

Theses of Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

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Transcarpathia's reannexation to Hungary (1938-1939).

Autonomy, occupation, military action.

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I. Antecedents of the research, problem posing

As a result of the peace system introduced after World War 1, the Transcarpathian Region (Kárpátalja), which is in the centre of my study, was annexed from Hungary to the newly established Czechoslovakia. After the Prague suzerainty of nearly two decades, by the late 1930s the Czechoslovakian state started to fall apart, which allowed Transcarpathia to become part of Hungary again. This long and complicated process can be divided into two important stages: first the flatland territories mainly inhabited by Hungarians got under Hungarian suzerainty in November 1938, then the highland territories mainly inhabited by Ruthenes were annexed to Hungary in March 1939 and supplemented as a result of the Slovak-Hungarian border clashes in April 1939.

This period under study has relatively extensive bibliography, primarily written in the Hungarian, Ukrainian, Czech and English languages. At the same time, most part of the special literature examines this period mainly from the view of the states interested in the territory in accordance with the authors' nationality; therefore, it was a huge task to compare and apply them with a focus on Transcarpathia.

The sources of the relevant countries regarding the questions studied in the dissertation are available in Budapest, Prague and Transcarpathia in several languages. Accordingly, in my paper certain persons, settlements and the Transcarpathian Region itself are sometimes referred to by different names and spelling, depending on the way of writing in the given source of literature. At the same time, the names of persons and settlements are always quoted in an understandable and unambiguous way. Also, I endeavoured not to make the repetitions and the mistakes thus occurring several times in some of the special literature. Therefore, wherever I could, I used original documents and sources available in archives and source publications, getting to know them in full, and I drew the conclusions based upon them. Besides, I aimed to focus on the Hungarian, Ukrainian and Czech or Slovakian bibliography and find a common denominator when presenting the events. However, it was impossible to do this exhaustively, since the Ukrainian or Czech authors are often not familiar with the sources used by the Hungarian historiography, which is true the other way round, too, so in many questions their opinions are in flat opposition that cannot be united.

When writing the dissertation, I set the following purposes in order to expound the topic:

- To present the process of annexing Transcarpathia to Czechoslovakia and the position of the region during the period of nearly twenty years spent within the Czechoslovakian state.
- To analyse the reasons for, the process of and the foreign and internal political factors of the weakening and collapse of the Czechoslovakian state.
- To examine the circumstances of the formation, operation and overthrow of the Cabinet Meeting of the Transcarpathian Autonomy's first government led by András Bródy.
- To describe the process of border negotiations in Komárom and the reasons for its unsuccessful ending.
- To outline the occupancy of the territories reannexed with the First Vienna Award, and the efforts of the Hungarian government to reannex the whole of Transcarpathia.
- To provide a comprehensive picture of the operation, the measures and nationality policy of the Ukrainian-oriented Volosin Government replacing the Ruthene-oriented government.
- To study the processes that took place in early March 1939 and led to the entire collapse and termination of Czechoslovakia, as well as the declaration of the independence of Carpathian Ukraine.
- To present the annexation of the whole Transcarpathia to Hungary, as well as the happenings of the military actions and armed clashes evaluated in different ways.
- And finally, to investigate the circumstances of the adjustment of Transcarpathia's western border, the military and civil public administration introduced in the area, as well as the history of the local government planned within Hungary.

When writing my dissertation, I primarily aimed to compare the sources of the archives of the countries involved in Transcarpathia's history during the period under research as well as the special literature to the best of my knowledge, and present the process of Transcarpathia's reannexation to Hungary on the basis of the results. For this purpose, I did not investigate the events and processes in the viewpoint of any country but Transcarpathia itself served as a starting point.

