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GEOPOLITICAL POSITION ANALYSIS OF TRANSCARPATHIA WITH EMPHASIS ON PERIOD BETWEEN 1918-1939

Abstract

Transcarpathia as a part of the Soviet Union lost its specific position. The Ukraine cultural influence and Rusyn specifics were in favour in the county, but they were pressed back. After the release of the totalitarian regime in the Soviet Union at the turn of the 80s and 90s there was an activation of several political groups, requiring the change of the area status. The initiative for the dissolution of a contract about the connection to the Soviet Union came into existence. The other group supported Transcarpathia's taking control over the Ukraine's autonomy of the area. In December 1991, the referendum took place on the territory of Transcarpathia. A majority of voters expressed for reinforcement of the local autonomy. Part of the participants voted for separation from the Soviet Union (members of the Hungarian minority, respectively Rusyn Revival supporters).

Key words: Transcarpathia, geopolitics.

Introduction

The end of the First World War meant a significant change of the status quo in the whole Europe. In a large extent, it affected Central Europe which had been highly integrated zone till that time. Its geopolitical base formed Austria-Hungary and Germany, whereby the Czarist Russia partly extend to the Northeast. According the peace agreement, this territory was disintegrated into smaller state units. Thus a number of geopolitical units were created and the nationality was the main subject

to discuss. The result was the fact that the interwar Central European policy had been led by the ongoing efforts of the territorial conquests, which made the cooperation between the countries of Central Europe harder.

The area in the central part of Carpathian Mountains and vicinity of the Carpathian Basin was one of territories whose nationality was discussed. This country had several historic names during the historical development. In this paper we use the term Transcarpathia. This territory entered the 20th century as a member of the Hungarian part of the Habsburg monarchy. In the 11th century, Transcarpathia was attached to Kingdom of Hungary and five Hungarian counties were encroaching on its territory. Its status was changed after the First World War, when it became the part of Czechoslovakia under the name Ruthenia.

When studying the history of Transcarpathia, taking into account the associated spatial factors in the narrower or broader context, we can find a number of geopolitical specificities peculiar to this territory. Several of them had already been applied at the time when Transcarpathia was attached to Czechoslovakia and they also influenced Transcarpathian's development. This area was situated on the periphery of this state, but its geopolitical importance to its existence was very important.

Geopolitical attributes of Transcarpathia

Geopolitical importance of Transcarpathia was increased mainly by its position on the border of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as by its peripheral character of the area in relation to the states that was part of (hence part of Czechoslovakia). In the 20th century Transcarpathia had changed its nationality several times, whereby each change was connected to ground-breaking milestones in European history: until 1918 it was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; after a transitional period in 1919, it was attached to Czechoslovakia; in 1938/1939, it was in two stages attached to Hungary; in 1945, after a brief treatment of the Czechoslovak administration, it was attached to the Soviet Union. Nowadays (since 1991) it is a part of independent Ukraine as the Transcarpathian region. We do not consider here a few days duration of independent Carpathian-Ukrainian state (15th – 18th March 1939).

It is obvious that not only Transcarpathia, but also the surrounding area did not have enough of their own sufficient sources for longer stabilization of the geopolitical situation that was mostly dependent on the processes development at European arena. Because of its strategic location, after World War, the territory of

Transcarpathia was subject matter of surrounding states. The political, demographic and economic potential for independent development was inadequate.

Transcarpathia was formed by the Central region of the Carpathians, which was forming a node connecting the western part of the Carpathian arc with its southern part. Czech geographer, J. Hromádka, succinctly defined geographic force-lines in the territory of Ruthenia: east-west direction of Carpathian ridges and north-south direction of river valleys - along with the transitional zone of the Carpathians and Transcarpathian lowlands - where the population and economic life were concentrated. A big mountain rampart created a natural barrier against the influences from the East and oriented this area geopolitically and economically to the opposite side –to the Carpathian basin. From the geopolitical point of view, the “face” of Transcarpathia was quasi faced towards the west and southwest – ergo to the Central Europe. This undoubtedly influenced the political affiliation of Transcarpathia territory during its entire history until 1945. This factor also significantly influenced the way of thinking and values of Transcarpathian inhabitants, which were formed in accordance to the Central European mentality and up to this days it had set them apart from other inhabitants of Ukraine's regions. This orientation also won in 1919 during the deciding of the nationality of Transcarpathia.

