multinational labour movement' (Harzig, 2005, p.n.n.). This is interesting insofar as many newspapers, through which Germans were informed about news related to workers organisations and the working people, were published within this frame. Apart from these Workers' Halls, there were also Saloons run and frequented by Germans. Alone on the Madison Street, that drags on four miles from the business centre to the neighbourhoods, 115 saloons were located (Ensslen, 1988). Most of these saloons not only served as places for socialising, political activities for the workers, such as meetings, but also as spaces for production and distribution of the papers of the working class (Ensslen, 1988).

Especially in the 1880s, Greif's Hall (...) represented this kind of political center towards which German organized labor gravitated; it was used by many socialist, anarchist, and union groups. Saloons frequently served not only as the focal points for these political gatherings, but also as a kind of infrastructural link between meeting places, business offices of newspapers and groups, and job placement offices (so called labor bureaus), which, if not located in the saloons themselves, were as closely affiliated with them as possible (Ensslen, 1988, p.169).

Such organisations helped to find emotional security among the country people who supported the expression of cultural identity, a very important aspect for Germans in their everyday life. The activities of these organisations, such as festivities, carnivals, fairs, concerts and picnics, were mostly announced in the German newspapers. For example, in the Saturday edition of *Abendpost*, dated 20 June 1914, more than ten announcements were published for picnics, organised by different German societies such as the *Chicago Bayern -Verein* (Chicago Bavaria-Club) or the *Deutschen Krieger Kameradschaft von Chicago* (German Warrior and Comradeship of Chicago). Beyond these cultural and social organisations, there also existed a large number of German women organisations, like the society of *Chicago und West Garfield Frauen Vereine*. Depending upon their social class, activities, such as charity performances, mask-balls, and family meetings, of the organisations were announced in newspapers. The Germans, who were larger in number, built societies in Chicago which enabled them to spend most of their time in the context of their ethnic group. The work place was the only space where Germans met other ethnic groups.

All these publications and organisations were made possible through the use of a common language indicating that the maintenance of the German language was essential to the Germans. In this way, all social classes and groups within the German community were unified. Maintaining the German language instructions in public schools was one of the shared interests of both the middle class and the working class (Harzig, 1991). Nevertheless, despite this common interest, Germans were divided along ideological lines. This was manifested in the labour movements' opposition to the religious, nationalistic and capitalistic elements of the middle class. The German socialists established special Sunday Schools in collaboration with the 'Freethinkers', a liberal left organisation, concerned in retaining the classic German tradition and the German language. Well-known labour movement leaders and journalists used to teach in such schools. According to Hofmeister, who quoted from the *Illinois Staatszeitung*, 4500 children, both German and non-German, took part in the German language instructions in 1871. Between 1890 and 1891, the number rose to 36,000 children of whom 50% were of German descent (1976, p.29). The influence of the German-American culture was so strong that in 1905, even in a small town such as Belleville (Illinois), many Black and Native Americans used to speak German (D'Eramo, 1996, p.212).

Construction and Transformation of German Ethnic Identity

The ethno-centric sentiment of the Germans in Chicago was concurrent with the intense national chauvinism in the politics of the German Empire. The victory parade in Chicago, celebrated after the unification of the German states into the German Reich following the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, is an example of the influence of Germany's politics on the German immigrants. Describing this event, the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* in its 30 May, 1871 issue stated, 'The Easter-Monday of 1871 started a new epoch in the history of German-Americans. To the enthusiastic feats of the German folk the long awaited national unity accessed, here for the first time Germans came together in a national feeling and for a national matter (...)'. The Germans' feeling of superiority over the Americans was expressed in a letter posted in the *Abendpost* on 18 July 1910, by a reader who wrote, 'The German national feature: The American culture in music, painting or scientific research is not compatible with German culture. Even an American would confess to this (...)'.

The ethnicity-centred consciousness also existed among the working-class Germans against the working class members of other ethnic groups. The nationalistic attitudes in their interaction with other ethnic groups provoked conflicts. *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* on 17 August 1872 reported: 'Fight between Irish and German: (...) as we know the Irish cannot accept that the German man is appreciated by his employers because of his hard working and intelligence which surpasses theirs [Irish]. They began a fight which grew into a battle (...). At last the Irish were beaten up by our people (...)'. Although Germans were seen as drunkard by other ethnic group, they in turn used this definition for the Irish. The *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* on 7 March 1873 reported about a 'Battle between German policeman and Irish drunkards'.

