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**THE SLOVAK LEAGUE AND NATIONAL ISSUE:
THE RUTHENIAN DISCOURSE (1934 – 1938)**

Abstract. *The purpose of the research is to analyse the peculiarities of the attitude of the Slovak League to the Ukrainian (Ruthenian, Rusyn) issue in 1934 – 1938. The research methodology is based on the use of general scientific methods (induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis). The scientific novelty consists in the fact that the Ruthenian issue on the activities of the Slovak League has been analysed by the authors on the basis of the unpublished archival documents. The Conclusions. The Ruthenian issue has been relevant both for Subcarpathian Rus and Slovakia, and especially for its eastern part. The Ruthenian political life activation has been extremely negatively received by the Slovaks in the mid-1930s. In Eastern Slovakia, the local administrations have been headed by people from the nationalist circles of the Slovak political elite, so naturally they have resorted to administrative abuses, the purpose of which was to “facilitate” the Slovakization of the Ruthenian population of the*

region in various ways. The official authorities representatives interacted with the relevant unions and societies closely, which tried to implement their ideas in practice. The Slovak League activity regarding resolving the Ruthenian issue has been a vivid example of such interaction. The impetus for this activity of the Slovak League has been the demands of the Ruthenians to replace the Slovak language in some Eastern Slovak schools with the Ruthenian and at the same time ensure that it is taught by the Ruthenian teachers. It has been determined that in connection with the intensification of a socio-political life of the Ruthenians in Eastern Slovakia and their defense of their own national rights, the Slovak authorities observed the Ruthenian issue with its subsequent resolution. In this context, the Slovak League took some practical steps in solving it. In 1934 – 1938, the Ruthenian issue was considered by the Slovak League at Congresses and meetings. There were diverse options for solving the Ruthenian issue on the part of the Slovak League, which led to the implementation of its ideas by the Slovak authorities, in particular, strengthening of total Slovakization in the educational network, banning of the Ruthenian societies and unions, persecution of the Ruthenian figures and even Slovakization of a religious sphere.

Key words: Ruthenian issue, Slovak League, Czechoslovak Republic, Eastern Slovakia.

СЛОВАЦЬКА ЛІГА І НАЦІОНАЛЬНЕ ПИТАННЯ: УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ / РУСИНСЬКИЙ ДИСКУРС (1934 – 1938)

Анотація. Мета дослідження полягає у з'ясуванні особливостей ставлення Словацької Ліги до українського питання у 1934 – 1938 рр. **Методологія** дослідження ґрунтується на використанні загальнонаукових методів (індукції та дедукції, аналізу та синтезу). **Наукова новизна** полягає у тому, що автори на основі неопублікованих архівних документів проаналізували українське / русинське питання у діяльності Словацької Ліги. **Висновки.** Українське / русинське питання було актуальним як для Підкарпатської Русі, так і Словаччини, а особливо її східної частини. Словаки активізацію русинського політичного життя у середині 1930-х рр. сприйняли вкрай негативно. У Східній Словаччині місцеві адміністрації очолювали вихідці з націоналістично налаштованих кіл словацької політичної еліти, тому, природно, вони вдавалися до адміністративних зловживань, метою яких було різними способами “сприяти” словакізації українського / русинського населення краю. Представники офіційної влади тісно взаємодіяли з відповідними спілками та товариствами, які на практиці намагалися втілювати їх ідеї в життя. Прикладом такої взаємодії стала діяльність Словацької Ліги у розв'язанні українського / русинського питання. Поштовхом для цієї діяльності Словацької Ліги стали вимоги українців / русинів замінити словацьку мову в деяких східнославацьких школах російською і водночас забезпечити її викладання русинськими вчителями. Встановлено, що у зв'язку з активізацією суспільно-політичного життя українців / русинів Східної Словаччини та їх відстоювання власних національних прав, словацька влада активно обсерувала українське / русинське питання з подальшим його вирішенням. У цьому контексті практичні кроки у його розв'язанні зробила Словацька Ліга. У 1934 – 1938 рр. українське / русинське питання розглядалося Словацькою Лігою на конгресах та зібраннях. Варіанти вирішення українського / русинського питання з боку Словацької Ліги призвели до втілення її ідей словацькою владою, зокрема, посилення тотальної словакізації освітньої мережі, заборони українських / русинських товариств та спілок, переслідування українських / русинських діячів та навіть словакізація конфесійної сфери.

