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## **A SITUATION OF THE TRANSCARPATHIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN THE LATE STALINISM PERIOD AND ITS REFLECTION IN THE PRESS OF THE TIME**

The study aims at chronological and logical reconstruction of the situation the Transcarpathian Reformed (Calvinists) and the Transcarpathian Reformed Church found themselves in the period after the Soviet troops entered the region until Stalin's death. It shows the ambivalent and at the same time chaotic situation the confession was in after the territory was annexed to the Soviet Union. Furthermore, it analyses the authorities' narrative on the issue in the local media of the time. The narrative was the new regime's political propaganda campaign that tried to legitimize its own ideology in the language of the region's Reformed.

Research methodology is based on the analysis of little-known and unknown archive sources of the Synodal Archives of the Reformed Church of Hungary, State Archives of the Transcarpathian Region, Central State Archives of the Highest Bodies of Power and Administration of Ukraine, State Security Service of Ukraine Administration in the Transcarpathian region, as well as recollections of participants of those events and articles in the local media.

The scientific novelty of the paper lies in the fact that in the Ukrainian ecclesiastical history researches the problem area of the Transcarpathian Reformed was studied in a rather partial, fragmented way, touching upon separate questions, not in a chronological order, though the history of the Protestants as a collective theme, or of the Baptists as the Protestant confession with the largest organization, acquired broad attention of the researchers. The research was guided by historical chronology and covered the evolution of the Soviet regime's anticlerical political propaganda campaign in the local media.

It has been revealed that after the Soviet troops entered Transcarpathia, the church structure of the Reformed suffered significant damages; moreover, 20–25 % of the congregation's male population was deported to the so-called three-day salvage work. The troubled situation was intensified by the fact that the state registration of the Reformed was not approved by the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC) in 1946; instead, it wanted to assimilate the Reformed into the Evangelical Christian-Baptists' (ECB) organization. It also turned out that in late 1946 CARC was not aware of the organizational structure, territorial division, as well as the number of believers of the Reformed. After it came to light, the community's complete inspection was initiated followed by bureaucratic suspicion and the invitation of the KGB to help in the case of head Reformed Church pastors. After the KGB's report the Soviet regime did not strive for the union of the Reformed and ECB, it let them be a separate confession, however this was the time when a wave of arrests of the Reformed Church pastors started. As a result, CARC wanted a man to head the Reformed who would be ready to compromise, serve the interests of the state authorities, as well as deviate from the traditional synodal-presbyter principle and organizational structure. In December 1949, Gencsy Béla was appointed head of the church. He behaved loyally (from the point of view of the state authorities) and at the same time made every effort to keep unregistered parishes from elimination.

**Keywords:** Transcarpathia Oblast, Transcarpathian Reformed Church, Church history, Soviet regime, the Reformed (Calvinists).

The theme's problem area is rooted in the fact that the Transcarpathian Reformed and the Transcarpathian Reformed Church history in the period after World War II has not yet been comprehensively studied as part of Ukraine's Protestant church historiography. However, this was the church with its specific structural and organizational principles – synodal-presbyter principle, parish autonomy, etc. that the authorities failed to assimilate into other church organizations that have become more comprehensible. The process that the Transcarpathian Reformed underwent between 1944 and 1947 is atypical and Ukraine's Protestant confession history has not yet been researched from this point of view.

Numerous modern Ukrainian historiography researchers studied the relation between the region's Protestant confessions including the Reformed and the Soviet Union from various points of view. Some researchers generally reveal the period's ecclesiastical and spiritual life, for instance Volodymyr Paschenko's<sup>1</sup>, Oleksandr Lysenko's<sup>2</sup> monographs, or Petro Bondarchuk's<sup>3</sup> article. Viktor Voinalovych's monograph is based on an outstanding scientific resource base and includes a subchapter devoted to the issues of the Transcarpathian Reformed<sup>4</sup>. The researchers that immediately studied the issues of

<sup>1</sup> Пашенко В. Греко-католики в Україні (від 40-х років XX ст. до наших днів). Полтава: АСМІ, 2002. 616 с.

<sup>2</sup> Лисенко О. Церковне життя в Україні 1943–1946 рр. Київ, 1998. 403 с.

<sup>3</sup> Бондарчук П. Особливості релігійної ситуації в Україні у середині 1940-х – на початку 1950-х рр. *Український історичний журнал*. 2010. № 2. С. 137–163.

<sup>4</sup> Войналович В. Партийно-державна політика щодо релігії та релігійних інституцій в Україні 1940–1960-х років: політологічний дискурс. Київ: Світогляд, 2005. 741 с.

the Transcarpathian Reformed after 1944 include: Ihor Salamakha<sup>5</sup>, Oksana Leshko<sup>6</sup>, Larysa Kapitan<sup>7</sup>, Inna Sherstiuk<sup>8</sup>. However, these studies focused on separate events or people without putting them into a chronological, cause-and-effect order; moreover, they predominantly make use of CARC archives. This makes the present research topical for it used state archive, church archive documents, former participants' recollections, as well as sources of the Synodal Archives of the Reformed Church of Hungary (Budapest).