As noted by Harzig (2005), German women particularly maintained a strong sense of their own value system. They considered themselves as good housewives and more skilled on household organisation than the women of other ethnic groups. An article in the *Frauenzeitung der Chicagoer Freien Presse* on 16 January 1898 complained about the tepid acceptance of Germans in American society: 'The average American women are so confident about their superiority that they consider all

other nations, above all women very deep under themselves (...). But the responsibility for this need to be seen by Germans, who are not consistently nationalistic and too easy to assimilate (...). In fact, the Germans resisted with their overall pride of own culture and language tradition against Americanisation. With their peculiarity, they became, what D'Eramo called 'an island in a sea of Americanism. On these islands one read German newspapers, one was treated in a German hospital, one learned German in schools, one listened to German sermonise in protestant churches, one sang German songs and played German music. This was called German-America just as usual as the term Latin-America' (1996, p.211).

On the other hand, Americans were protesting that Germans often criticised American customs and institutions instead of trying to understand and accept them within the American context. The *Chicago Times* of 22 January 1872 stated that 'if the foreigners, particularly Germans, didn't like the American way then they should return to their countries' (cited in Hofmeister, 1976, p.54). The more proud the Germans were about themselves, the more they were ridiculed by the English and called the "Dachshund Element" Dachshund is a dog race and known as typically German) (D'Eramo, 1996). At the same time, the Germans insisted that they had a right to the lifestyle which they were accustomed to in Germany. Eugen Seeger (1893) described the escapades of Germans as follows:

On Sundays they were in the habit of marching through the streets of the city to the strains of blaring bands, preferring to parade past crowded churches on their way to the picnic grounds, where they amused themselves to their hearts' content while guzzling enormous quantities of beer (...) and then they enthusiastically assured each other it was "just like in Germany" (p.106).

After the proclamation of the 'Sunday closing law', which primarily affected Germans, a large number of them armed them and marched to the courthouse. As the situation escalated, this so called 'beer riot' resulted in the death of several Germans (Hofmeister, 1976, p.57). According to Hofmeister (1976), the incentive behind the Sunday closing law was to be found more in economic competition rather than the cultural differences. Since the consumption of German-made beer grew to such large dimensions, the whiskey producers, who were mostly of Anglo-Saxon descent, were concerned of their traditional-cultural influences and their profit. The efforts of Germans to counteract the anti-German sentiment increasingly resulted in massive anti-German campaign among the Americans.

German Anarchists and Anti-German Sentiment

The anti-German attitude in Chicago had a history that went back to the late 1800s. As mentioned above Chicago was the centre of a strong labour movement led by German anarchists and socialists,. Among them particularly a group called the *Forty Eighters* who left Germany after the defeated Revolution in 1848 was very strong (Levine, 1992). The powerful labour movement, which tried to establish an *eight-hour-working day*, was a thorn for the American state authorities. In May 4, 1886, a labour protest rally, near Chicago's Haymarket Square organized among others by the German anarchists ended disastrously when a bomb was thrown, killing several people, both police personnel and civilians (Russell, 1986). Although it could not be proven, eight immigrant anarchists, among them five Germans, were found guilty. A year later, four of the eight were regarded as dangerous anarchists

and were executed. Since four of the five Germans lived in the German neighbourhood on the North Side, the funeral procession went down on Milwaukee Avenue.⁵ Hundred thousands of Germans showed their bitter solidarity (Keil and Jentz, 1988, p.90). In the context of the protests, the English press repeatedly stated that the majority of the radical workers were German and attacked the German element as a whole (Hofmeister, 1976). It was unclear whether the anti-German sentiments or the class conflicts caused the death of the labour-movement leaders. It was assumed that various factors influenced the decision of the executive authorities. According to Hofmeister, ‘the German element’s conspicuous part in eliminating religious instruction from the public schools, in repulsing the temperance movement, in assuring less oppressive Sunday laws, and in the eight-hour movement provided fuel to fan the flames of the anti-German sentiment’ (1976, p.59). Thus the anti-anarchist attitude of the establishment can be regarded as a major factor in increasing the anti-German sentiment during the WWI.