Ключові слова: українське / русинське питання, Словацька Ліга, Чехословацька Республіка, Східна Словаччина.

The Problem Statement. The postwar transformations in Central and Eastern Europe and creation of new states in the region did not resolve the national issue and ethnopolitical contradictions. Furthermore, during the interwar period, the above-mentioned transformations intensified and deepened against the background of assimilationist and integrationist ethnopolitics of the newly formed states.

The Czechoslovak Republic was one of these newly formed states. Although it consisted of the majority of the Czechs and the Slovaks and had a democratic constitution. In the country, the issue on the real status of the national minorities always remained unresolved.

The Ruthenian issue was also on agenda along with the German and the Hungarian issues, the main ones in the ethnopolitics of the Czechoslovak Republic.

The Analysis Recent Research and Publications. The attitude of the Slovak League in the 1930s regarding the solution of the Ukrainian issue as a research problem was not the subject of historical studies. There are several studies in Slovak historiography that focus on the development of this issue. The monumental research of R. Letz on the activities of the Slovak League during the interwar period stands out among them, at the same time, it rather briefly shows how it addressed the issue on the future of the national minorities (Letz, 2000). The monograph by P. Švorc should be singled out, in which the author outlined the socio-political background of the period of the 1930s, when the Slovak League developed its activities in relation to the ethnics in Slovakia (Švorc, 1996). One cannot ignore the publication by P. Kova, in which he analysed J. Ruman's views, as one of the associates of the Slovak League at the time, on the Slovak-Ruthenian relations in the 30s of the 20th century (Ruman, 1935). At the same time, the Ukrainian scholars mentioned the existence of the Slovak League partially, without resorting to the analysis of its direct ethnopolitical activities (publications by I. Sirky, A. Panov, I. Liubchuk) (Sirka, 1980, Panov, 2010, Liubchuk, 2009). In general, there are no professional developments on this issue in the Ukrainian historiography.

The purpose of the research is to analyse options for solving the Ukrainian issue by the Slovak League leaders at their annual Congresses in the 1930s.

The Results of the Research. First of all, the issue on the territorial definition and ethnonymic terminology should be elucidated. After joining the Czechoslovak Republic, part of the Ruthenian population of Priashivshchyna was within the boundaries of the Slovak administrative control (Klečacký, 2024, Švorc, 2020a, 2020b, 2022). Furthermore, the Ruthenian-Slovak border of the ethnic demarcation was ignored by the participants in the post-war arrangement of the new political map. As a result, the Ruthenian communities were located in Spiš, Šariš and western Zemplín, which came under Slovak rule. The name of the local population was among the definitive issues on the ethnonymy that lived in the north-east of Slovakia during the interwar period. It is obvious that the Ruthenians lived on the territory of the region. Methodologically, we proceed from the fact that the Ruthenians are part of the Ukrainian nation, according to the evidence, provided by the ethnographic materials of the Ukrainian folk historians V. Hnatiuk, I. Verkhratsky, I. Pankevych, S. Tomashevsky, and the study by the Slovaks (S. Czambel, J. Húsek, V. Latty), the Czech (L. Niederle) ethnographers. At the same time, we state that the Ruthenians were characterized by a blurred and imperfect national identity due to various circumstances. The Ruthenian population was in search of its own national self-reflection. At the same time, it should be mentioned that only some local intellectuals, the clergymen mainly (for example, a priest Omelian Nevytskyi), considered themselves to be the Ukrainians in the 1920s. The others (i.e. the majority) declared themselves either the Russians (Velykorossy/Great Russians) or the Ruthenians, while fundamentally rejecting the Ukrainian ethnicity. The situation began to change in the 1930s with the formation of the enlightened cultural and educational centres, the struggle for the school, the language of instruction in it, and the active activities of individual Greek Catholic priests. Actually, under the influence of these circumstances, part of the local population began to assert their Ukrainian identity.

