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LANGUAGE PLANNING ISSUES OF HUNGARIAN PLACE-NAMES IN SUBCARPATHIA*

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In a minority situation, the question of place-names is among the basic issues of language planning touching upon both corpus and status planning. It is the job of the former to decide that the name of a given place can be used in what language or languages and in what forms; and it is the task of the latter to clarify whether certain variants can be used or not and in what circumstances. There are cases, however, when status and corpus planning are not synchronized, the result of which is that questions of place-name use become very complicated.

Subcarpathian place-names have been changed, or, we could even say, have become victims of change through language planning several times in the course of the 20th century.

The first reform of place-names in Subcarpathia was instituted between 1898 and 1912 in the course of a national regularization of place-names in Austria-Hungary. Several monomorphemic place-names were given premodifying constituents, e.g. *Déda* became *Beregdéda* and *Salamon* became *Tiszasalamon*.

The second change in several place-names dates back to the years following the Treaty of Trianon when this region constituted a part of Czechoslovakia. This was when *Beregszász* was first referred to as *Berehovo*.

In 1939, when, according to the First Vienna Accord, Subcarpathia again became part of Hungary, naturally, another change of place-names was carried out. In principle, the changes automatically reinstituted names dating from before the regularization of village names, but in practice some of the names were also modified (Földi 1993, 106-8).

After World War II, in 1944-45 the fourth large-scale place-name reform took place, its changes finalized by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of

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the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic on June 25, 1946, approving and making official the Russified names of Subcarpathian towns and villages (which were later given Ukrainian versions of their names as well). Thus *Bátyú* became Russified *Uzlovoje*¹ (Узловое) and Ukrainianized *Vuzlove* (Вузлове), *Botfalva* became *Prikordonnoje* (Прикордонное) and *Prikordonne* (Прикордонне), and *Bene* became *Dobroszelje* (Доброселье) and *Dobroszilja* (Добросілля) etc. From this time on the use of the Russian forms of the names became compulsory in the press and other formal domains. Before recording interviews with Subcarpathian Hungarians, local Hungarian radio or television reporters would, for instance, routinely warn their interviewees that on record they should use the official names, e.g. *Beregovo* instead of *Beregszász* (cf. Balla 1993, 22). Such name change concerned not only Hungarian villages, but many Ukrainian and Ruthenian villages as well. This is how *Volove* became *Mezsgorje* (Межгорье) and *Mizshirja* (Мішчир'я).

The fifth place-name reform, which is the focus of the present investigation, began in 1988 and continues up to the present.

As usual, this wave of name changes was also preceded by political changes. In 1988 the local Hungarian press, encouraged by Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*, started using Subcarpathian Hungarian place-names in Hungarian. This, however, according to Lizanec (1991, 4), did not bring considerable change, since names approved in 1946 remained the only official designations. This is also supported by Móricz (1990, 3), who says: "Reporters, editors of publishing houses, proofs editors, teachers and all fastidious and conscious users of their Hungarian mother tongue often stop when they have to write the name of a Hungarian place-name, wondering 'How is this then? Which one is the correct form? What suffix shall I write with the name of this or that village or town?'. Their confusion stems from the fact that these place-names have disappeared from the written language over the past few decades. Even if we had been using them in everyday conversations, we tend to easily overlook the ones we knew or suspected to be erroneous because we have not had any source where their correctness could be checked since no dictionary or list of place-names existed to codify them."

Thus something had to be done. The task was two-fold. Status planning had to be instituted to make the use of the Hungarian names of Subcarpathian places LEGAL in WRITTEN language use, and corpus planning tasks had to be carried out by CHOOSING among the variants that existed in SPOKEN discourse.

¹ Latin alphabet versions of Subcarpathian place names are written in their Hungarian-based transliterations throughout this paper. (Translator's note.)

The issue of the Subcarpathian Hungarian place-names was first discussed by an orthographic committee formed in 1988 by members of the Department of Hungarian Philology at Uzhgorod State University, the Hungarian Studies Center of the Soviet Union, editorial offices of publishing houses and Hungarian periodicals, and, naturally at the time, the Communist party committee. This orthographic committee put forward a controversial resolution concerning the Hungarian language use of Subcarpathian place-names: their decision was that Hungarian villages could be called by their Hungarian names, but the four towns had to be continued to be called *Uzsgorod*, *Mukacsevo*, *Beregovo* and *Vinogradov*, instead of their original Hungarian names *Ungvár*, *Munkács*, *Beregszász* and *Nagyszőlős*, respectively (Balla 1993, 39).