Basically, the authors aimed at describing the historical span of events that the Transcarpathian Reformed and their Church underwent between October 1944 and March 1953 based primarily on sources of that time. The paper also endeavours to elucidate the specific historical situation that determined the activity of the Reformed in the region after 1944. Furthermore, the research reveals the way the Soviet regime enforced its authority against the Reformed; how it impeded the community from self-organization based on its inner mechanism. To expand the research area and to understand the problems under investigation better we conducted a content analysis of the press of the time that enabled us to approach the suggested issues independently from the Soviet regime's narrative.

**The new authority in the region.** The Soviet troops in 1944 – immediately after they entered Transcarpathia – «did not hurt the pastors», however this did not mean that the new regime tolerated independent functioning of churches and denominational communities. Numerous principals of the region's historical churches escaped from their parishes in the autumn of 1944 together with the retreating Hungarian troops. The sources support 25 Reformed Church pastors and assistant ministers leaving their parishes<sup>9</sup>. However, there was no massive escape on the part of the believers for they were bound by their lands and house. It is a fact that the incoming Soviet troops did not face civil resistance, however, pursuant to the secret decree 0036 issued in mid-November 1944, 18–50 year-old Hungarian and German male population underwent ethnic deportation that was entitled three-day salvage work<sup>10</sup>. This carrying away of the Reformed Church believers caused a significant decrease in their number for «preventive detention and penal servitude took

<sup>5</sup> Саламаха І. Реформатська церква Закарпаття в перші післявоєнні роки (1945–1948). *Історія релігій в Україні: праці XI Міжнародної наукової конференції* (Львів, 16–19 травня 2001 р.). Львів, 2001. Кн. 1. С. 372–378.

<sup>6</sup> Лешко О. Реформатське духовенство Закарпаття в другій половині 40–50-х роках. *Науковий вісник Ужгородського національного університету. Серія: Історія*. 2003. Вип. 9. С. 74–82; Лешко О. Державна політика і протестантські громади Закарпаття в 1946–1949 роках. *In Carpatika-Karpatika*. 2002. Вип. 20. С. 105–114.

<sup>7</sup> Капітан Л. А. Генче – очільник реформатської церкви Закарпаття. *Наукові праці історичного факультету Запорізького національного університету*. 2013. Вип. XXXV. С. 184–187.

<sup>8</sup> Шерстюк І. Закарпатська реформатська церква у перші повоєнні роки. *Історична пам'ять*. Полтава, 2012. Вип. 28. С. 85–92.

<sup>9</sup> Fodor G. A református egyház első évtizede Kárpátalja szovjetizálásának idején (1944–1954). *Hadifogság, Málenkij Robot, Gulág. Kárpát-medencei magyarok és németek elhurcolása a Szovjetunió hadifogoly- és kényszermunkatáborai (1944–1953)* / eds. Molnár D. E.; Molnár D. I. Beregszász; Ungvár: «Rik-U» Kiadó, 2017. P. 99.

<sup>10</sup> See further information in: Molnár D., Erzsébet. Transcarpathia and the Malenkij Robot. / ed.-in-chief A. Bárány. *Acta Universitatis Debreceniensis, Series Historica*. Debrecen: University of Debrecen, 2014. Vol. LXVI. P. 326–339.

away on average the congregation's 20–25 %»<sup>11</sup>. However, at the time of deportations, the Reformed Church pastors were not carried away; the majority of those who were in the list were let go at their dwelling place. Despite all that, there were Reformed Church pastors who (for some reason) were driven on foot by the Soviet troops to Svaliava detention camp, however, on 5 December, Petrov army commander (commander-in-chief of 4<sup>th</sup> Ukrainian front) eventually ordered them to be sent home<sup>12</sup>.