At the same time, the complex Slovak-Ruthenian relations on the ground of the Greek

Catholic Church were dealt with outside the church ground (Borza, 2017). The slogan “every Greek Catholic is a Ruthenian”, which spread from the clergy, clearly reveals the reason for Slovakia’s restrictive measures against the Ruthenians. In the Slovak environment, Hungary’s historical experience with the assimilation of the Slovaks still resonated, and it looked from the Slovak side as an attempt to create a similar threatening image of the Greek-Catholic clergy, which was still largely oriented towards Hungary.

In general, the Ruthenian issue naturally became quite relevant both for Subcarpathian Rus’ and for Slovakia, and especially for its eastern part (Švorc, 1996). If in Subcarpathian Rus’ Ruthenians made up the majority and naturally had opportunities for the national development, then on the territory of Slovakia they lived in the northeastern regions and were subjected to total Slovakization.

The impetus for the activation of the Ruthenians in Eastern Slovakia was the population census in the Czechoslovak Republic in 1930. The Slovak authorities were taken aback that the Ruthenians showed resistance to its intention to register them as the Slovaks. For this purpose, the Ruthenians took part in a corresponding action, which was aimed at raising the level of Ruthenian national consciousness among villagers and fight for the defense of their own national identity. The front of the struggle for the national Ruthenian identity was led by the local intelligentsia, represented in the majority of cases by the local Greek-Catholic priests and partly by teachers and government officials. In this situation, the local Slovak authorities began to observe the Ruthenian national movement actively.

Since 1930, the Slovak authorities had taken an active interest in the Ruthenian issue. On August 19, 1930, the Presidium of the Ministry for Internal Affairs of the Czechoslovak Republic considered the Ruthenian issue in Slovakia at its meeting secretly. As a result, the police commissariat in Prešov prepared a 33-page document on this issue (The Archive of the Office of the President of the Czech Republic, *Předsednictvo ministerské rady, 1918 – 1945*, in.č. 294, k.150). The authors of the document believed that “The Ruthenians were nomadic pastoral people, who moved with their herd from place to place and never lived a state life”. Furthermore, “there are written sources that the Ruthenians reached the former Šariš župa and Eastern Slovakia, in general, only in the first half of the 14th century” (AOPCR, *Předsednictvo ministerské rady, 1918 – 1945*, in.č. 294, k.150).

At the same time, the authors of the document analysed political processes within the Ruthenian community of Eastern Slovakia. According to them, “the Ruthenian people are divided into various opposing directions, which are fighting furiously among themselves and are not ashamed of any means. The attack “above all reached the hearts of the Ruthenian people”. The leaders of the hostile directions have awakened their slumbering consciousness and are getting away with it by placing the blame on the opposite camp. They indicated that Subcarpathian Rus’ had “an unusual influence on the political processes of Eastern Slovakia” (AOPCR, *Předsednictvo ministerské rady, 1918 – 1945*, in.č. 294, k. 150).

During the first half of the 1930s the Slovak authorities monitored the Ruthenian national movement closely and tried to find “recipes” for resolving the Ruthenian issue. Thus, on February 9 of 1934, the country’s government in Bratislava issued an order to conduct questionnaires regarding the Ruthenian issue in Slovakia. The reason for this was the introduction of the Ruthenian language at the Slovak schools in Eastern Slovakia. As an argument, the example of a priest from Telgart was given, who “beat up 10 children because they did not know the decathedral sermon in Ruthenian, but only in Slovak” (Slovak National

Archives, Krajinjský úrad v Bratislave (1920, 1928 – 1939), k. 90, p. 26).

In its order, the Slovak administration indicated that “recently, there has been a growing agitation for the replacement of the teaching language in all Slovak schools in Eastern Slovakia in communities, whose residents are of the Greek Catholic faith. That agitation and the harmful consequences for Slovakia and the republic derived from it must be countered” (SNA, Krajinjský úrad v Bratislave (1920, 1928 – 1939), k. 90, p. 26).

The Slovak authorities of the first half of the 1930s reported on the strengthening of the Ruthenian movement repeatedly. Thus, they argued that the most effective Ruthenian propaganda is carried out by the Ruthenian or the Ukrainian emigrants: “the priest in Hodemarek is a Ukrainian by birth, the priest Špilka, the priest Jankievych, the priest Kreiter is a Ukrainian by birth” (SNA, Krajinjský úrad v Bratislave (1920, 1928 – 1939), k. 90, p. 26).