Geopolitical aspects of the problem of Transcarpathia nationality after the First World War

Transcarpathia connection to the newly-formed Czechoslovakia state was not the part of program of its founders – T.G. Masaryk and E. Beneš. This program became an issue after the split of Austria-Hungary. At that time, a non-Hungarian communities seated in the territory of the former Kingdom of Hungary founded their own independent states or joined neighbouring states. Therefore the Transcarpathia nationality problem had to be solved by adherence to one of the possible alternatives. During the breaking times of crushing changes of the European political map, after the First World War, several opportunities of constitutional solutions of Transcarpathia were created.

The conception of an autonomous state was unreal because of the external and internal reasons. International situation of those times could not accept an alternative connection to Ukraine or Russia. One of the solutions was to connect Transcarpathia to Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia gained territory of Ruthenia

which had not reached its own territorial-administrative realization, thus it was not organized into a compact administrative unit.

Alternative of Transcarpathia connection to the state with a gravitational centre on the east of the Carpathians was problematic. It can be documented by the attempt to create a West Ukrainian People's Republic in 1918, which should have also included Galicia, Bukovina and Transcarpathia (although its power was not big enough). This project met with resistance of the victorious Great Powers. One of the causes can be found in the fact that the movement for the independent Ukraine cooperated during World War II with governments of the defeated Central Powers. We can also state the geopolitical explanation: the formation of unstable buffer state in that area would have affected the geopolitical arrangement, based on a chain of countries forming sanitary cordon. It would have also created a permanent danger of its extinction and the possibility of connection to the Russian state, which would have pierced into the Central European area.

Considering the geographical and geopolitical structure that created the territory of Transcarpathia, it turned out that the most real solution was connection of Transcarpathia to one of three neighbouring states covering into the Carpathian Basin. (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania). The conception of the Transcarpathia's existence within the Hungarian state was not real. Moreover the Declaration of Independence of "Rusyn country", which was announced by government 21.12.1918, did not help its realization. The decision to join Transcarpathia with Czechoslovakia greatly influenced several factors. One of them was the connection of closely neighbouring ethnically related areas to Romania and Poland. Thanks to the peace treaties, Romania gained bigger part of Bukovina and Poland gained territory of Galicia.

However, the most important decisions were these of Rusyn authorities at home and abroad. Although these Committees approved other solutions as well (e.g. autonomy), at the turn of 1918 and 1919, a crucial part of the political establishment at home and in the U.S. declared for connection to Czechoslovakia under the conditions which were partly reflected in the articles of the treaty, concluded in Saint-Garmain. The determining factor was the decision of the Ruthenian National Council in Scranton (Pennsylvania, USA) on 12th November 1918, according to which the Hungarian Ruthenians were attached to Czechoslovakia as an autonomous area. Leading representative of Rusyns G. Žatkovič enforced the resolution according to which the Transcarpathia, "in a high degree keeping their rights as a state, will join with the Czechoslovak Democratic Republic on the

federal principles". Ruthenian Councils in Prešov, Uzhhorod and Chusta formed a common Central National Council that agreed with the decision of Scranton, from 8.5. 1919.

During the Paris Peace Conference in Versailles, Czechoslovak delegation submitted its territorial demands in the form of eleven memoranda. One of them was dealing with the problem of Rusyns in Hungary. On 4 April 1919, Supreme council of Triple Entente approved the Czechoslovakia's demand to make the unity with the area of Transcarpathia, because it was afraid of its attachment to the soviet Russia. According to the treaty, signed on 10 September 1919 in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Transcarpathia became a part of the Czechoslovak state as an autonomous unit. The Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic, passed in 1920, declared Transcarpathia an integral part of the state called Carpathian Ruthenia.

