2. THE AUTONOMY QUESTION IN TRANSCARPATHIA

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This matter may be divided into periods. Transcarpathia (Carpathian Ukraine) was an administrative region under the autonomy legislation of Czechoslovakia (Second Republic) from October 11, 1938, to March 15, 1939, headed by the pro-Hungarian András Bródy (Andrej Brody) and then by the Ukrainian-oriented Avgusthyn Voloshyn, who sympathized with Ukrainian notions and saw the region in terms of the future of its indigenous Slav inhabitants. The areas returned to Hungarian administration under the First Vienna Award of November 2, 1938, including the cities of Ungvár (Užhorod), Munkács (Mukačevo) and Beregszász (Berehovo), were placed under their pre-1919 counties. Military action then brought the rest of Trianon Transcarpathia under Hungarian rule after March 15, 1939, and the earlier, smaller area, not contiguous with Trianon Transcarpathia and mainly inhabited by Rusyns, was declared to be the "Subcarpathian Governorship." The territory of the region was also affected by the Second Vienna Award.[1]

Under Hungarian military rule the governorship was headed by Julius Marina as commissioner, with Béla Novákovits as military commander. Then came as governors Zsigmond Perényi (July 1939–October 1940), Miklós Kozma (November 1940–December 1941) and Vilmos Pál Tomcsányi (from January 1942). In April 1944, after the region again became a theater of war, András Vincze was both governor and military commander until October 15, when Hungarian administration in Transcarpathia ceased.

On October 11, 1938, the Czechoslovak council of ministers agreed to appoint an autonomous government for "Podkarpatská Rus" (Subcarpathian Rus, or Subcarpathian Ruthenia) known as the Council of Ministers of Podkarpatska Rus. Under the First Vienna Award, 1,523 square kilometers of Podkarpatska Rus (21.1 percent of

the region) was transferred to Hungary. In the remainder, Voloshyn established a Carpatho-Ukrainian state with its center in Khust, to which Adolf Hitler gave recognition in the form of a consulate. The constitutional law granting autonomy to "Podkarpatská Rus" was passed in the Prague Parliament on November 22, 1938, having been promised for twenty years in the Treaty of Saint-Germain of September 10, 1919, and the 1920 Czechoslovak Constitution.[2]

Hungary did all that it could to recover the whole of Transcarpathia. In the autumn of 1938, an incident was directed by Miklós Kozma, involving an incursion by the so-called Ragged Guard. This was officially halted, but such border incidents continued.[3] Meanwhile the Poles tried similar tactics to Kozma's, under the command of a professional army officer, Feliks Ankerstein, in what was known as Operation Crowbar in late October and November 1938. The Polish Consulate in Užhorod became a domestic information source.[4]

The decisive events took place in mid-March, when regular Hungarian troops, with tacit agreement from Germany, put paid to the Carpatho-Ukrainian state and its resistance forces, the Carpathian Sich Guard. Then Voloshyn's government in Khust declared the independence of Carpathian Ukraine on March 15. This was merely a symbolic act, as the whole of Transcarpathia had been annexed to Hungary by then.[5]

After the reannexations, the local inhabitants were discontented by a relative loss of freedom of speech compared with liberal Czechoslovak democracy, for the Hungarian system kept public opinion under tight control. This was not just the fault of the Horthy regime, for this was a border region of military significance. Institutions won in "twenty years' struggle" were lost or absorbed into similar institutions in Hungary. On March 15, 1940, the United Hungarian Party was disbanded or absorbed into the Hungarian Party of Life. A decision of the Synod of the Reformed Church of Hungary in October 1939 abolished the Reformed Church Diocese of Subcarpathia, placing it in the Hungarian-based Trans-Tisza Diocese. The Roman Catholic Apostolic Governorship of

Subcarpathia was dissolved by papal command in October 1939 and its area returned to the Diocese of Satu Mare. The authority of the Province of Esztergom was restored over the Greek Catholic Diocese of Munkács in the summer of 1939. Rusyn secondary school teaching was curtailed and most officials were recruited from the "parent country."