The War and Anti-Germanism

In 1914, when the WWI broke out, Chicago harboured the largest German community in the USA with its 800,000 Germans consisting of first and second generation immigrants (D’Eramo, 1996). The anti-German emotions reached its peak with the beginning of the WWI. In August 1914, around 10,000 Germans in Chicago demonstrated to demand neutrality from the USA. The war changed the relations between the ethnic groups. The Irish sympathised with the Germans out of their anti-English resentments. The Polish, on the other hand, were against the Germans, because Poland was attacked by the Central Powers. And among the English groups, mistrust grew against the Germans (D’Eramo, 1996).

During the war, Germans enthusiastically supported their former country. On 5 August 1914, the Germans held a mass meeting of more than 10,000 people at the Auditorium to listen to impassioned speeches by prominent German-Americans and called for their support for German Emperor. In demonstration of their solidarity, they gathered thousands of dollars for the German and Austrian Red Cross (Hofmeister, 1976). On the other hand, many Germans found it important to express their loyalty to the United States as well, in order to avoid harassment. The following excerpt from an editorial in the *Abendpost* of 31 December 1914 issue is an example of their efforts to show their allegiance to the United States:

We are of German blood and heritage, but we are also citizens of the United States. We call ourselves German-Americans and every day we become more proud of this name. To us, the designation German-American seems proper and fitting. Nothing else would do. But other people do not agree with us. They deny us that right. They scoff at the implication of Germanism contained in the expression and call us “hyphenated Americans”, which is to say, Americans with a mental reservation, or “grade B” Americans.

When USA became embroiled in the war on 7 April 1917, as the adversary of Germany, many Germans were torn between their loyalties. The Americans also questioned the loyalty of the Germans

⁵ For more on Anarchism and Haymarket Bombing see for example Lewis Russell, Lewis (Ed.) (1986). Chicago History: The Magazine of the Chicago Historical Society. Volume XV. Number 2.

and called them the 'disloyal Dachshund element' (Hofmeister, 1976, p.63). The anti-German opinion of the American public increased in proportion to the number of US American cargo ships being plunged by the German submarines in the Atlantic (D'Eramo, 1996). Eventually, thousands of Germans and several German organisations expressed their absolute support for the United States. However, to organise and perform activities against the involvement of the USA in the war, which many anarchist German groups attempted, remained futile, as the groups were dispersed by the Chicago police. According to Hofmeister (1976), on 17 September, 1917, it was reported that a state authority, William J. Bryan, declared in a speech at the LaSalle Hotel that people who at that time insisted on their right of free speech to criticise America, were not law abiding citizens, but promoters of anarchy.

The anti-German sentiment reached its peak when Americans or other ethnic groups rejected to hire Germans. The *Sonntagspost*, dated 5 January 1919, used a common announcement of that time as a title for the editorial, 'No Germans Need Apply Here'. Chicagoans who had a German accent or a German name suffered disadvantages. In an effort to avoid persecution, certain individuals and organisations resorted to change of their names. *Abendpost*, dated 20 August 1918, reported that many Germans applied to obtain permit for changing their German names. 'More than fifty persons applied to the court for a permit to change their German names. Mister H. Feilchenfeld (...) would like to be called Field. Otto W. Mayer (...) would like to change his name into Mayor (...)'. Furthermore, the organisations, businesses, shops, hotels, restaurants, saloons, also chose or compelled to change their German names. The 'Germania Club' a social organisation was renamed as 'Chicago Lincoln Club' by its members. The name 'Hotel Bismarck' was changed to 'Hotel Randolph', the 'Hotel Kaiserhof' became 'Hotel Atlantic', and the 'German Hospital' was renamed as the 'Grant Hospital' (Hofmeister, 1976, p.71).

According to some people the aim of this repression was to free America from the memories of a German cultural element; so the 'Frankfurter' (sausage) was renamed to 'hot dogs'. The change of 'Hamburger' into 'Liberty Steak', however, was less successful and it remained 'Hamburger' (D'Eramo, 1996, p.214). The name changing process comprised the street names on the North Side as suggested by other ethnic groups. Despite Germans' resistance against those changes, many streets, which carried names such as Berlin, Frankfurt, Luebeck or Rhine, were re-named. Only few names such as Goethe and Schiller could be maintained due to massive protests from all German-American citizens and German clubs (Hofmeister, 1976, p.71-72). The Americanising process of many original German organisations or institutions also included the world-famous *Chicago Symphony Orchestra*, which was founded in 1890 as 'Theodore Thomas Orchestra' and was composed almost exclusively of Germans in pre-war days. During and after the WWI, the harassment against the members of the orchestra was so intense that the members felt obliged to publicly show their loyalty to the United States. According to a report published in the 17 August 1918 issue of *Abendpost*, Albert Ulrich, the manager, warned the members in a meeting at Ravinia Park not to be foolishly provocative, stating:

If I ever hear the slightest disloyal or pro-German remark from anyone of you, I will report him not only to the orchestra society, but also to the department of justice, to make him pay for his foolishness. The times are too serious for foolish remarks of sentimental devotion to the old country, too serious for anti-American speeches of any kind. Speak the American language, so that everyone can understand what you say; think before you say anything and always be aware of your duty toward the country we all love, the United States of America.

