

Thesis of PhD Dissertation

**Transcarpathian Hungarians in Prisoner-of-War
and Labour Camps of the Soviet Union
(1944-1953)**

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I. The purpose of the thesis and the definition of the chosen topic

At the end of 1944, by defiling the front line and calming down weapons brought the Transcarpathian Hungarians and Germans not the era of peace and calmness but a period when they had to face up further hardships. According to the created Doctrine of Collective Guilt – which declared the collective guilt of Germans and Hungarians – the consequences of the lost World War for ten thousands of people belonging to these ethnics there were deportations, forced labour and malenkij robot.

The Soviet will to punish the Hungarian nation was also obvious in the case of Transcarpathian Hungarian as Stalin decided to attach this territory to the Soviet Union. According to professional opinions the biggest ethnical clean up in the territory of Hungary at that time took place in Transcarpathia in order to annex the area to the Soviet Union smoothly. Systematic, ruthless imposition of the Soviet regime began in Transcarpathia in October 1944, when the soldiers of the Soviet Army, exactly the 4th Ukrainian Front appeared in the region.

Among the numerous features of the sovietization of Transcarpathia – establishing the soviet (council) system, organizing collective farms, violent gathering of crops, forcible nationalization, and struggle against the historical Churches – the most tragic measure of the Soviet power in Transcarpathia was the malenkij robot. This expression derives from the Russian words “malenykaja robota” which mean “little work”. By frequent use of the expression malenkij robot (little work), and the promise of a three-day long reparation and restoring work the representatives of the Soviet power tricked ten thousands of innocent civilians. That is why the concept of “malenkij robot” designates the dragging away of masses of civilians and their long term of incarceration in forced-labour camps of the Soviet Union.

Persons deported with reference to malenkij robot were taken into two types of forced-labour camps: GUPVI (Glavnoe Upravlenie Voyennoplennikh i Internirovannikh /General Management of POW's and Internees) camps and GULAG (Glavnoe Upravlenie ispravitelno-trudovykh Lagerei / Main Administration of Corrective Labour Camps) camps. Both types of these camps were under the control and supervision of the NKVD that was established in 1934. However, there were significant differences between the two camp systems. The GUPVI camps were set up for prisoners of war (POWs) and internees who were dragged away in large numbers ignoring their personal

identification. The Soviet authorities focused merely on meeting the plan figures as well as on the isolation of a given nationality just like in the case of Transcarpathian Hungarians. On the other hand, in the case of people who were taken into GULAG camps the prisoner's personal identity was very important. The representatives of the occupying Soviet authority presumed that they could hinder the process of establishing the regime. Therefore, they became inmates by show trials organized against them and they were directed to GULAG forced-labour camps.

After the tragedy of the malenkij robot, in 1947 Transcarpathian Hungarian youths who came of military age were declared distrustful to do military service and were pressed to spend their term of service in the coal-mines of the Donets-basin. These youths were intended to be used as free labour force in order to rebuild the Soviet Empire being in ruins after the war and it lasted till 1952.

The objects of the thesis are the following:

1. Presenting the sovietization of Transcarpathia.
2. Studying the reasons of malenkij robot in the case of Transcarpathian Hungarians.
3. Investigating the number and territorial distribution of Transcarpathian deported people being in GUPVI-camps.
4. Studying how the Greek Catholic Transcarpathian Hungarian community was affected in malenkij robot.
5. Presenting the show trials against Transcarpathian Hungarians and pro-Hungarian Rusyn intellectuals and "kulaks".
6. Studying how the Transcarpathian Hungarians were affected in the forced-labour in the Donets-basin.

II. Sources review, methodology

Present research is firstly based on the sources which can be found in the State Archives of Transcarpathian Region. Archival materials concerning the history of Transcarpathian Ukraine from 1944 to 1946 can be found under the pressmark 14. F.P. Gazette of People's Committee of Transcarpathian Ukraine (Вістник Народної Ради Закарпатської України) also belong to the primary sources in which were printed decrees, orders and resolutions adopted by the People's Committee of Transcarpathian Ukraine.

From 22 January 1946, after the region became one of the administrative territory of the Soviet Union under the name Transcarpathian territory (Закарпатська область), the numbering of the archival materials is started again, so the related documents can be found under the pressmark 1. F.P. It was essential to use the Protocols of the Transcarpathian Territorial Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine (Протоколи засідання бюро Закарпатського обкому КП України), and also the recordings of the meetings (Стенограми засідання бюро Закарпатського обкому КП України).

Besides the archival sources the reminiscences of the survivors and witnesses also have a great importance, especially because of the lack of concerning documents. By using the method of oral history – which historical method concentrates on the personal experiences and collective memory – we can get more detailed information which is not included in the archival sources and statistics.

It proves the actuality of the topic as for the survivors' memoirs connected with the event happened 70 years ago we are in the very last minute of the 24th hour. In this respect the research results of the Tivadar Lehoczky Institute of Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute was very useful for us. The Institute has been dealing with searching for the survivors of malenkij robot since 2004.

Camp diaries, letters sent from the lagers, memoirs make up the next group of the primary sources. They can also contribute to get better knowledge about the circumstances of the deportations and life in the camps.

I was to synthesize the various data and information gathering from the above mentioned sources during the research period in order to describe the process of deportations more clearly than before.

III. The results of the research

According to the objectives mentioned above after examining the source groups and synthesizing the information we can draw up the following results of the thesis.

1. The thesis, already formulated in academic-scientific literature, have been also proven by the result of the research, sovietization of Transcarpathia by ideas made in Moscow, based on communism, internationalism, doctrines of management plan, was done by the scheme which was used in the Soviet Union, having all the marks characterizing the building of the communism within the empire. Violence, the intimidation and liquidation of the ethnic intellectuals characterized the building of the Soviet system in Transcarpathia. The creation of the one-party system and the board power, nationalization and forced collectivization, the state power's actions against the historical churches, and the "inner-enemy" was all parts of this process.