On May 30, 1934 and on June 12 of the same year, the Minister for the Interior addressed the police leadership in Košice and Prešov, as well as the district commanders in Bardejov (Bardejov), Giraltovtsi (Giraltovce), Humenné, Stará Ľubovňa, Mezhylobortsy (Medzilaborce), Mikhalivtsi (Michalovce), Preshiv (Prešov), Sabinov, Snina, Stropkov, Spišská Stará Ves and Vranov regarding the national propaganda, “moving towards the national awareness and the known movement “Lemkivshchyna”. The leader of this movement was D. Vyslotskyi, who was the editor of the newspaper “The Ruthenian Voice” in Prešov in 1919 – 1921. According to the Slovaks, it was he who “organized the Lemkos in communities and towns from the so-called Lemkivshchyna, also lying on the Polish side, on the Czechoslovak side in Eastern Slovakia and partly in Subcarpathian Rus” (SNA, KÚ, k. 33, p. 1).

“Vyslotskyi ceased to be a Russophile and became an outspoken separatist, who seeks for the independence of the “Lemko” people, does not recognize the state borders and declares the need for complete independence for his population. He “is not drawn to Russia, nor to Ukraine, and conversely, neither to Poland nor to Czechoslovakia” (SNA, KÚ, k. 33, p. 3). The Minister noted that “the Poles are following that movement with interest” (SNA, KÚ, k. 33, p. 3).

On July 31 of 1934, on the “Lemko case” the Slovak administration in Bratislava provided the Minister for the Interior in Prague with a corresponding report. It ran about the characteristics of Vyslotskyi and his inspiration. In particular, he believed that “all Ruthenians, without regard to linguistic dialects, should unite and create one great Rus’ against the united Germans, so that they could preserve all the other Slavic states in the west that could not join Russia”. At the same time, “all the Ruthenians there should supposedly use one literary language and the language of Pushkin, Lermontov and other glorious Russian writers” (SNA, KÚ, k. 33, p. 9–10).

According to the Slovak authorities, “the Lemkos are residents of the Ruthenian nationality in Poland in the political counties: Nowy Sącz, Grzybów, Jasło, Krosno and Sanok in the amount of 400 thousand people”. “Before the coup, the residents of the Ruthenian nationality in Uzhhorod, who call themselves “Rusnaky”, were also called Lemkos. They also noted that the ethnonym “Lemko” comes from the word “only” (“len”), instead of which the word “lem” is used (SNA, KÚ, k. 33, p. 10).

According to them, “the Lemko people differ from other Ruthenians, the so-called the Ukrainians, in their pronunciation is pure “Old Ruthenian”; they are the Ruthenians in body and soul. They are called “solid Rusniaky” in contrast to other Ruthenians, who had already partially been subjected to the so-called Ukrainian movement”. At the same time, in Poland, “the Lemkivsky movement... supposedly has a number of supporters among the

young intelligentsia, who is more aggressive as the older generation to which Dr. Sobin, Dr. Hahatko and the others belong, who settled in Subcarpathian Rus” (SNA, KÚ, k. 33, p. 10). Analyzing the situation in the northern Lemko region, the Slovak authorities stated that “the authorities support the Lemkivsky movement, so that the limit of the Ukrainian expansion to the west would be drawn” (SNA, KÚ, k. 33, p. 10).

The Slovaks rejected the activation of the Ruthenian political life in the mid-1930s very negatively. The supporters of the Ruthenian political life were contemptuously called the “autonomist chauvinists” trying to awaken the Ruthenian consciousness (SNA, KÚ, k. 185, pp. 227–228). The newspaper “Slovák” ran that the Ruthenians in Eastern Slovakia were awakening. There is time for the Slovaks to treat the Ruthenian issue with the same attitude and not allow various Fentsikovtsy and Zhydovskovtsy to incite our fellow Ruthenian citizens in Slovakia – against the Slovaks” (Agrárnici, 1935, p. 134).