Administration of Transcarpathia under Hungarian rule took a curious course. The Hungarian-inhabited band of territory restored by the First Vienna Award was absorbed into the county system, but the Rusyn-inhabited lands beyond remained a special administrative area under the Subcarpathian Governorship based in Ungvár, with three districts styled Ung, Bereg and Maramarosh. One feature was the absence in many parts of clear boundaries, meaning that a community might belong to two different administrative units. Thus Ungvár was the seat of the governorship and of Ung administrative district and of Ung County. Munkács was the seat of the Bereg administrative district and part of Bereg County, whose seat was Beregszász. In education, institutions could be divided even within one building, according to the language of instruction, while geographically these might belong to the Košice, Satu Mare or Subcarpathian educational district. When the Ungvár, Munkács and Beregszász gymnasia were taken over in 1938–1939 by the Voloshyn government, non-Hungarian students and staff were moved into the smaller area of Subcarpathia (Carpatho-Ukraine), where several new gymnasia began to teach in Ukrainian (at Perechyn, Svaliava, Bilki, Rakhiv, Rakoshyno and Velykyy Bychkiv). These were either closed in the following school year or demoted to civil schools. Ungvár Gymnasium was broken into three parts: Hungarian-language gymnasia for boys (Drugeth) and girls (Szent Erzsébet) and a Rusyn-language gymnasium. Munkács's was divided into a Rusyn-language and a Hungarian-language gymnasium (Árpád Fejedelem). Beregszász was left only with a Hungarian-language middle school, while the one in Khust became Rusyn- and Hungarian-language. The Jewish Hebrew schools were closed after the passage of the Jewish Acts.[6]

Even Hungarian inhabitants in the area outside the governorship that had belonged to Podkarpatska Rus in the Czechoslovak period, and then been brought into the county system, retained a feeling for Transcarpathia, expressed, for instance, in 1939 by Árpád Siménfalvy, lord lieutenant of Ung County: "Just as Hungarians and Rusyns fought jointly for their rights in the years of oppression and felt that they belonged as one, so we cannot now raise a Great Wall of China between the habitations of the Rusyns, the administrative district of Subcarpathia, and the activity of the county administration. Hungarians and Rusyns have to be brought closer together."[7]

Prime Minister Pál Teleki saw it as a moral question, after the return of all Transcarpathia to Hungary, to give the Rusyns the territorial, linguistic and cultural autonomy long promised to them. He saw Transcarpathia as the site of a national policy experiment in operating the idea of state of St. Stephen, as he considered the Rusyns to be the minority most loyal to the Hungarian state. Several meetings on the subject were held in March 1939, and the bill on the "Subcarpathian Vojvodeship" and its local government underwent several versions before being presented to Parliament in July 1940. But, shortly afterwards, the prime minister had to withdraw the measure, mainly under the security pressure from the military, and the issue died forever. Teleki's idea of a Subcarpathian Vojvodeship had failed.[8]

It was clear during the debate that the draft had more opponents than supporters. The situation is shown clearly in a statement by Béla Imrédy, who had been drawn into the preparations, having negotiated in September 1938, while still prime minister, with András Bródy. He "raised the question of whether we were prepared to grant Subcarpathia a measure of autonomy in the case of accession. The statement that I made to him then was yes, but we did not detail the matter precisely at that time and tried to keep it rather vague, but as I say, the undertaking to give them autonomy was made firmly. However, I must add that this was stated conditionally, in a case of voluntary accession, meaning that an occupation-type accession such as this, in my view, substantively alters the situation and absolves

us morally from the earlier undertakings."[9] It was mentioned in Teleki's circle that Bródy should again be given some political role in Transcarpathia, but in the event, the governorship went to Baron Zsigmond Perényi, who had this to say: "It is true that we assured them autonomy and drew up plans for it, but we did that against the Czechs."[10] Perényi had ties to Transcarpathia as an Ugocsa landowner, and took part between the wars in distributing secret, politically motivated, Hungarian state subsidies in Transcarpathia.