2. Examining the reasons of the deportation of male Transcarpathian Hungarians and Germans in 1944, as a result of the research we can say that the deportation's main reason was the ethnic cleansing, the principle of collective guilt gave suitable base to the Soviet empire for this. The decimation of the Hungarians in the area meant a sort of political security for the Soviet leading who wanted to clean immediately the heartland from the unreliable elements. It has a special significance because Transcarpathia was just attached to the growing Soviet empire from Hungary. Besides the political reason we cannot ignore the economical reason: we have to mention that the deported people meant free manpower for the empire which was ruined after the world war.

3. Beside the document which contains numerous aspects of the sovietization it was also managed to find a highly important list, regarding the malenkij robot, from July 1945 made for the order of People's Committee of Transcarpathian Ukraine to measure the number of prisoners in Stalin's lagers from the area. The details of the prisoners of war taken from the front and the civilians taken from their home are together in this register. As the numbering in the original register is rather chaotic, it starts over from the beginning more times within one settlement, in order to have more accurate information we have seen it appropriate to organize the details into an electronic database, according to that 28 098 Transcarpathian Hungarians and Germans were imprisoned in Soviet lagers. Based on these data we can find out that the 40 000

prisoners mentioned by academic-scientific literature and also accepted by public awareness is an exaggeration.

4. During the research – by the method of Pearson's Correlation Coefficient Calculator – that hypothesis got proven, which was based on reminiscences and on the letter of Miklós Béla Dálnoki written to the Soviet government, settlements with larger number of Greek Catholics were not, or just least, affected by the events of malenkij robot. This fact proves that deportations were based on ethnic nature, as the Soviet occupying forces were not aware of the area's ethnic composition. Therefore, the Hungarian ethnic Greek Catholic community living in the area were automatically known as Ukrainians or Rusyns and they were not taken. Obviously this doesn't mean that people who belonged to the Greek Catholic church did not become victims of the communism later on, as the Soviet empire's actions against Greek Catholic Church and against those Greek Catholic priest who did not enter the Pravoslav church are well known.

5. During writing the thesis we tried to present purging measures which were managed by the local representatives of the Soviet power. The aim of these measures was to remove the intellectuals, representatives of historical churches and the farmers resisted the collectivization because they meant obstacles to building up the regime effectively. As the result of show trials created against them they were sent to the GULAG camps. By these measures the integration of Transcarpathian Hungarians who stayed without leaders and "shepherds" became easier. By that way not only those people became victim of the regime who made no secret of their anti-Stalinism, but those in whom Soviet executives saw any potential enemies in sovietization of Transcarpathia.

6. During our research we highlighted that the region's young men who were due for military service had to face new trial: a three-year labour service in the Donets Basin. Although it was not official that the mine operating work was based on ethnics and the Soviet Union's all nation was involved more or less, so far the researches are showing that the Transcarpathian quota's majority was Hungarian ethnic. Unfortunately, there are still no details regarding the number of Transcarpathians sent for labour service between 1947 and 1952, although we have some part details which shows that from 1947 to 1949 approximately 12 000 Transcarpathians took part in mine operating work in the Donets Basin. Both the population and these people who were forced for

labour service remember this as another possible deportation after the malenkij robot, because very short time took since last deportations in 1944 and as the majority of those deported still didn't get back home from the lagers. It is not an exaggeration to say that the labour service in Donbas mainly mean free manpower in the coalmines for the Soviet government who called for forced industrialization, also took big part in the intimidation and weakening the Transcarpathian Hungarian ethnic group.

Summing the facts above we can say that the appearance of the Soviet Union didn't mean only new empire, new scheme, but in the process of building the Soviet regime the Transcarpathian Hungarians got into an extremely disadvantaged situation who were mentioned, in more documents created in the Soviet era, as Fascists, and so the second period of their minority history have started which is the darkest period up until now. It was a new world for the people who survived there trials after their return where they were secondary citizens such as the region's other Hungarian ethnic citizens as in November 1944 in the November Manifesto announced the Hungarians and Germans as eternal enemy. Sadly, and for the survivors it is still sore that their rehabilitation has not happened, did not get mentioned on the highest level that they were not guilty. In April 1991 – a few months before Ukraine become independent – the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic accepted the status of the rehabilitation for the victims of the political retaliation but only for those who were sentenced so it did not affect the people who were taken for malenkij robot.



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List of publications related to the dissertation

Hungarian book chapter(s) (8)

- 1. Molnár D.E.:** A "malenykij robot"-ra elhurcolt felső-Tisza-vidéki magyarok egy felmérés tükrében.
In: A II. Rákóczi Ferenc Kárpátaljai Magyar Főiskola Lehoczky Tivadar Intézetének tanulmánygyűjteménye 2012. Szerk.: Bocskor Andrea, Dobos Sándor, PoliPrint, Ungvár, 43-57, 2012. ISBN: 9789662595192
- 2. Molnár D.E.:** A polgári lakosság Magyarországról és a Szovjetunióhoz csatolt Kárpátaljáról történő kényszermunkára hurcolásának összehasonlító elemzése.
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- 3. Molnár D.E.:** "Emberről intézet Szolyván": Deportálások a Nagyszőlősi járásból a szovjet rendszer kiépítésének idején (egy felmérés tükrében).
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The Candidate's publication data submitted to the iDEa Tudóstér have been validated by DEENK on the basis of Web of Science, Scopus and Journal Citation Report (Impact Factor) databases.

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