The local administrations were headed by people, who were from the nationalist minded circles of the Slovak political elite in Eastern Slovakia, so naturally they resorted to various administrative abuses, the purpose of which was to “promote” the Slovakization of the Ruthenian population of the region in various ways. It should be noted that the representatives of the official authorities interacted with the relevant unions and societies closely, which tried to implement their ideas in practice. An example of such interaction was the activity of the Slovak League in resolving the Ruthenian issue. It should be noted that the impetus for this activity of the Slovak League was the demands of Ruthenians to replace the Slovak language at some Eastern Slovak schools with the Ruthenian and at the same time ensure that it was taught by the Ruthenian teachers.

The Slovak League was founded on the initiative of I. Gessay on October 22 of 1920 in Bratislava. It was the successor to the Slovak League in the USA, established back in Cleveland in 1907. The goal of the Slovak League was to support the Slovak people mentally, socially and financially; work towards the complete cleansing of Slovakia from everything that interferes with the national development of Slovakia and the Czechoslovak Republic as a whole; expanding knowledge of the Slovak language as the state language on the foreign ethnic territory of Slovakia and strengthening the Slovak spirit not only among the Slovaks, but also among the foreign speaking population in Slovakia (Koval', 2007, p. 80; Letz, 2000; Witt, 2015).

The Slovak League focused on the national, cultural, educational and economic issues (SNA, SL, k. 1). On a practical level, the goals of the Slovak League were to take care of cultural as well as material needs of the Slovaks, especially where they lived together with the national minorities, often in terms of numbers as a minority, and, hence, to counteract their denationalization. Therefore, the Slovak League sought to provide assistance to the Greek-Catholic Slovaks, who lived in the territory of northeastern Slovakia (Koval', 2007, p. 80). The Slovak League also dealt with the issues of the Germans in Spiš, the Hungarians in the southern territories. There were the following issues on which the main focus was: schooling and the establishment of the Slovak schools in mixed ethnic areas (SNA, SL, k. 1).

Each candidate had to record that “I certify that I am familiar with the Charter of the Slovak League in Slovakia and that I agree with its actions and ideas” in order to obtain membership in the League (SNA, SL, k. 1).

At the same time, the activities of the Slovak League were not properly organized in the territory of Eastern Slovakia at the beginning of the 1930s. On May 12, 1931, the propaganda department of the League noted that the majority of local cells were small in number, partly

inactive, and evaded paying membership fees. In particular, the cell in Stropkov numbered 63 members, dues were paid only by the end of 1929, and did not provide reports on its activities. In Bardejov the number of members was 58 people; since the end of 1927 membership fees were not paid, the activities of the cell were limited. In Snina, the circle of the organization included 33 people; the dues had not paid since 1928; it is characterized by “careless leadership, very poor work”.

There were 35 and 28 members in Sabinov and Lipany respectively, the dues were not paid for two years, and they were characterized by limited activity. The cell in Humenné stood out among them, there were 88 people, working very well, belonging to the best departments (SNA, SL, k. 1).

In fact, eastern Slovakia was characterized by the unresolved territorial delineation of the Ruthenian-Slovak ethnic division, the growth and politicization of the Ruthenian movement in the electoral, educational, and religious spheres at the beginning of the 1930s.

That is why, the Slovak League facilitated its activities in ethnically mixed territories, one of which was Eastern Slovakia in the 1930s. On June 8, 1931, at the meeting in Bratislava, the issue on “focusing on the eastern territories” arose (SNA, SL, k. 71). Moreover, during the period of 1935 – 1938, the Slovak League tried to resolve the Ruthenian issue at its meetings actively.

It should be noted that the Ruthenian issue was raised by the Slovak League at the Congress in Lučenec. However, due to lack of information, it was postponed until the next Congress. There was the strong opposition regarding the revision of the borders with Subcarpathian Rus’ by the Slovak League (*K rusínskej otázke*, 1934, p. 11).