This decision clearly did not settle the confusion in the matter of the Hungarian language use of Subcarpathian place-names. By 1989, two forms of place-names were often printed in the local Hungarian press: the Hungarian name, followed by the Russian name in brackets.

It is not surprising, then, that in 1989 the Subcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association (SHCA) was formed to serve as an organization protecting the interests of the region's Hungarian minority, and which attempted to settle the matter of place-names. To facilitate this, on September 25, 1990, the Mother Tongue and Language Policy Committee of the SHCA addressed its concerns to the Linguistics Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences requesting the Institute's opinion on the following four questions:

1. What form is recommended in the case of place-names which historically have more than one component but whose name is used in its short form in the spoken language (e.g. *Beregsom* vs. *Som*)?
2. Is it fitting to use Hungarian place-names in the case of villages which have no ethnic Hungarian population or where their number is exceedingly low?
3. Which form is recommended in the case of place-names whose names have two variants in spelling (e.g. *Borzsova* vs. *Borzsava*)?
4. Which forms are recommended in the case of place-names that can receive both *in*-cases and *on*-cases in locatives (e.g. *Csapba* vs. *Csapra* for 'to Csap')?

The Linguistics Institute's recommendations arrived promptly, suggesting that linguistically the Subcarpathian Hungarian place-names should be written in compliance with the rules of Standard Hungarian orthography. Names of places having an attributive component should be used in their longer form. In

its answer to the second question, the Linguistics Institute expresses its view that use of the Hungarian name as the official name of a place appears natural in the case of places with considerable Hungarian populations. The official opinion of the Linguistics Institute states: "The use of a Hungarian name with a long history is however recommended as a nonofficial name to be used in the Hungarian press and in everyday spoken communication even when the official administrative name of the place is not its Hungarian name (e.g. in the case of *Ökörmező*). In this respect we consider it acceptable that alongside with their official names, ethnic Hungarians refer to villages *Csinagyijevo* and *Uszty-Csorna* as *Szentmiklós* and *Királymező*." (cf. Móricz 1990). In answer to the third question the Institute recommends taking into consideration the historical written tradition, and in connection with the fourth question they state that neither variant is considered incorrect and advise referring to norms of local usage as decisive. The statement also considers necessary the compilation of a list of Hungarian names of Subcarpathian villages and towns, mountains and bodies of water.

Following this, as Móricz writes (1990, 3) "The Mother Tongue and Language Policy Committee of the SHCA immediately started compiling the list of Hungarian geographical names of Subcarpathia, which the association is planning to publish soon in order to provide a source for correct language use for all those interested."

It could seem that after the above-mentioned committee of the SHCA compiled and published the promised index of place-names, the question of place-names was resolved and, at the same time, Subcarpathia's Hungarian community finally found the institution which would take up the role of linguistic legislator and which could in the future successfully deal with such tasks of solving questions of regional codification. But, on December 6, 1990, almost exactly at the same time as the above, the deputy president of the Regional Council of People's Deputies addressed a letter to the Ungvár Institute of Hungarian Studies (then still called the Hungarian Studies Center of the Soviet Union) to request their opinion in connection with the Hungarian names of 19 towns and villages of the Beregszász Region (Lizanec 1990). The Institute of Hungarian Studies formulated its professional opinion and, satisfying the request, "prepared a report about every place in the region on the basis of which the committee of the regional council could judge (approve) the historical names to be restored" (Bíró 1993, 138).

From then on, two Subcarpathian institutions simultaneously concerned themselves with compiling the list of Subcarpathian Hungarian place-names. This, however, did not turn out to be an easy task. New, and not at all in-

significant questions occurred during the course of this work such as what constitutes an HISTORICAL NAME, what constitutes an OFFICIAL NAME, what historical situation is to serve as the basis in deciding the official name of a place, and who is entitled to decide the official Hungarian name, the population, the authorities, or perhaps a scientific body? (Móricz 1991, 4). The situation was further complicated by the fact that the two institutions did not agree on several points. For instance, both institutions stated that the main task is the restoration of historical names, but they defined the notion of historical name differently. Major points in the opinion of the Institute of Hungarian Studies was that in transliterating the Hungarian place-names into Ukrainian and Russian the phonetic and morphological rules of those languages should be taken into consideration (e.g. *Barkaszó* should be *Баркасове* and *Bökény* should be *Бекень*) and that in the case of compounded place-names the attributive first component of the name can be translated regardless of whether the name is in Hungarian or Ukrainian (e.g. *Feketepatak* should be *Csornij Potik* and *Verhni Remeti* should be *Felsőremete*).