In the period between 28 October 1944 and 22 January 1946, the temporary state formation, established on the territory of present-day Transcarpathia, Transcarpathian Ukraine headed by the People's Assembly, launched a forced Sovietization with the help of Soviet troops, the essential elements of which were the transformation of churches into Soviet-style ones:

a) pursuant to the decree issued on 5 December 1944 secularization took place: the separation of church and the state, of church and school was declared;

b) on 5 April 1945 the decree «On the free choice of religion» was adopted<sup>13</sup>;

c) on 20 April the People's Assembly issued a decree «On the use of church property»<sup>14</sup>, specifying that all personal property and real-estate that previously belonged to the church as a legal entity, was now owned by the congregation;

d) likewise, in accord with decree no. 58/945 «On the nationalization of schools»<sup>15</sup> of 20 April 1945, all educational establishments were regarded state property, while denominational schools fell under the control of villages and cities<sup>16</sup>;

e) although the territory did not belong to the Soviet Union formally, on 20 April the People's Assembly passed the decree On the Management of Cult Affairs via the Transcarpathian Ukraine's People's Assembly and appointed Petro Lintur its head<sup>17</sup>;

f) in December 1945 Fedor *Pouchán*, Berehove district's school inspector informed in his circular that religious education was prohibited at school<sup>18</sup>. At the same time, in late 1945, for the first time at the regional educational management level, two religious education classes per week were reduced to one.

All these made the position of the family, community, and the church untenable, made them dependent on the state. When the Soviet power took over de jure power in Transcarpathia at the end of January 1946, it immediately began declaring its imperial authority over the churches and confessions present there: it put into force the decree of the Soviet Russia Council of People's Commissars of 20 January (2 February) 1918 on freedom of conscience and on church and religious communities<sup>19</sup>. Pursuant to this law only governmentally rec-

<sup>11</sup> Jelentés az Zakarpacka Ukrajnai Magyar Református Egyház helyzetéről, 1946. október 1-i állapot szerint. Synod Archives of the Reformed Church in Hungary (SARCH). SARCH 2f. 41d. 1947/1726. Ol. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Fodor G. A református egyház... Ol. 101.

<sup>13</sup> Вісник Народної Ради Закарпатської України. 1945. 15 квітня. С. 90.

<sup>14</sup> Там само. 1 травня. С. 113.

<sup>15</sup> Там само. С. 115.

<sup>16</sup> State Archive of the Transcarpathian Oblast (SATO). F. P-2595. Op. 1. Delo Nr. 4. Ol. 33.

<sup>17</sup> Вісник Народної Ради Закарпатської України. 1945. 1 травня. С. 114–115.

<sup>18</sup> SATO. F. P-2595. Op. 1. Delo Nr. 4. Ol. 43.

<sup>19</sup> Декреты Советской власти. Москва: Политиздат, 1957. Т. I: 25 октября 1917 г. – 16 марта 1918 г. / состав.: Ю. Ахабкин, С. Валк, И. Загоскина, Б. Казанцев, Л. Растопчина. С. 373–374.

ognized and registered communities and ministers were allowed to continue their religious activity. At the time the supervision of religious organizations in Transcarpathia was entrusted to two state administrative units instead of the above-mentioned council headed by P. Lintur: Petro Lintur remained the Transcarpathian regional representative of the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (CAROC), while Serhii *Liamin-Ahafonov* was appointed representative of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults.

The new regime, however, did not treat confessions equally, viz.: it clearly supported the Orthodox Church, but tried to merge numerous western Christian confessions with those that were more approved in the Soviet Union. In the course of time the Greek Catholic confession was eliminated (their churches and believers were attributed to Orthodox faith), they tried to blend the Reformed into Evangelical Christian-Baptists (ECB); furthermore, they wanted to make the Roman Catholics autocephalous (to make its bishop hierarchically independent from the Pope).

Although the territory was not yet *de jure* part of the Soviet Union, in late 1945 the Soviet regime was looking for ways to place Protestants under state control. To settle this issue the Evangelical Christian-Baptists were chosen with 56 congregations at the time, including 10 Hungarian ones<sup>20</sup>. In late January 1946 Andreiev A. L., the vice president of All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists (AUCECB), the head presbyter of the Ukrainian SSR, visited Transcarpathia to prepare accession of the so-called «Free Christian» congregation to the Baptist society. On 22 February in Mukachevo the «Free Christians» signed association with the ECB, though later on they backed down on it<sup>21</sup>.

**The Transcarpathian Reformed Church and the Soviet Regime.** After WWII, until the first half of 1945, the Reformed Church could hardly recover from the shock. «True, our leaders' inactivity is not that much their own will, but powerlessness and external consequence. They are under constant surveillance and abuse is frequent. The pastors' congregation is usually not allowed. The diocese general assembly was not allowed»<sup>22</sup>. Although the cited source of the time specified: «The external damages caused by the war are relatively low. The churches are intact and the parishes are still standing with various damages. These damages made the church's external life difficult only sporadically and not considerably»<sup>23</sup>.