One of the important factors in the resistance to the “threat in the Slovak east” and the Greek-Catholic inspirations regarding “who is a Greek-Catholic is a Ruthenian” was the religious assimilation. In 1935, the idea of creating a separate Greek-Catholic bishopric and naming a bishop for the Slovaks with the liturgical Slovak language was announced (SNA, KÚ, k. 297, p. 157). As a result, the translation of liturgical books from Ruthenian to Slovak started, which had to be “tried to be published and tested”, and in the plan of the national distribution it was planned that “the Slovak and mixed parishes will be included in one, mainly the Slovak diocese” (SNA, KÚ, k. 297, pp. 136–137).

For the first time, the Ruthenian issue as the subject of a professional discussion was raised at Congress X of the Slovak League, which was held on June 8–10, 1934 in Spišská Nova Ves. The main report was made by the Secretary of the League, J. Ruman. He analysed the statistical data, linguistic and religious situation in detail. The politician believed that the reason for the politicization of the Ruthenians was the politicization of the Slovak internal political life and, accordingly, the preparation for the parliamentary elections of 1935. As regional secretary of the Slovak League in Kosice, J. Ruman wrote that “it would be very naive if we did not want to admit, that the Ruthenian issue has reached such large and dangerous proportions due to our own fault”. He considered the reason for this “in the politicisation of our public life” (Ruman, 1935, p. 37). In his opinion, the “Ruthenian issue” “is one of the most pressing issues not only of the east, but of Slovakia as a whole” (SNA, SL, k. 71). He stated that “Russophile harassment” is quite widespread in Eastern Slovakia (SNA, SL, k. 71). J. Ruman also offered his own recipe for solving the Ruthenian issue.

At Congress of 1934, the issue of the danger of “the Ruthenian propaganda in Eastern Slovakia, which has spread greatly not only among the Ruthenians, but also among the Slovak Greek-Catholics hatred of the Slovaks and at the same time creates Magyar

irredentism, threatens the integration of our Slovakia, was lively discussed". There was also talk on "dangerous agitation for the porysinnia (to become a Ruthenian) of Eastern Slovakia". The participants stated that "the Ruthenian propaganda does not affect only the cultural rapprochement of East Slovak and Subcarpathian the Ruthenians, but on the contrary, in the spirit of the slogan "from Poprad to the Tysa", it speaks of the union of Eastern Slovakia with Subcarpathian Rus' into one large autonomous political entity" (SNA, SL, k. 71).

The issues dedicated to the territorial definition were raised. The CRNR and RNR "demand the annexation of 16 eastern Slovak environs...Sobrance, Veľký Kapušany, Kráľovský Chlmec, Michalovce, Trebišov, Vranov, Humenné, Medzilaborce, Snina, Giraltovce, Prešov, Bardejov, Sabinov, Stará Ľubovňa, Spišská Stará Ves" (SNA, SL, k. 71).

The Congress members noted that "the tendency of the Ruthenian movement is undoubtedly political instead of the Slavic solidarity and cultural Slovak-Ruthenian rapprochement, mutual hatred and corresponding national frictions have been created" (SNA, SL, k. 71). Therefore, "the history of all those issues was one and the same; the population was told that if the school is not Ruthenian, their children will not know how to pray from Ruthenian books, which will lose their Ruthenian faith. Therefore, they signed only out of fear that his Slovak school would eventually convert him to their faith". The reason for this was that "the Ruthenian issue has acquired such large and growing dimensions through our fault, the great fault of our Czechoslovak political parties".

One of the participants of the Congress, Grnčar from Prešov, noted that "the campaign that started in the east is already progressing further, closer to us... The population today is so determined that the answer to any question is "I am a Ruthenian" (SNA, SL, k. 71).

It should be noted that in the field of political preferences of the Ruthenians of Eastern Slovakia, serious changes occurred in the mid-1930s. They began to participate in the electoral processes actively. Thus, Bardiyivskyyi Chief claimed that Fentsyk "gained many admirers in this district" (SNA, KÚ, k. 237, p. 25).

On February 21, 1935, another meeting of the members of the Slovak League was held in Bratislava, at which the Ruthenian issue was resolved. The members of the League agreed that "the language issue should be depoliticized, and that's because not such a large number of voters would be of particular importance to individual Czechoslovak political parties". At the same time, the delegates stated that "people, who define themselves as the Ruthenians do not have the national consciousness until now and that the problem of 90 000 Ruthenians in Slovakia could be gradually eliminated in a short time with silent cultural work and economic promotion" (SNA, KÚ, k. 90, p. 26).