II. The structure of the study. The special literature and the groups of sources applied during the research

Although the topic of my research covers the two stages of Transcarpathia's reannexation in 1938 and 1939, I had to go back in time to fully understand this question. Therefore, Chapter I outlines how Transcarpathia became part of the newly-founded Czechoslovakia and under what circumstances it existed until the two-stage reannexation to Hungary. In parallel with the gradual weakening of the Czechoslovakian state, the region had to wait for long years until the preliminarily promised autonomy – during the annexation to Czechoslovakia -, whose first stage was the first Transcarpathian autonomous government led by András Bródy and coming to power on 11 October 1938. When discussing the Transcarpathian events, I also outline the operation of the Hungarian and international diplomacy, the organising Hungarian diversionary actions and the negotiations held in Komárom. At the end of Chapter 1, I describe the operation of the Bródy Government and study the circumstances that led to their overthrow and the coming into power of the Ukrainian-trend political powers expressing opposite plans.

Chapter 2 discusses the initial period of the Transcarpathian reign of the Ukrainian government led by Avgustin Volosin, which coincided with the annexation of Transcarpathia's smaller southern area mainly with Hungarian population and Upper Hungary (Felvidék) to Hungary, i.e. the Vienna Award. I outline the military occupancy of the awarded territory as well as the operation of the military and civil public administration established. I also investigated the endeavours of the Hungarian leadership that aimed to reannex the whole Transcarpathia after the Vienna Award but failed in the end – or at least in 1938. The history of the Transcarpathian territory, which remained in Czechoslovakia, was mainly inhabited by Ruthenses and Ukrainians and was called Carpathian Ukraine by the Ukrainian government, is also outlined until 22 November at the end of this Chapter.

Chapter 3 begins with the investigation of Transcarpathia's statutory autonomy enacted in the Czechoslovakian constitution, after which the territory practically became an equal member among the three parts of the country. However, the name of the state remained nearly the same, without including Transcarpathia any form: the Czech–Slovak Republic. With this broader autonomy, Volosin and his Government started to form the territory under their power into Ukrainian. I presented the parliamentary elections closed with foreseeable

results after the introduction of the one-party regime, which aimed to officially shelter the power of the Carpathian Ukrainian government. Meanwhile, I examined both the steps taken by the Hungarian government and diplomacy as well as the intentions of the great powers, especially Germany, including the changes, in relation to Transcarpathia. By March 1939 the time had come to reannex Transcarpathia – or in Ukrainian respect, the Hungarian occupation of Carpathian Ukraine –, when, among others, the changes in the German interests allowed Hungary to settle the status of the territory in a way that was appropriate for it. As the antecedents of this process, I presented the last episodes during the collapse of the Czechoslovakian state, after which Carpathian Ukraine declared its independence in the hope of German protection. However, since the German protectorate was not realised, the newly declared Ukrainian state ceased to exist, and the territory was reannexed to Hungary through a military action.

In the following part of the Chapter another military action was analysed, too. On Transcarpathia's western border, which became a border region between Hungary and Slovakia that time, no new borderline was demarked exactly. After Transcarpathia's annexation to Hungary and the declaration of Slovakia's independence, the Hungarian leadership had to realise that in strategic terms the new borderline was entirely unreasonable; among others, it made the defence of the region centre Ungvár impossible. Therefore, the Hungarian leadership decided to adjust the borderline and penetrated into the territory of Slovakia, resulting in small clashes for several days. In the end, this territorial dispute could be settled with a common agreement, and Hungary managed to push out the Transcarpathian border westwards to such an extent that it fulfilled the Hungarian demands. I examined this process at the end of Chapter 3, and then I also dealt with the opportunity of the local government established through the military and civil public administration introduced after the reannexation.

The topic of my research has a rich source base, so I had the opportunity to apply the materials accessible in the archives of three countries during my work: the Transcarpathian Regional State Archives, the National Archives of the Hungarian Archives, the National Archives of the Czech Republic, and the Archives for the Presidential Office of the Republic. Beyond the materials available at the archives listed, an important part of the source base is the Transcarpathian and Hungarian press of that period as well as the press published by the Association for American Ruthenes. All the actual archival sources and press matters applied by me are listed in Subarticles “Archival Sources” and “Contemporary Press” of my

dissertation. Also, the collections of documents, the published sources and the auxiliary publications used by me contain important sources.