The Rusyn András Bródy was one of the tragic political figures of the period. During his brief period as prime minister in the autumn of 1938 he took a policy line sympathetic to Hungary, seeing that as most appropriate from the national and state-related points of view for protecting the interests of the Rusyns. But he realized after 1939 that he had made a bad choice and turned against official Hungarian policy (unsuccessfully in the event, as he was unable to achieve anything), which had failed to grant Transcarpathia autonomy. Then, under the Soviet system, he was executed for having taken a treacherous pro-Hungarian stance. (Avgusthyn Voloshyn, who had followed an expressly pro-Ukrainian line, also died in a Soviet prison.)

The administrative position of the Subcarpathian Governorship was laid down in Prime Ministerial Order No. 6200 of July 7, 1939, which it would be mistaken to view as a grant of autonomy.[11] The title of the order betrays the fact that it was a "provisional" solution to the question, valid until autonomy should be granted. Transcarpathia had become a difficult issue for the Hungarian government. According to the military command, "The favorable mood of the inhabitants towards the idea of the Hungarian state begins to become unsettled."[12] One big burden was the various vetting committees. The fate of the Jews was one great tragedy in Transcarpathia. Some were taken in 1941 to German-occupied areas of inner Ukraine, while others were deported in 1944 to certain death in Germany.[13] This ethnic group, most of whom identified themselves as Hungarians, became victims of war. There were 78,272 Jewish inhabitants of the region registered in 1941, but only 6,998 in 1946.[14]

Transcarpathia again became a theater of war in April–October 1944, before coming under Soviet occupation.

Notes

1 Csilla Fedinec, "Kárpátalja közigazgatása és tanügyigazgatása 1938–1944 között" [The Public Administration and Educational Administration in Transcarpathia between 1938 and 1944], *Magyar Pedagógia* (1996) 4: 367–375; Csilla Fedinec, "Kárpátaljai autonómia, határváltozások 1918–1944" [Transcarpathia's Autonomy and Border Changes 1918–1944], in Cecília Pásztor, ed., *"... ahol a határ elválaszt." Trianon és következményei a Kárpát-medencében* ["Where the Border Divides." Trianon and Its Consequences in the Carpathian Basin] (Salgótarján, 2002), pp. 415–436; R. Oficyns'kyj, *Politychnyj rozvytok Zakarpattia u skladi Ugorshhyny (1939–1944)* [Political History of Transcarpathia under Hungarian Rule (1939–1944)] (Kyiv, 1997); Charles Wojatsek, *From Trianon to the First Vienna Arbitral Award. The Hungarian Minority in the First Czechoslovak Republic 1918–1938* (Montreal, 1981), pp. 206–208.

2 "328. Ústavní zákon o autonomii Podkarpatské Rusi. 329. Vyhláska o uplném zneni predpisu o autonomii Podkarpatské Rusi" [328. Constitutional Law on the Autonomy of Subcarpathian Rus. 329. Decree on the Consolidation of the Rule of Subcarpathian Rus's Autonomy]. In *Sbírka zákonů a nařízení státu cesko-slovenského*, Ročník 1938. Částka 109. Vydána dne 16. prosince 1938 [Official Gazette of the Czecho-Slovak State, Year of 1938. Issue 109. Issued on 16 December, 1938].

3 Mária Ormos, *Egy magyar médiavezér: Kozma Miklós. Pokoljárás a médiában és a politikában (1919–1941)* [A Hungarian Media Magnate: Miklós Kozma. Descent into Hell in the Media and Politics (1919–1941)], Vol. II (Budapest, 2000), pp. 549–572.

4 Dariusz Dabrowski, *Rzeczpospolita Polska wobec kwestii Rusi Zakarpackiei (Podkarpackiei) 1938–1939* [The Republic of Poland to Carpathian Rus (Transcarpathia) 1938–1939] (Toruń, 2007).