In 1934, E. Beneš explained arguments for the attachment of Transcarpathia to Czechoslovakia as follows (quoted Šroněk 1992):

1. Absolute independence was impossible because Transcarpathia was not political and cultural ready and its economic level was low.
2. It was not possible for Ruthenia to stay under the Hungarian law. The main reason was the right of nations to self-determination.
3. Attachment of Ruthenia to the Ukraine or Russia was not possible. The resistance of Poland was an unacceptable obstacle for Ukrainian solution. Attachment to Russia was not possible because of great changes in entire Central Europe. Western allies and the United States were not prepared to allow Russia to get across the Carpathians and become a Central European state.
4. If none of the above mentioned alternatives was acceptable, there would not have been any other solution than connecting Ruthenia to Czechoslovakia on condition of reasonable autonomy (see Šroněk 1992).

We can dispute about above mentioned arguments. Without any doubts, geopolitical factors played a very significant role. One of them stayed behind: the interest of influential powers on Paris Peace Conference – do not allow Hungary to be a neighbour with Poland, in particular to ensure neighbourhood of Czechoslovakia and Romania.

Czechoslovakia founders did not count in their original plans with Transcarpathia attachment. E.g. on the map of the Czech state that T.G. Masaryk took away during emigrating in 1914, Transcarpathian part had not been included. He assumed that the Czech state would border with Russia, which should have included Uzhhorod,

Mukachevo, or Sighetu Marmăției. Although the map of the Czechoslovak National Council in Paris attached Užhorod to Slovakia, the eastern border was formed by rivers Uh, Ondava and Bodrog. This concept lost its justification after the fall of the tsarist regime in Russia.

Geopolitical aspects of Transcarpathia connection to Czechoslovakia

In the context of Transcarpathia connection to Czechoslovakia, the question is arising: what was the importance of this attachment to its geopolitical position? Transcarpathia (Ruthenia) covered only 8.3% of the area of the Czechoslovak Republic (12,656 km²) and barely 5% of its population (606,568 inhabitants in 1921). From this point of view, the area did not represent a remarkable reinforcement of Czechoslovak Republic towards neighbouring countries. Transcarpathia was also a multi-ethnic area which created the potential for instability and tensions. Besides Rusyns (62% of the population in 1921) also a relatively large minority of Hungarians (17%) and Jewish (14%) lived there.

The territory was economically and culturally undeveloped and mostly rural oriented, while only a few economic activities had the national importance (timber production, wool production and tobacco planting). Less importance had other various agricultural activities (cattle breeding, pigs and horse breeding, respectively fruit picking). This implies interwar deliberations about the Czech imperialism in connection with Transcarpathia, as well as its naming the "Czech semi-colony" or "Africa in Central Europe".

The territory of Transcarpathia had extremely extended already disadvantageous shaping of the Czechoslovak Republic in relation to its geostrategic situation in Central Europe. The ratio of length and width of the Czechoslovakia was 5:1. On 100 km² of territory there was 2,42 km of borderline, while in Poland it was just 1,13 km, Germany 1,16 km and Hungary 1,86. The shape of the area allowed direct contact with several neighbours (but at the same time borderline with Romania was only 5% from all over the country). Thus formed territory had created conditions for transit, but from an inner-state perspective its configuration was considerably unfavourable. Besides military-strategic issues it created conditions for unbearable extension of internal transportation lines and their congestion, which affected mainly Transcarpathia, because it was farthest from the centre of the state.

The shape of the state territory caused problems with geopolitical vindication of the existence of Czechoslovakia, which apparently formed heterogeneous geopolitical conglomerate. Perhaps the most accurately characterized geopolitical unity of the

state was by Korčák J. (1938), who wrote about three natural units, forming Czechoslovakia: Baltic, Danube and Tisza, which were defined according to three major river-basins. The state was thus known as a set of upper streams of important European rivers and their catchment basins, whereby this character did not disturb the territory of Transcarpathia.

Certain international tensions, stemming from the requirements of independence and also from the territorial claims to extend its territory westwards, came from the Transcarpathia's side. Borders of Slovakia and Transcarpathia (Ruthenia) had been an issue of frequent controversy, which were discussed at the end of 1918, during the negotiations on T.G. Masaryk and G.I. Žatkovič, Rusyn leader. Those negotiations led into the declaration of the existing borders as temporary, and proposed that the boundary line should have provided access of a large part of eastern Slovakia to Transcarpathia (Ruthenia). This issue is analyzed in the next part of this article.