The special literature used by me includes diverse works written in different countries, in different languages, and ranging from books written right after the events under study to special literature including the latest research findings. The special literature applied by me is presented in detail in Subarticle “The special literature of Transcarpathia’s history between the two world wars” in the dissertation.

III. Research methodology

During the research I worked with a considerable amount of documents and document groups written in several languages, which made selection difficult. Despite the relatively short chronological limits of the topic, a large amount of source materials is available at the Czech, Hungarian and Ukrainian archives. A part of these files is rarely studied by the Hungarian researchers, which can also be observed in the special literature in certain cases; therefore, the period of Transcarpathia’s reannexation to Hungary required a more accurate and extensive analysis. During my work I applied the descriptive and comparative methods based on the available source material and special literature on the given topic.

The history of Transcarpathia annexed to Czechoslovakia between the World Wars is often evaluated in entirely different ways in the historical science of the relevant countries; therefore, one of the most important tasks was to compare and clash the opinions about the given question expressed in different times and in different languages in the special literature, and to draw my own conclusions after examining the given question based on sources of archives.

To sum it up, I can state that during my research I have analysed the different questions based upon the available sources and special literature base, which often determined the selection of the research method. Besides the parallel application of descriptive and comparative methods, I also aimed to combine them.

IV. Research findings

I did my research in accordance with the objectives set in the introduction and presented Transcarpathia's annexation to Czechoslovakia from the antecedents, the status of the region within the Czechoslovakian state between the World Wars. Following that, I investigated what processes and events led to the cessation of the Czechoslovakian protectorate of the Transcarpathian territory with mixed population after World War I and to its reannexation to Hungary. For this purpose, I aimed to study the given period in as many aspects as possible. According to the title of the dissertation, my study primarily focused on Transcarpathia; however, to understand this question, I had to deal with the history of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany and the neighbouring countries in detail, and when describing the events I also had to present the rather complex and wide-ranging international diplomacy of the period preceding World War II.

Although the Ruthenes were one of Hungary's peoples who could have decided about their future with the right of "self-determination" after World War I, it was done instead of them by Ruthene organisations who lived in the USA and were convinced by representatives of the Czechoslovakians with the necessary promises. Therefore, the annexation to the new state formation could be realised by involving the founders of the Czechoslovakian state, the American Ruthenes and the American President. The local Ruthenes were not asked the opinion of but were confronted with a *fait accompli* that they had to accept.

In return for the annexation, the Czechoslovakians promised everything that the leaders of the Ruthenes desired; therefore, they rightly hoped that besides "Czesco" and "Slovensko", "Rusinsco" will become an equal member of the state formation. Despite this, to their disappointment, they had neither their own state nor autonomy in their new country. Although in the Czechoslovakian state wide-range autonomy would have been introduced to Transcarpathia according to the constitution, the current leaders of Prague would postpone its realisation for various made-up reasons for nearly twenty years.

The giving up of Transcarpathia's local government took nearly two decades. In this context, I presented in detail that this could have taken place not by the choice of Prague but in the hope of preventing the state from falling apart. At that time, in October 1938 the main question in Budapest was what would happen to Transcarpathia and the Upper Hungary since the supplementing of the Munich Agreement allowed for the settlement of the situation of

the Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia. The establishment of the first Transcarpathian autonomous government also enhanced the chance of realising the Hungarian plans. This was due to the fact that András Bródy was named the head of this government by the Prague Government, who was popular and widely supported in the local political life and fostered good relations with Hungary. The Ruthene trend led by him always played a predominant role in Transcarpathia's political and social life between the World Wars, and in the newly established government Ukrainian politicians only receive a minority role. according to the local power relations.

However, the contrasts between the Ruthene and Ukrainian trends soon rose to the surface. Both trends aimed at self-determination but they knew that they cannot achieve it without external support. Bródy's Ruthene trend hoped that from Hungary, while Volosin's Ukrainian trend was entirely anti-Hungarian and hoped help primarily from German and if necessary from the Soviet or Czechoslovakian leadership. The Ruthene majority insisted on deciding about the future of Transcarpathia by a popular vote. However, this could have not been realised that time or later since Bródy was arrested in Prague owing to his ambitions in this matter on the charge of treason, and his government was dissolved. Avgustin Volosin's entirely Ukrainian autonomous government came to power under such circumstances.