5 M. Vegesh, *Karpats'ka Ukrai'na. Dokumenty i fakty* [Carpatho-Ukraine. Documents and Facts] (Uzhhorod, 2004); V. Bodnar and M. Vegesh, *Karpats'ka Ukrai'na v mizhnarodnyh vidnosynah (1938–1939)* [The Carpatho-Ukraine Question in International Politics (1938–1939)] (Uzhhorod, 1997); Lóránt Tilkovszky, *Revízió és nemzetiségpolitika Magyarországon (1938–1941)* [Revision and Nationality Policy in Hungary (1938–1941)] (Budapest, 1967); Csilla Fedinec, ed., *Kárpátalja 1938–1941. Magyar és ukrán történeti*

közelítés [Transcarpathia 1938–1941. Hungarian and Ukrainian Historical Rapprochement] (Budapest, 2004).

6 Increasingly discriminatory anti-Jewish laws were passed in Hungary on May 29, 1938, May 5, 1939, August 8, 1941 and September 6, 1942. These emulated the Nuremberg Laws passed in Germany in 1935. Also see Fedinec, "Kárpátalja közigazgatása."

7 Magyar Országos Levéltár [The National Archives of Hungary], K 28, 45. cs., 96. t.

8 Géza Vasas, "Egy félbehagyott alkotmány. Kárpátalja autonómiájának ügye 1939–1940-ben" [Uncompleted Constitution. The Question of Transcarpathian Autonomy in 1939–1940], in Csilla Fedinec, ed., *Kárpátalja 1938–1941. Magyar és ukrán történeti közelítés* [Transcarpathia 1938–1941. Hungarian and Ukrainian Historical Rapprochement] (Budapest, 2004), pp. 157–216; Balázs Ablonczy, *Pál Teleki – The Life of a Controversial Hungarian Politician* (Wayne, NJ, 2007).

9 Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Kézirattára [Manuscripts of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences], Egyed Papers, Ms 10-734/25.

10 *Ibid.*

11 "A m. kir. minisztérium 1939. évi 6.200. M. E. számú rendelete a Magyar Szent Koronához visszatért kárpátaljai terület közigazgatásának ideiglenes rendezéséről" [Royal Hungarian Government Order 1939/6.200 M. E. on Provisional Administration of the Transcarpathian Territory Returned to the Holy Crown of Hungary], in Fedinec, ed., *Iratok a kárpátaljai magyarság történetéhez*, pp. 528–534.

12 Magyar Országos Levéltár, K 28, 123. cs., 237. t.

13 Ágnes Ságvári, "Zsidósors Kárpátalján" [Jewish Destiny in Transcarpathia], in Idem, *Tanulmányok a magyarországi holokauszt történetéből* [Studies on the History of the Hungarian Holocaust] (Budapest, 2002), pp. 33–67; Ágnes Ságvári, "Holocaust Kárpátalján 1941-ben," [Holocaust in Transcarpathia in 1941], *Múltunk* 2 (1999): 116–144; György Haraszti, "Kárpáti rapszódia" [Carpathian Rhapsody], *História* (2004) 2–3: 23–28; Tamás Majsai, "A kőrösmezei zsidó deportálás 1941-ben" [Deportation of the Jewish Population of Yasina in 1941], in Kálmán Benda, Angéla Beliczay, György Erdős and Edit Nagy, eds., *Ráday Gyűjtemény Évkönyve IV–V (1984–85)* [Ráday Collection Yearbook IV–V (1984–1985)] (Budapest, 1986), pp. 59–86; Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: the*

Holocaust in Hungary, 2nd ed. (Wayne, NJ, 2000); Tamás Stark, *Hungary's Human Losses in World War II* (Uppsala, 1995); Gavriel Bar-Shaked, ed., *Names: the Counties of Carpathian Ruthenia. Part I. Names of Jews Deported from Ugocsa County (Sevlus and Vicinity)* (New York/Paris, 2004); Israel Gutman and Bella Gutterman, eds., *The Auschwitz Album* (Yad Vashem, n. d.); Henry Abrahamson, "Collective Memory and Collective Identity: Jews, Rusyns, and the Holocaust," *Carpatho-Rusyn American* 17 (Fall 1994): 3.

14 Kárpátaljai Területi Állami Levéltár [State Archive of the Transcarpathian *Oblast*], Fond 125, opis 2, delo 67, f. 58–59.