These reasons also took part in enforcement of views that considered attachment of Transcarpathia to Czechoslovakia as a short-term stopgap. K. Kadlec (1920) said: "it is certain that admitting of the Ruthenians to the union means that the bigger burden would lie on us the smaller are rights and benefits. The territory became a new part of republic, the territory which is difficult to coordinate from the centre, the territory which is in its entire nature completely different from the other two components, with the natural people who are not financially secured, an area that can be hardly considered as a permanent member of our state. Let's say the truth!" He predicted Transcarpathia's attachment to a state which core area is on the east of the Carpathians.

Ruthenian problem and the formation of the Slovak border

Delimitation of eastern borders of Slovakia, ergo Transcarpathia-Slovak border line had been the subject of several studies that arose before the formation of the Czechoslovak Republic. In general, the eastern border of Slovakia was the same with the eastern boundary of the historic Zemplín and in Ung County and the same was with ethnographic border between Slovaks and Ruthenians. The spatial vision of the founders of the Czechoslovak state almost corresponded to this definition.

At the end of 1918 the Hungarian government established already mentioned Ruthenian autonomy named "Russian country", with the Transcarpathia as its core. The territory of this unit was not bounded strictly and Rusyn politicians also demanded to join the parts of Slovakia with enclaves of Rusyn settlements.

Moreover documents of Rusyn panels, approving the attachment of Transcarpathia to Czechoslovakia, applied for attachment of eastern part of Slovakia, what is more they applied for "all Rusyn areas", which belonged to Hungary, Romania and Poland (Klimek, 2003). In the case of Kingdom of Hungary, it was the attachment of the nine counties inhabited by Ruthenians from the Kingdom of Hungary in the northeast. Ruthenian politician G. Žatkovič supported the idea of the creation of the Ugro-Ruthenia State that did not include only the territory of Transcarpathia, but also a large part of eastern Slovakia (see Švorc 1996).

In regard of these circumstances, the delimitation of the Transcarpathia western boundary within the Czechoslovakia (even though it had only the inner state character) was very special matter. Proposals for the course border with the Slovak had consolidated gradually. Proposals for boundary with Slovakia had gradually stabilized. According to the original proposal of the Supreme council of Triple Entente, the boundary went from the north through the river Uh to Uzhhorod and further to the south near the railroad Uzhhorod - Chop. After the declaration of the General statute on November 1919, the definitive boundary was set westerly from the previous proposal. The border line was moved northerly and southwards of Uzhhorod for the benefit of Carpathian Ruthenia (see Trávníček 1992). Other negotiations (Prague, 1920) about their direction were ineffective.

Rusyn politicians accepted the borders under reservations. From an administrative point of view the borders were respected by state institutions, in despite of the fact that they had not been codified by the law until 1938. However, Ruthenians did not agree with the borders and were protesting during the whole interwar period. In 1929, the congress of the Patriotic Youth in Uzhhorod adopted a resolution providing that "the Ukrainian nation lives under the Carpathian Mountains from Poprad to Tisza" (Švorc 1996). The protests were at the highest level in the pre-war period.

Geopolitical importance of Transcarpathia from the aspect of interwar Czechoslovakia

During the interwar period, the geopolitical position had the key importance not only for its geopolitical orientation of Czechoslovakia but also for its destiny. Czechoslovakia extended from the west into the central Europe through the Danube area to the East, where penetrated typically Eastern European regions thanked to Transcarpathia. By the Transcarpathia, Czechoslovakia was bordering with the Black Sea country, Romania, which was important fact from the geopolitical point

of view -the state was bordering with the North Sea-Baltic countries as well as with the Black Sea countries. In that manner, Transcarpathia contributed to Czechoslovakia to fulfil the function of both stabilized and stabilizing factors in Central Europe.

Ever since 1918, T.G. Masaryk was aware of the importance of Transcarpathia to Czechoslovakia. On 23 December 1918 pending the Cabinet Council, he said: "In this moment, there is an opportunity for Hungarian Ruthenians to come. We would be the direct neighbours of Romania; it would have a great importance." The importance of Transcarpathia needed to be understood especially from the geopolitical point of view, which became even more important in the 30s of the last century during the external threat of Czechoslovakia. Transcarpathia created the bridge connecting the state with the allied Romania and thus created territorial continuity of the Little Entente.