In the Ukrainian SSR, CARC head Petro Vilkhovyi visited Transcarpathia, the new administrative unit, in March 1946 and suggested that the new officials study the territory's history and ethnography in order to understand its present (of the time) religious movements. Moreover, it encouraged them to try and master local languages for they would greatly help them in their further work<sup>24</sup>. One of the participants later wrote in his recollections of the visit: «Vilkhovyi, the religious affairs representative from Kyiv, visited Mukachevo. He also visited the Reformed Church pastor»<sup>25</sup>. Kyiv head official «Asked the Transcarpathian

<sup>20</sup> SATO. F. P-1490. Op. 1. Delo Nr. 1. Ol. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Лешко О. Державна політика і протестантські громади Закарпаття в 1946–1949 роках. *Carpatika–Карпатика*. Ужгород: Вид-во УжНУ, 2002. Вип. 20: Релігія і церква в країнах Центральної та Південно-Східної Європи. С. 105–114.

<sup>22</sup> SARCH 2f. 41d. 1947/1726.Ol. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Ol. 1.

<sup>24</sup> SATO. F. P-1490. Op. 1. Delo Nr. 14. Ol. 2.

<sup>25</sup> Horkay B. A Keleti Baráti Kőr. Képek a kárpátaljai ébredésből. Kom Over En Help Alapítvány. 1998. P. 111.

Reformed Church pastors what government they consider legally valid: the Soviet or the Hungarian one?»<sup>26</sup>. The pastors present at the meeting responded: «According to the Holy Bible each Reformed Church pastor is obliged to obey the higher authorities that God placed above them. Therefore, seeing the changes and their consequences, the Hungarian Reformed Church pastors could not but regard the Soviet government legally valid above them»<sup>27</sup>. In other words, the Reformed Church pastors recognized the Soviet regime's validity at the time.

Then, in spring and summer of 1946 there were 88 Reformed Church pastors in three Transcarpathian dioceses. This was the year when pastors were arrested: in July-December Gönczy Pál, Velyka Dobron, Balogh Sándor, Eszeny, Narancsik Imre, Muzhiiivo, and Csok József, Mala Byihan pastors were arrested. Neither Balogh nor Narancsik came back, both of them died in Soviet captivity in the course of 1948.

Meanwhile, the Reformed parishes' state registration (unlike the Catholic one) was slow on the part of the authorities; Polianskyi, the leader of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults from Moscow encouraged the election of a «senior». It occurred on 12 February 1947 in Velyki Berehy. Györke István was elected the regional representative of the Reformed, while Pázsit József was appointed his secretary<sup>28</sup>. However, Vilkhovyi, the head of the Council for Religious Affairs from Kyiv did not accept members of the Eastern Friendly Circle (EFC) for he considered them fanatic, deviationist and ordered his deputy «to dismiss Györke István János's election for the post of a bishop»<sup>29</sup>. Instead, the oldest member Bary Gyula, a dean from Bereg was asked in May 1947 to fill in the post of senior. Meanwhile, in February 1947 KGB started surveiling the Eastern Friendly Circle and in May 1947 concluded, «the Eastern Circle is an anti-Soviet organization that helps fascist Hungary transform Transcarpathian Ukraine into a Saint Stephen land»<sup>30</sup>. This made it obvious that the organization would be liquidated. «Pursuant to the order of the Council for Religious Affairs functioning within the Council of Ministers of the USSR of 20 May 1947, the Transcarpathian regional representative of the Council for Religious Affairs functioning within the Council of Ministers of the USSR dissolved the illegal organization calling itself the "Eastern Brothers" club»<sup>31</sup>. On 11 June Simon Zsigmond, the EFC leader, Horkay Barna and Zimányi József were officially informed of the club's dissolution.

Meanwhile, Ravasz László, a bishop from Hungary, initiated in summer 1947 negotiations on the affiliation of the Transcarpathian Hungarian Reformed Church congregation to ECB<sup>32</sup>. At the meeting AUCECB was represented by *Ivanov Illés Grigorjevich* who claimed

<sup>26</sup> SARCH 2f. 41d. 1947/1726. Ol. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> SATO. F. P-1490. Op. 1. Delo Nr. 18. Ol. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Central State Archive of Supreme Authorities and Administration of Ukraine (CSASAAU). CSASAAU. F. 4648. Op. 4. Delo Nr. 34. Ol. 130.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 134.

<sup>31</sup> Archive of the Security Service of Ukraine in the Transcarpathian region (ASSUTO). F. P-2258. Op. 1. Storage Unit 5983. Delo Nr. C-2274. Ol. 19.