However, the internal political games and skirmishes had no particular effect on the decision about the future of Czechoslovakia and Transcarpathia in international policy. Based upon the Munich Agreement, the territories inhabited by the Sudeten Germans became part of Germany, while the future of the Czechoslovakian Hungarian minority had to be settled by way of bilateral negotiations. All this ended without success in Komárom at the time of the Bródy Government. Both parties turned to the powers involved in the Munich decision, and finally the Viennese arbitration brought a solution in this affair. It was already the Volosin Government that had to face its result. Despite their preliminary hopes, they had to give up the largest Transcarpathian cities, Ungvár and Munkács to Hungary, and they also lost Transcarpathia's southern territories mainly inhabited by Hungarians and having a developed agriculture. The lack of these territories and the loss of the main railway and road lines caused serious supply disturbances to Transcarpathia's remaining mountain territories. The Ukrainian government had to transfer its seat from Ungvár, a big city also having a governmental district to Huszt, a town that had only 18 thousand inhabitants and could not fulfil the role of a "capital city" in any respect.

Therefore, the Hungarian revisionist policy partly achieved its purpose and regained most territories with Hungarian population from Czechoslovakia. In the remaining Transcarpathian territories – which the Ukrainian government arbitrarily named Carpathian Ukraine – still had a Hungarian population of 25,000 people. The ring of the Little Entente surrounding Hungary had not been broken by the Vienna Award; therefore, the establishment of the Polish-Hungarian border and Transcarpathia's mountain territory were essential to Budapest. The Hungarian government attempted to occupy this territory in the weeks after following the occupancy after the Vienna Award in early November; however, this attempt failed owing to the lack of German and Italian support.

In the Transcarpathian territory, which remained in Czechoslovakia, the Ukrainian government exercised power; however, the army and law enforcement mainly remained in the hands of the Prague leadership. In order to counterbalance this and enforce the will of the government, the semi-military organisation called "Carpathian Sich" was set up in Huszt on 9 November 1938. Volosin and his Government had thorough knowledge of the difficult internal political situation and also knew that the population of the area did not entirely support it. Therefore, with the help of the formations of Sich, the opposition people deemed to be a threat to national security were closed into concentration camps in several places all over Transcarpathia. All political parties were banned, and only the Ukrainian Central National Council was acknowledged as a legally operating organisation.

Czechoslovakia's constitution was given a new content on 22 November 1938: the state was transformed into three country areas with equal rights, practically rearranging it into a federative state similarly to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy dissolved earlier. Since Carpathian Ukraine had only an appointed but not an elected cabinet, the Volosin Government considered it really important to hold the national assembly elections, through which it could officially consolidate its power. The elections were held on 12 February 1938, which obviously were won by the candidates of the then power, and the new parliament was convened by the Czech and Slovakian Head of State on 21 March.

However, the changes taking place in the great power policy did not allow this at the time mentioned earlier. In early March 1939 Germany decided to realise its plans related to Czechoslovakia and it soon eliminated the country as an independent state. On 14 March Slovakia asserted its independence, and then the Czech territories got under German "protection" as the Czech-Moravian Protectorate. Under such circumstances the Volosin Government decided not to give away the opportunity and to declare the independence of

Carpathian Ukraine soon after the Slovaks, on 14 March. However, a few days earlier Hungary had already received the consent of Berlin to occupy Transcarpathia. When the independence of Carpathian Ukraine was declared, the Hungarian army had already marched up at the borders, what is even more, they had already crossed the border in several places to prepare for the military operations.