Politicians and soldiers emphasized this importance. E. Benes explained it very simply: "The Little Entente is not possible without Rusyn". General of Army, J. Šnejdársek, longtime commander of Czechoslovakian army units on the eastern Slovakia and in Carpathian Ruthenia, stressed it out in the 30s: "Military importance of Carpathian Ruthenia rests in establishment of connection with our friends on the east (Russia and Romania) and interrupt the connection of enemy or less inclined nations (Hungary and Poland)" (Šroněk 1992).

Location of Transcarpathia represented not only very important political and military bridge for Czechoslovakia but also the wall crossing two large lowlands - East European Plain and the Danube Basin. At the beginning Czechoslovakia was surrounded by a "German Sea". The attachment of Transcarpathia opened better opportunities in political and strategic area in the east. All diplomatic attempts to ensure the safety of Czechoslovakia were associated with the mediating function of the eastern part - Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia. This effort fetched along the formation of so-called Little Entente.

The political alignment of Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia consisted of pragmatic connection of three countries, directed against the restoration of Habsburg dynasty and against the Hungarian revisionism and irredentism. At the same time it served the purpose of enforcement of French interests in the Central and South Eastern Europe. Nevertheless we could see that it was too weak bond for creation of deeper and long-running cooperation which did not find a wider reaction, especially in economic cooperation. From the geopolitical point of view, states of the Little Entente formed an arc enclosing Hungary from three sides. Its

weakest link was the connection of Czechoslovakia and Romania in the area of Transcarpathia.

The Little Entente thus acted as a geopolitical hybrid, consisting of Central European Czechoslovakia, and Romania and Yugoslavia, situated in the southeast of Europe. It did not cause mutual disputes between member states, but some individual interests of countries were different. The interests of Yugoslavia and Romania in the Balkans were quite far so they did not immediately feel the pressure from Germany as Czechoslovakia did. It is symbolic that with the process of the Carpathian Ruthenia falling also The Little Entente became weaker and finally disbanded.

Geopolitical importance of Transcarpathia was significantly affected by its borders. Because of the strategic needs, their northern part, i.e. the borderline with Poland in Carpathian mountain ridge suited them. On the other hand, larger part of the southern borderlines (especially with enemy Hungary) was strategically very disadvantageous and only short parts had boundary on mountain ridges and streams. Inter alia, river running from north to south had allowed easy access to the interior only from the south, hence from the wide valley of the Tisza. The weakness of Transcarpathia's geopolitical position was the communication link with the rest of the territory of Czechoslovakia, which touched the southern part of its territory and after Hungary occupation, under the authority of the Vienna Award (November 1938), Czechoslovak part became almost incapable of economic life. The aim of Czechoslovak Army headquarters was to build up rail and road communications but these requirements for improvement of the geostrategic position of Transcarpathia were not realized during the interwar period.

Geopolitical significance of Transcarpathia in the context of Poland and Hungary

Transcarpathia was a corridor that formed a barrier for the territorial continuity of states, which had strained relations with Czechoslovakia (Poland and Hungary). Power concepts of Poland and Hungary, directed against Czechoslovakia, were meeting in the area of Slovakia and Transcarpathia (Ruthenia). Hungary supported a revision of its borders and renovation of the pre-war Hungarian state. One of the aims of the Hungarian irredentism was Slovakia and Transcarpathia, whereby the attachment of Transcarpathia (Ruthenia) was part of the so-called vertical conception of Hungarian irredentist policy (Deák 1991). The conception counted on

separation of eastern part of Slovakia and its overall weakening, which could have resulted with its attachment to Hungary.

Since the early 20s, Poland had strained relations with Czechoslovakia because of delimitation of boundaries. In addition, Czechoslovakia was an obstacle to the implementation of the Polish interests in the Danube area and the Balkan. It was the historical concept of J. Pilsudski, concerning some "Polish geopolitical vertical", extending from the Baltic to the Adriatic with the dominance on the Polish state (Intermarium). Danube basin Region was quite strange for Poles, because they were always thinking geopolitically in the shear horizontal within Europe, thus via from northern Germany through Poland towards to the Baltic States.