<sup>32</sup> See further information in: Szamborovszkyné Nagy I. «Többet tenni most nem lehet. Irattárba!» A kárpátaljai reformátusok és az orosz baptisták egyesülési/együttműködési történetéről (1947). *Hagyomány, identitás, történelem 2019* / eds. Lányi G., Kiss R. Budapest: Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem Egyház és Társadalom Kutatóintézetének Reformáció Öröksége Műhelye, Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem Hittudományi Kar Egyháztörténeti Kutatóintézet, 2020. 2. kötet. P. 377–398.



cooperation was only possible if the Reformed completely blend into their organization. The Reformed and Ivanov I. G. had been discussing this for a month and a half. However, first of all, as a result of KGB reports, in autumn 1947 the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults considered: «It is not advisable to unite the Reformed (Calvinist) Church with the ECB ... The processes that are taking place in the Reformed Church testify to the need to keep this church under a so-called “glass umbrella” and not to hide it under the cover of the Evangelical Baptists»<sup>33</sup>. In a written note of April 20, 1948, Polanskyi, the president of the USSR’s CARC, expressly forbade the union of Reformed and Baptist Christians<sup>34</sup>. He also instructed his subordinates to «carry out the registration of the 76 Reformed parishes that have a pastor within the shortest possible time. We recommend to reject registration for the rest 15 communities»<sup>35</sup>.

See the number of the Reformed Church pastors and congregations in the period under analysis until 1 January 1948 in Table<sup>36</sup>.

Table

**Some measurable data on the Transcarpathian Reformed Church**

<b>Denominational characteristics</b>	<b>01.12.1941</b>	<b>06.01.1946</b>	<b>01.01.1947</b>	<b>01.01.1948</b>
The number of pastors	90	88	76	82
The number of assistant ministers	23	—	—	—
The number of congregations	93	91	90	92
The number of the Reformed among the population	92 949	?	approx. 62 000	approx. 60 000
The number of churches	90	90	62	76
The number of parishes	85	?	—	—
The number of denominational schools	57	—	—	—

The state registration process of the Reformed Church congregations started on 14 June 1948 and extended to 31 December<sup>37</sup>. In the process of registration the state authorities expressly prohibited organized religious education, preparation for confirmation, confirmation itself, as well as home mission. Pursuant to article 9 of the 1918 decree religious education

<sup>33</sup> Central State Archives of Public Organizations of Ukraine. F. 1. Op. 23. Delo Nr. 5069. Ol. 34, 141.

<sup>34</sup> CSASAAU. F. 4648. Op. 4. Delo Nr. 49. Ol. 140.

<sup>35</sup> Войналович В. Партийно-державна політика щодо релігії та релігійних інституцій в Україні 1940–1960-х років: політологічний дискурс. Київ: Світогляд, 2005. С. 654.

<sup>36</sup> See the 1941 data in: Fodor G. A Kárpátaljai Református Egyház élete a sztálini egyházpolitika szorításában. *A kommunizmus áldozatait, rehabilitációs alternatívák Kelet-Közép Európában*. Nemzetközi tudományos konferencia anyagai / ed. D. Erzsébet Molnár; D. István Molnár. Beregszász; Ungvár: Kiadó «Rik-U», 2016. 173–174 ol.; see the 1946 data in: SATO. F. P-1490. Op. 1. Delo Nr. 9, 5–6, 9–11, 16; see the 1948 data in: Войналович В. Партийно-державна політика... Ol. 680.

<sup>37</sup> CSASAAU. F. 4648. Op. 4. Delo Nr. 42. Ol. 210.

at schools was prohibited, it could only be conducted individually<sup>38</sup>. Thus, the practice of religion was limited to the private sphere: to the family and the church.

By 1 January 1949, 60 out of 92 congregations, and 60 out of 82 pastors were registered by the state to perform their activities, however, 12 congregations and 12 pastors were declined the registration for they were considered politically unreliable. The communities included Tiachiv, Khust, Vynohradiv, Mukachevo, Uzhhorod that had a significant number of believers<sup>39</sup>. Meanwhile, pastors were continuously arrested: Between 1946 and 1951, 18 Reformed Church pastors and one assistant minister were arrested and sentenced to 4 to 25 years of imprisonment in a corrective labour camp<sup>40</sup>.

After finishing the registration process the Soviet regime intervened into the church's inner structure and suggested the elimination of the historically formed diocese-dean system and the formation of an administrative centre. This change was introduced on 23 December 1949 in Uzhhorod where Gencsy Béla, Ung County dean was elected regional or «arch-deacon», thus eliminating dioceses<sup>41</sup>.

Gencsy Béla, the head of the Transcarpathian Reformed Church was loyal as a government authority in May 1952 when he participated in a peace conference in Zagorsk that is situated near Moscow. At the conference Gencsy (just like the representatives of other confessions) was in favour of the Soviet Union's «peace policy» and did his best to send registered pastors to non-registered parishes, thus saving them from elimination. In fact, the participation in Zagorsk and the signing of the final declaration enabled him to apply for permission to send pastors to the mountainous Reformed sporadic areas (Rakhiv, Svaliava, Solotvyno, Yasinia) and to have new pastors ordained by the Bishop of Miskolc (Hungary) in 1952. The latter was the case when *Rasputko* (Transcarpathian regional religious affairs representative) accused Gencsy of treachery and asked Vilkhovyi to withdraw Gencsy's registration and remove him from the post of the head of the Reformed Church. However, CARC leader in Kyiv did not consider Gencsy's replacement timely; moreover, in January 1953 he ordered his Transcarpathian regional subordinate to register Reformed Church parishes in Uzhhorod and Mukachevo. In a few weeks after this order the Reformed Church parishes of both towns received their operating licence from the Transcarpathian Regional Council. Thus, by 1 April 1953, 63 Reformed Church parishes with 52 pastors were registered in Transcarpathia. Still, 11 legalized parishes had no pastor of their own<sup>42</sup>.