According to the promise made by Germany to Budapest, Volosin, who enquired about defence, received no support from Berlin, so the Soim (parliamentary) session held on 15 March and the ratification of the independence of Carpathian Ukraine were soon followed by the termination of the new state. The Hungarian troops deeply invaded the territory of Carpathian Ukraine in three directions. Seeing the blighted prospects of the situation, Volosin abandoned the territory with some of the members of the cabinet, and the Czech army also withdrew by putting up some resistance. Besides the Czechs, the Hungarian incoming formations also had to fight several battles with the poorly-equipped, disorganised and misdirected formations of the Sich, but the outcome of these fights was never doubtful owing to the Hungarian preponderance. In a few days, the Hungarian army reached the lines set as aims and annexed Transcarpathia's mountain areas to Hungary.

The border between Transcarpathia and Slovakia was not exactly demarcated during the Czechoslovakian period, and the dissolution of Czechoslovakia was interpreted by the Hungarian leadership as the lapsing of the First Vienna Award. To adjust the strategically unfavourable borderline, the Hungarian military force invaded the predetermined Slovakian territory at early dawn on 23 March 1939. The Slovakian military force could exert no considerable resistance, so the Hungarian troops soon reached the lines specified as targets. Later the Slovaks launched counter-attacks, without success. By the beginning of April, the border dispute had been settled by way of negotiations, and Hungary could keep the occupied territories.

After the end of the military operations, military and then civil public administration came into force in the reannexed territories. The Hungarian government planned to establish autonomy and set up Transcarpathian Vajdaság; however, the preliminary preparations lasted until the outbreak of World War II. Therefore, it was not realised in times of war.

Therefore, Transcarpathia's reannexation to Hungary was a multi-stage process beginning with Czechoslovakia's weakening and becoming a really achievable purpose for Hungary through the execution of the Munich Agreement. The annexation of the Sudeten German territories from Czechoslovakia to Germany showed that the Trianon borders can be

changed, even without war. Afterwards, despite the unsuccessful negotiations in Komárom, the First Vienna Award gave back the Upper Hungarian territories with Hungarian population. Therefore, Czechoslovakia further weakened until its final collapse in the spring of 1939, as a result of which Hungary could annex the whole Transcarpathia.

Actually, Transcarpathia was never granted the statutory autonomy promised by both the Czechoslovakian and the Hungarian parties. More specifically: the Czechoslovakians introduced it but only when they had no other choice, although they had had twenty years to do that earlier. Hungary also planned to do so for a long time, but it could not complete it because of joining World War 2. However, it is a fact that the civil public administration introduced on 7 July 1939 and the bilingual, Hungarian and Hungarian-Russian (Ruthene) public administration remained valid in Transcarpathia until the Soviet military occupation in October 1944.

When writing the dissertation, I described the events and occurrences in detail, following the Transcarpathian and international events simultaneously. It was not my purpose to present the Czechoslovakian leadership or the Carpathian Ukrainian government in a bad light; however, the facts did not draw a good picture of them in numerous cases. At the same time, the Hungarian party did not only consider the future of the local population when attempting to gain back Transcarpathia; besides the historical right, it also followed economic and political interests and aims, which it managed to achieve in parallel with the dissolution of Czechoslovakia.

VI. Publication activity performed in this topic

The consolidation and power-gaining of the German National Socialist Labour Party.
[Посилення німецької націонал-соціалістичної робітничої партії та її приход до влади
] Published in: Az Ungvári Nemzeti Egyetem Diákköri Tudományos hírnöke.
[Студентський Вісник УЖНУ]. 2010 (Sole author).

A nemzetiszocialista állam kiépítése az 1930-as években. Published in: Scientia Denique tudományos publikációs füzet. 2011, Volume I, Issue 1. (Sole author)

Kárpátalja visszacsatolásának első szakasza. Published in: Scientia Denique tudományos publikációs füzet. 2012, Volume II, Issue 1. (Sole author)

Fedinec Csilla – Vehes Mikola (Editors-in-Chief), Cserniczkó István – Oficinszkij Román – Osztapec Jurij – Szarka László – Tokar Marian (Editors) - Kárpátalja 1919–2009. Történelem, politika, kultúra. Recenzió a Scientia Denique tudományos publikációs füzetben. 2016, Volume V, Issue 1. (Sole author)