The most important symbol of German identity, the German language was an obvious target of anti-Germanism. Yet on 9 September 1914, the *Abendpost* urged its readers to send their children to German classes ‘because the German language was destined to become the world language, and that he (sic) who does not master it to some degree at least, will suffer economic disadvantages or will have less chance of progress than those who understand and speak German’. Despite high popularity of the German language as an academic subject, all high schools gradually dropped all their German instructions. All attempts of German-Americans to maintain the German language in high schools failed. At first, the classes lost their non-German enrolments, and then the German students left the classes because of fear of harassment (Hofmeister, 1976).

Although bitter, Germans never tried expressing their strong consciousness of identity again. There were some attempts by the community leaders to resurrect the German ethnic culture in the 1920s. For example, the *Abendpost*, dated 13 July 1925, reported about the proceedings of an impressive meeting in Humboldt Park, in which more than 3000 people participated. ‘The German oak tree is still standing. Although it passed some storms and it lost some of its leaves and twigs in the last eleven years, the strong root is still there. A German-American, who denies his (sic) German descent, is like Judas the traitor and he should be condemned by proper people’. This speech, of Ernst Krueggen, was symbolic in the attempts of re-establishment of the German element in Chicago six years after the beginning of the First World War. However as Harzig (2005) states, also in later years the efforts to revive German ethnic culture were in vain as German-American population had lost interest in ethnic issues. The strong German cultural influence in Chicago has not disappeared entirely but it became invisible.

Conclusion

In the 19th century, the Migration in the USA was a settlement migration, unlike the migration to Europe; the USA being a relatively new country with yet emerging structures. The absence of a uniform language and culture and the developing economy enabled the immigrants to constitute their own ethnic ‘colonies’, where they could speak their own language and establish institutions and businesses as per their needs. Initially, they were not compelled to learn a different language and adapt themselves to a different culture. The German press played a crucial role in establishing and developing the German presence in Chicago. Moreover, it helped to build a powerful German ethnic identity through the use of a common language and history.

Due to their numeric superiority and their fondness to their own culture, Germans were even capable to exert influence and to establish their power over the other ethnic groups. Unlike any other group, Germans organized themselves in all the areas of their life. Therefore, the interaction with other ethnic groups was not only problematic but tense. Nonetheless, more than other ethnic groups such as Irish, Germans strongly held on to their culture in which German language and the German press played significant roles. In the second half of the 19th century, the Germans lived a German-American life, which they created themselves; they spoke and wrote for German-America rather than for the USA. The construction of the German ethnic identity in Chicago was possible on the basis of three aspects: Firstly, the particularity of an immigration country with yet developing social structures. Secondly, the openness of the society enabled the construction of a specific strong German presence. And thirdly, the particularity of the German situation in which the ethnic community was built and in which the assimilation happened.

However, the Germans paid bitter costs for this nationalism with the outbreak of the World War I. Anti-German propaganda, boycott of German goods, and sanctions heaved the 'hyphenated' out of their anchor. Both, the Americans with a German background and the German immigrants in the USA, got into discrepancy and loyalty conflicts. They had to face a choice between becoming 'fully' American and 'remaining' German. The final disappearance of the German ethnic identity happened in the form of changing names. Thus, the anti-German sentiment among Americans can be seen as the result of three factors: First, German nationalism that was gradually rising since the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. Second, the labour-movement that was led by German anarchist was a thorn in the eyes of the wealthy and governing bodies. And finally, the WWI that caused a boycott of German goods and businesses after the involvement of the US to the war. The Germans constitute the only ethnic group in the USA which had to renounce their nationality. Although the Germans were the largest ethnic group before Irish, Italians and English, their influence seems to have disappeared today. In Chicago, as the most German city of the USA the strong marks of the Germans are blurred.

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