**Anticlericalism in the local press propaganda.** Anthony R. Pratniis and Elliot Aronson interpret propaganda as mass influence that manipulates pictures, applies psychological methods; it is the presentation of a predetermined point of view for the recipients to accept. «Propaganda is usually a schedule, it is used to make ideology accepted by the audience, if possible, by means of deceit and delusion»<sup>43</sup>. In other words, propaganda is a system of thoughts, a communicative line of conduct aimed at accepting an ideology by

<sup>38</sup> Декреты Советской власти. ОI. 374.

<sup>39</sup> CSASAAU. F. 4648. Op. 4. Delo Nr. 42. ОI. 228.

<sup>40</sup> See further information on arrests in: Fodor G. A református egyház... ОI. 108–111.

<sup>41</sup> CSASAAU. F. 4648. Op. 4. Delo Nr. 66. ОI. 2–3.

<sup>42</sup> State Archive of the Russian Federation. F. 6991. Op. 3. Delo Nr. 1114. ОI. 298.

<sup>43</sup> Pratkanis A. R., Aronson E. A rábeszélőgép – élni és visszaélni a meggyőzés mindennapos mesterségével. Budapest: Ab Ovo, 1992. ОI. 14.



an audience using, if need be, lies and manipulation<sup>44</sup> (however, lies are not necessary to transform communication into propaganda).

Political propaganda campaign occurs if the ruling regime's replacement is in sight or has recently happened. The intensity of the campaign is largely determined by the legitimacy of taking over power – the less legitimate the new government seems, the more powerful the political propaganda is. The new regime's centrally controlled propaganda informs its citizens the new ideology it wishes them to follow and assures that the political movement stays uniform all over the country. Propaganda requires proper organization: its efficiency largely depends on the communicative skills of those creating it. In the course of time, the artificial world formed by mass communication can become reality. George Gerbner, a researcher of communication theory, calls this process *cultivation*. Identification of artificial world and reality happens easily because the propaganda recipients' cognitive horizon does not go beyond their own experience. As far as the government authority communicates with its citizens on a daily basis by using the same propaganda messages, the people do not believe there can be a different reality to the one presented by the government authority in the media<sup>45</sup>.

Transition of power in Transcarpathia occurred in November 1944 and to stabilize it the new Soviet regime had a predilection for using mass media propaganda. At the time printed media had a very significant role in this activity. To ensure success new daily and weekly periodicals were started at regional and district levels. Here belonged the «Vörös Zászló» (Red Flag) that was established in Berehove with its first issue on 2 December 1945<sup>46</sup>. At first, it came out twice a week on two pages, later on it appeared on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays on four pages. Having analysed the issues from the Late-Stalin period we can clearly see state propaganda in the articles. From the point of view of their content, the texts can be subdivided into two groups: those promoting the new regime at power, the legitimacy and perfection of communism, and those that discredited religion.

The propaganda in favour of the new state culminated, at first, at the time of the first elections. Prior to the February 10, 1946, election of delegates to the Supreme Council of the USSR, the columns of Red Flag were exclusively devoted to articles emphasizing the biographies of the delegate candidates and the democratic nature of the electoral system. A recurrent formula for the latter is that the right to vote «applies to everyone, regardless of race, nationality, religion, education, social origin or wealth»<sup>47</sup>. The next media campaign of this kind preceded the elections to the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR on 9 February 1947<sup>48</sup>. The issues that came out in the first months of the year included reports of the candidates' campaign, activity, and election meetings. The previously mentioned idealizing formulas were present here as well. Later on, articles promoting the perfection of the Soviet regime were less frequent and were replaced by writings describing topical local issues.

We came across 26 articles in the Red Flag that contained anticlerical propaganda in the period from December 1945 to March 1953. Based on their content and style they can be subdivided into two groups:

<sup>44</sup> Virányi P. A propaganda természetén. *Jel-Kép*. 2019. No 3. Ol. 5.

<sup>45</sup> Csepeli Gy. A hatalom anatómiája. Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 2013. Ol. 9.

<sup>46</sup> Botlik J., Dupka Gy. Ez hát a hon... Budapest; Mandátum Kiadó, 1991. Ol. 87.