Relationship between Poland and its neighbour was in conformity with well-known rule of French diplomat, Ch. M. Talleyrand. According to this rule, good relationships with states of first class (Czechoslovakia) are not easy; therefore, it is better to have good relations with neighbour states of second class (Hungary) to create pressure on neighbours of first class. Batowski H. (1971) writes that friendly relationship of Poland and Hungary is linked to the year of 1919. They followed the historical sympathies and also pragmatic interests of both countries in relation to hostile Czechoslovakia. Poland did not ratify the Trianon agreement so it indirectly supported Hungarian revisionism, which was also related to the territory of Transcarpathia. Especially Transcarpathia should have become (with aid of Poland) the bridge between Hungary and Poland.

When studying the conception of territorial delimitation of Poland in the period 1864-1921, published by the Polish geographer P. Eberhardt (1999) we may state that various proposals had identified southern border of the Polish state with the Polish-Hungarian range (except parts of Orava and Spiš). Poland did not demand for the territory of Transcarpathia. As late as the 30s last century, Poland was thinking over the attachment of the north of eastern Slovakia and Transcarpathia. However, later on Poland had admitted Hungarian claims for this territory (see Švorc 1996).

After the Transcarpathia attachment to Czechoslovakia, Poland blamed his southern neighbour for encircling tendencies and for endeavour to create "Czech-Russian corridor". Poland sought to obtain a border with Hungary at the expense of Slovakia and Ruthenia, which would open the way to power and business penetration to the south. Key role of Transcarpathia in the concept of Hungarian-Polish border creation was determining throughout the whole interwar period. This area was seen as geopolitically weakest part of Czechoslovakia. Since 30 years,

after obtaining Polish support for the Slovak autonomist movement and thus maintain the existence of Slovakia as an independent geopolitical unit, Transcarpathia was the only alternative of territorial contact of both states. In the second half of the 30s, Germany's interests were applied and these efforts were subdued, as Germany was counting on utilization of Slovakia and Transcarpathia as a corridor for their penetration to the east and south (towards Ukraine and Romania and their sources). The occupation of Transcarpathia by Hungary was realized after its integration into the German power sphere.

Geopolitical aspects of the constitutional position of Transcarpathia in interwar Czechoslovakia

Hronský M. (2011) mentions; requirements, resulting from the peace agreements' articles enshrined autonomy of Transcarpathia, were enshrined in conflict with the centralism of government in Prague. Pragmatic, they were trying to stabilize the existence of Czechoslovakia by the elimination of separatist tendencies. The administrative centre of Ruthenia became Uzhgorod, where the Governor and the council, appointed by the president of Czechoslovakia were resided. Rusyn politician were not satisfied with this situation and it led to emigration of G. Žatkovič, the most important Ruthenian policy. Not even the country regime, adopted in 1928, fulfilled the ideas about Carpathian Ruthenia self-government. By convention, Czechoslovakia was divided into four units, one of which was the Carpathian Ruthenia.

The threat to Czechoslovakia by Germany and 30s of the last century finally noted a change of Prague downtown policy towards the Carpathian Ruthenia. In May 1934, E. Beneš declared: "It is decided for centuries how will be the fate of Carpathian Ruthenia look like. Czechoslovakia will never abandon a claim of Ruthenia, will never admit the revision and will always be defending it, if necessary".

It is little problematic to judge the loss of Transcarpathia in 1938/1939 by the participation of central state organs of Czechoslovakia. As we have already mentioned, the process of building autonomy in Carpathian Ruthenia (the implementation of which should fill the contents St. Germain agreement) was slacken and it was one of the causes of the loss of confidence of several Transcarpathian politicians towards Prague. Economic and cultural backwardness, as the main reason for a constant delay in the introduction of autonomy, was

insufficient for many of politicians, especially in the face with an evident geopolitical importance of Transcarpathia.

Intense negotiations on Ruthenia autonomy took place after 1934. It was speculating about its phased implementation, because of the fear of being abused by the neighbouring countries, which sought to destabilize the Czechoslovak state. Carpathian Ruthenia gained the autonomy within Czechoslovakia in October 1938 under the name of Carpathian Ukraine. This change was already done but in a drastically geopolitical and domestic political situation. It was at the time, when the territorial integrity of Czechoslovakia was disrupted by Germany, Poland and Hungary. Following agreements in Vienna, in November 1938, Hungary annexed southern part of Transcarpathia, thus the rest of the territory became defenceless from a geostrategic point of view.