The other party, the Mother Tongue and Language Policy Committee of the SHCA agreed on several points with the Institute of Hungarian Studies, but they also found excessive science-centeredness detrimental, being of the opinion that "it's not scientists who should decide what this or that village should be called—the primary decisive factor should be the opinion of the locals" (Kárpáti Igaz Szó, February 6, 1991, p. 2).

The SHCA saw the solution in the use of DOUBLE PLACE-NAMES, that is, every place should have an official name in the state language and an official Hungarian name. This, however, was not possible in accordance with the Ukrainian laws in force at the time, in 1991. It is another matter that in reality every Subcarpathian place had two official names, a Russian and a Ukrainian one, although these often differed in one letter alone (e.g. *Мыкачєво* vs. *Мыкачєе*).

In order to resolve the disputed questions and to bring the opinions closer to each other, the SHCA, the Hungarian Studies Center of the Soviet Union and the Institute of Hungarian Studies, Budapest called a meeting in Uzhgorod on May 11, 1991, which was to be devoted in its entirety to the question of Hungarian place-names. The result of the meeting was an eight-point statement (Kárpátalja 1991, 4) in which the parties present expressed their resolve to adhere to in the future. The statement considers desirable that official place-names be USED PARALLELLY in the languages in question and that the minority population of a town or a village be allowed to officially use their own form of the name of the place if they constitute at least 5% of the total

local population or number at least 1,000 people. The official names are to be formed according to the rules of the formation of proper nouns in each language. The participants of the meeting also considered it desirable that the historical index of Subcarpathian place-names be completed. However, differences remained on some points even after the meeting, and the historical index of Subcarpathian place-names was never completed either.

Two lists of place-names, however, in the end were published: one, a "Subcarpathian Hungarian place-name dictionary" in the volume *So this is our land...* and the other, "Index for identifying place-names" in the volume *A thousand years of Hungarian populated places in Subcarpathia*, both co-authored by József Botlik and György Dupka (Botlik-Dupka 1991, 261-6; and 1993, 326-41), and which contain the Russian and the Ukrainian names alongside with the Hungarian ones. The first volume lists the Russian and Ukrainian names adopted in 1946 and their Hungarian equivalents, while the second follows an official publication of the Subcarpathian Regional Council which reflects the 1993 state of affairs and those official regulations which reinstituted the original names of some of the Hungarian populated villages.

Despite the above, the restoration of and official authorization of the traditional names of Hungarian places has been progressing very slowly ever since. The Ukrainian parliament restored the historical Hungarian names of two Hungarian villages, *Eszeny* and *Tiszaásvány*, thus replacing *Javorovo*/Яворово and *Minyeralnoje*/Минеральное. Even though in its decree of December 22, 1992, the Subcarpathian county council brought decisions concerning the restoration of several other places with Hungarian populations, the Supreme Council of Ukraine approved the restoration of the historical names of 27 Subcarpathian places, 23 places with Hungarian populations among them, only in March, 1995 (Köszeghy 1995). But the principles and opinions discussed above were not followed in these cases consistently either. For instance, while *Szürte*, *Téglás* and *Bátfa* were given back their old names, *Bátyú* continues to be called *Batyovo*/Батьово in official documents.

The question of *Beregszász*/*Beregovo*'s name also continues to be unclear legally, despite the fact that on November 25, 1990, a referendum was held on this question in this the sole Hungarian majority town in Subcarpathia, where out of 14,478 people who took part in the referendum, 12,457 voted for reinstituting the name *Beregszász* to replace *Beregovo* (Dupka-Horváth-Móricz 1990, 128). Lizanec thus turned out to be right in claiming that "the issue of place-names then is the question of constitutional law and not that of a referendum" (Lizanec 1992, 2).

The problem of the place-names has been in the forefront of the agenda of most regional, county, national and also international authorities such as the Ukrainian-Hungarian Joint Committee on Overseeing National Minorities' Rights (cf. Kárpáti Igaz Szó, April 4, 1995). Despite this, there are still many places in Subcarpathia which are referred to in official documents by their old, Russified or Ukrainianized names. Current Ukrainian laws allow changing of place-names, and the right of initiation of such a change lies with the village councils. The fate of place-names is thus the function of both individual community motions and that of politics.

Considering the issue from its practical side, not everything goes smoothly either. Lujza Baksa writes: "A lot of people's work is vested in the changing of the names for dozens of places. ... But this work is not finished yet. What's the point if you have a decree printed in black on white but still don't have the road signs?" (1995, 4). She is correct in noting that chaos reigns in the realm of place-name signs. There are places that have been given back their historic names but their road signs have nevertheless remained unchanged while there are others that have been using the Hungarian road signs without official decrees allowing them. Such a chaotic state of affairs is due, in several cases, to the sloppiness and lack of interest on the part of the local councils.

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