<sup>47</sup> Egyszerű magyarázatok nagyszerű alkotmányunkhoz. *Vörös Zászló*. 1946. Január 17. Ol. 2.

<sup>48</sup> Vörös Zászló. 1947. Január 5. Ol. 1.

- those mentioning concrete cases, even names, when a member of the church was presented in negative light;
- «educational» articles describing the incompatibility of religion with science and the Soviet society.

It is an interesting chronological phenomenon to note that while articles of the first type were mainly published before 1948, articles using scientific methods started to appear regularly in the columns of Red Flag after 1949.

Three concrete cases of anticlerical attacks ought to be mentioned. In the first case a rural pastor was attacked: «A Reformed Church pastor from Badalovo owns 5 hectares of land and it is not he who works upon it». His name was not mentioned, but the author called the authorities upon action: «It's time the village council put an end to the Reformed Church pastor's exploitation of others' work»<sup>49</sup>.

In a report on a district party meeting in June 1948, we read the following about local leaders: «It is also intolerable that Ivancho I, a teacher from Chopivka, has a closer relationship with the church and the pastor than with the school. The Soviets in the villages must make sure that the schools teach in the Soviet spirit». Later the article mentioned that «The meeting of deputies strongly condemned Mihok, the Soviet chairman of the village of Velyka Byihan, who, in collusion with the agents of the Church, had fallen under the influence of the enemies of the Soviet state»<sup>50</sup>. The previous formulation is fully in line with the report of the local party meeting, where the responsibility of the church is again raised: «At the same time with establishing collective farms, we are also dealing with our Komsomol members, many of whom are still under the influence of the Church. The church only insists on the old, hampers the new, the fresh, the viable»<sup>51</sup>.

Until 1948, there were several instances of comments in some articles in which the person under criticism had links with the church (e. g. going to church, befriending pastors, etc.). At first glance, these articles are not even religiously themed, they usually include the church as a negative factor in some political content. Typically, it is striking that aggressive articles with an anticlerical tone no longer dominate the daily press from 1949 onwards. This date coincides with the completion of the «Soviet-style» conversion of the country's confessions, by which time both Roman Catholic and Reformed communities had been registered with the state and the local Greek Catholics had been «reverted to Orthodoxy». Perhaps, this is why the previous virulent anti-church sentiment became more «permissive», and direct discrediting was abandoned. In fact, however, between 1949 and early 1952, the Red Flag published more than 20 relatively large scientifically grounded «educational» articles in its columns, which portrayed the Church in an outdated, superstitious and negative light. The authors usually represented some branch of science.

All in all, the (anticlerical) press propaganda can be divided into several groups, after the registration of confessions (which actually coincided with the period of forming collective farms), articles with a different tone were published, and it should be noted that the mass show trials against the pastors of the Transcarpathian confessions during this period did not receive any publicity in the columns of the Red Flag.

<sup>49</sup> Kémedi K. Idegen munkaerővel dolgoztat a földjén. *Vörös Zászló*. 1948. Február 19. Ol. 1.

<sup>50</sup> A körzeti Szovjet negyedik ülésén. *Vörös Zászló*. 1948. Június 6. Ol. 2.

<sup>51</sup> Cs. Tóth J. A falusi kommunisták az új élet építői. *Vörös Zászló*. 1948. Augusztus 26. Ol. 2.

**To sum up**, the late Stalinist period between 1944–1953 was a long journey (rich in both negative and positive events) for the Transcarpathian Reformed community. At the beginning of the decade, the Reformed Church suffered considerable damage. This damage began with the exodus of pastors due to the atheistic nature of the new state power, and continued with the Soviet deportations in November 1944, which were carried out with the help of the Soviet army. They took away 20–25 % of the congregations' male population announcing it as a three-day salvage work. This was followed by the nationalisation of the parishes' property, the classification of their former churches as public property, the refusal to register the Reformed in 1946, and the attempt to incorporate them into the ECB. At the same time, since the summer of 1946, there were several waves of mass arrests of Reformed pastors and convictions in show trials, as a result of which between 1946 and 1951 18 pastors and one assistant pastor were arrested and sentenced to between 4 and 25 years in a corrective labour camp.

However, it should also be noted that despite this, the Reformed communities kept their faith, maintained their churches and pastors, and constantly sought ways to reconcile with the new state power. Testimony of the latter was given to the head of CARC in the spring of 1946, to the effect that: «According to the Holy Bible each Reformed Church pastor is obliged to obey the higher authorities that God placed above them». After 1944, this was also the intention of Gyula Bary, the senior among the pastors, whom the regional religious commissioner wanted to see at the head of the Reformed, because Lyamin-Agafonov believed that, in addition to his willingness to compromise, he would also serve the interests of the state power. Finally, in the second half of 1948, two thirds of the Reformed communities received state operating licenses and were registered as a separate church in the Soviet Union. However, the abandonment of the synod-presbyter principle and the traditional Reformed organisational structure was only achieved by Béla Gencsy, who was elected head presbyter in December 1949. Genchy was seen by the state authorities as a loyal leader, who strove to keep the unregistered Reformed parishes from being liquidated.