After the obtaining autonomy, autonomous government of Ruthenia was aware of the geopolitical position of Transcarpathia. Its position in relation to Soviet Ukraine was magnified. Ruthenia should be a kind of "Ukrainian Piedmont", the first free Ukrainian territory, independent of the Soviet Union. It was not a pure accident that pending the Stalin negotiations with Germany in 1939, he established mutual agreement not to admit the independence of Transcarpathia (Greguš 1991).

In 1939, twenty-year period of Transcarpathia existence within Czechoslovakia was ended. In March 1939, Transcarpathia was annexed to Hungary. After a brief armed conflict, demarcation with the newly formed Slovak Republic was occurred. Border was moved to the west and Slovakia (on the expense of Hungary) lost the area of 1055 km² and 74 municipalities. Poland supported this practice, because the Hungarian-Polish border was extended and it reduced the risk of the threat from the south of Germany. At this time, there was also a symbolic meeting of Hungarian and Polish soldiers on the northern border of Transcarpathia.

Conclusion

In 1919, when political leaders of Rusyns discussed about the future of Transcarpathia, they decided for western orientation in terms of its connection to Czechoslovakia. After the passage of the front in Transcarpathia, in the autumn 1944, activity of Soviet authorities began. It contravened articles of the Treaty on friendship, mutual assistance, and post-war cooperation between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, which entered into a convention in 1943. According to the Treaty, the Soviet Union regarded Transcarpathia as part of Czechoslovakia and accepted its territorial integrity. Since the end of 1944, Soviet agents were

organizing campaigns and petitions, which should promote "reunification" of Transcarpathia with Ukraine. The tolerance of Czechoslovak government to this development was related with its concerns about the fate of Slovakia (see Taborsky 1993).

About 27 years later, after the annexation of Transcarpathia to Czechoslovakia, its population, after the various forms of pressure was forced to accept the east orientation and connect with the Soviet Ukraine in the position of the Transcarpathian region. 29. 6. 1945 a contract of the Unification of with the Soviet Union, was signed.

Since 1945, south of the Carpathians and thus the space of Carpathian basin was part of the Territory of Russian Empire, acting as the Soviet Union. It was a radical geopolitical breakthrough throughout the whole Central Europe. For the first time in the history, the Entire territory of Transcarpathia became part of state formation, the core of which lay east of the Carpathians.

The accompaniment of this annexation, formally affirmed by the Czechoslovak Parliament, was a shift of the eastern boundary of Transcarpathia westward. Slovakia lost 13 municipalities on the behalf of Soviet Ukraine. Changes had concerned mainly the southern part of the original interwar administrative boundary, where Czechoslovakia passed Chop, an important railway junction, to the Soviet Union. Transcarpathian withdrawal was associated with large-scale migration of a large part of its population to Czechoslovakia.

Transcarpathia as a part of the Soviet Union lost its specific position. The Ukraine cultural influence and Rusyn specifics were in favour in the county, but they were pressed back. After the release of the totalitarian regime in the Soviet Union at the turn of the 80s and 90s there was an activation of several political groups, requiring the change of the area status. The initiative for the dissolution of a contract about the connection to the Soviet Union came into existence. The other group supported Transcarpathia's taking control over the Ukraine's autonomy of the area. In December 1991, the referendum took place on the territory of Transcarpathia. A majority of voters expressed for reinforcement of the local autonomy. Part of the participants voted for separation from the Soviet Union (members of the Hungarian minority, respectively Rusyn Revival supporters).

Proclaimed efforts of achieving the higher level of Transcarpathian's autonomy of the area of Ukraine was not successful in the last twenty years. Paradoxically, in particular Hungarian politicians are nowadays, in foreign policy context, concerned to change the status of Transcarpathia. It is related to the former Transcarpathia

jurisdiction to historical Hungary and also with a large Hungarian minority inhabiting the southern part of Transcarpathia. In the Czech Republic, in 1990, was founded The fellowship of Ruthenia friends, which has been active in the cultural field up to this days.

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