A unique insight into the period is provided by analysing the content of the local press of the time, which presents the mass media propaganda used by the new Soviet regime. In 26 cases (in the period under investigation), the «Vörös Zászló» published articles containing direct anti-religious and anticlerical propaganda. These press articles can be divided into two distinct groups and periods: before and after the registration of the confession, articles with a different tone were published, and it should also be noted that in this period the mass show trials against the pastors of Transcarpathian confessions (including the Reformed) did not receive any publicity in the columns of the party newspaper.

Finally, we can conclude that our theme encompasses so many events in the period under research that exploring and examining its individual elements and/or its interrelationship from a new perspective could yield exciting and interesting results. This is all possible as there is a considerable amount of source material from the period that has survived and recollections of participants. In addition, the study of the press of the period can be extended to other printed matter, even within the field.

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## **СТАНОВИЩЕ ЗАКАРПАТСЬКОЇ РЕФОРМАТСЬКОЇ ЦЕРКВИ В ПЕРІОД ПІЗНЬОГО СТАЛІНІЗМУ ТА ЙОГО ВІДОБРАЖЕННЯ У ТОГОЧАСНІЙ ПРЕСІ**

Проаналізовано й реконструйовано у хронологічному та логічному порядках становище закарпатських реформатів (кальвіністів) і Закарпатської Реформатської Церкви як організації в період від захоплення краю Радянською армією до смерті Йосипа Сталіна. Розкрито амбівалентну й водночас хаотичну ситуацію, у яку потрапила конфесія внаслідок входження регіону до складу Радянського Союзу, а також проаналізовано наративи влади щодо цього питання в тогочасній місцевій пресі, де в початковий період політично-пропагандивної кампанії нової влади були спроби мовою реформатів краю досягти легітимізації провладної ідеології.

Проаналізовано маловідомі й невідомі архівні джерела Синодського архіву Угорської Реформатської Церкви, Державного архіву Закарпатської обл., Центрального державного архіву вищих органів влади та управління України, Архіву Управління Служби безпеки України в Закарпатській обл., а також спогади учасників тих подій і публікації тогочасної місцевої преси.

Зазначено, що наукова новизна роботи полягає у тому, що в українських дослідженнях історії Церкви проблематика закарпатських реформатів вивчалася переважно епізодично, уривчасто, розкривалися лише окремі аспекти, не у хронологічному й історичному порядках, попри те, що історія протестантів загалом або ж баптистів як однієї

з конфесій зокрема, яка мала найбільшу організацію, одержала досить широку увагу. Взято за провідний принцип дотримання хронології та простежено нагнітання антицерковної політичної пропагандивної кампанії радянської влади в місцевій пресі.

Виснувано, що після приходу радянських військ на Закарпаття церковна структура реформатів зазнала значної шкоди, а 20–25 % чоловічого населення релігійних громад під приводом участі у триденних примусових відновлювальних роботах депортували. Зазначено, що ситуацію погіршувало й те, що державну реєстрацію реформатів у 1946 р. Рада у справах релігійних культів (РСРК) не дозволила, натомість мала намір об'єднати їх з організацією Євангельських християн-баптистів (ЄХБ). Виявлено, що наприкінці 1946 р. РСРК не володіла інформацією ні про організаційну структуру реформатів, ні про їхній адміністративний поділ, ні навіть про чисельність вірних. З'ясовано, коли влада це усвідомила, то запустила процес повного аналізу конфесії, але через недовіру до бюрократії до вивчення керівного складу реформатських священників залучили КДБ. Проаналізовано, як після доповіді КДБ радянський державний механізм відмовився від ідеї об'єднати реформатів із ЄХБ, залишив їх як окрему конфесію, одночасно розпочавши хвилю масових арештів реформатського духовенства. Також виявлено, що РСРК хотіло бачити на чолі реформатів людину не просто готову до компромісів, а таку, що служитиме інтересам влади й відмовиться від традиційного принципу синоду-пробств та узвичаєної організаційної структури. Встановлено, що після того, як це відбулося у грудні 1949 р., в особі Бейли Генчі (Béla Gencsy) на чолі Церкви опинився лояльний (із погляду влади) керівник, який прагнув урятувати релігійну спільноту, що не отримала державної реєстрації, від розпуску.

**Ключові слова:** Закарпатська обл., Закарпатська Реформатська Церква, історія Церкви, радянська влада, реформати (кальвіністи).