The Slovak politicians launched an action against the thesis that "whatever is a Greek-Catholic is a Ruthenian" in opposition to the Ruthenian Greek-Catholic clergy and a significant reduction of its role in Eastern Slovakia. On a practical level, they suggested establishing a separate Greek-Catholic bishopric for the Slovaks in Michalovce.

On July 19, 1935, the Ukrainian government in Bratislava sent an order to the district Chiefs of Eastern Slovakia to identify Russification activities on the part of the Greek Catholic clergy (SNA, KÚ, k. 297, pp. 86–87). In turn, on June 1, 1935, Sabinov Chief reported on the relationship between people "who is a Ruthenian, then a Bolshevik is", as well as the increase in the number of votes for the Communist Party at the parliamentary elections (SNA, KÚ, k. 297, p. 98).

As a result, a corresponding programme of denationalization of the Ruthenians was

developed. It was offered that the Greek Catholic Diocese in Slovakia in Prešov “pass into the Slovak hands” as a practical measure to speed up this process. Also, among the steps to paralyze the Ruthenians, it was necessary to prevent “the Ruthenian propaganda” by the people from the Greek-Catholic Teachers’ Institute in Prešov and from some folk Greek-Catholic schools. It was also suggested publishing religious and other school books for the Greek-Catholic Slovaks and the Greek-Catholic schools and “finally to bring the Ruthenians living in Slovakia closer to the Czechoslovak culture by the fact that a language close to the Czechoslovak language was introduced in the Ruthenian folk schools in Slovakia” (SNA, KÚ, k. 90, p. 26).

In this regard, the Ruthenians put forward the “Memorandum of the Ruthenian population of Prešov Ruthenian oblast”, which included 16 points of demand on August 17, 1936. Among them, the main demand was to join the autonomous Subcarpathian movement “the 250 000 Ruthenian population is degraded to the minority of the Ruthenian region of the former Zemplynskyyi, Abauyskyi, Sharyshskyyi, Spishskyyi poviats” because “the Ruthenian population of Prešov Rus is exposed to all kinds of the national oppression, denationalization, constant attacks against the Ruthenian cultural institutions and economic wrongs”. It was required to be carried out through a “plebiscite under the supervision of disinterested controllers”, “so that the authorities would grant us our rights”. The Memorandum also talked about the existence of the Ruthenian institutions, the introduction of the Ruthenian teaching language at national schools and the appointment of the Ruthenian teachers there, the creation of the Ruthenian bourgeois schools in the districts of Sobrance, V. Svidník, Bardejov, Sabinov, Giraltovce, St. Lubovňa, Spišská St. Ves, Trebišov, Vranov, Humenné, Michalovce, Prešov; the appointment of the Ruthenian school inspectors for all Ruthenian districts, the approval of the Ruthenian books for teaching “in the language of Duchnovič”, the teaching of the Ruthenian alphabet and the Ruthenian Catechism in all communities where worship was held in the Old Slavic language, the allocation of subsidies to libraries in Ruthenian communities, the publication of laws in Ruthenian language, establishment of the Ruthenian seals, inscriptions in all government structures located in the Ruthenian communities, state support for the Ruthenian gymnasium in Prešov, the Ruthenian text on tickets, admission of the Ruthenian to government, appointment of a Ruthenian referent and a school referent for the Ruthenian schools, as well as a Ruthenian referent for church affairs, the introduction of the Ruthenian officials into the exposition of the country’s government. The authors of the Memorandum opposed the replacement of the Greek Catholic Bishop in Prešov and the Ruthenian schools (SNA, KÚ, k. 237, p. 2).

The Slovak authorities began to study the “unhealthy situation in the Greek Catholic Church” (SNA, KÚ, k. 297, pp. 197–201). In August of 1936, the district Chief from St. Lubovňa reported on the growth of the political activity on the part of the Greek-Catholic priests of Jakubany, Šambron, and Krompachy, who conduct “their Ruthenian politics” among the population. They tried to show their civil position and in practice supported the Fentsikivtsi. Thus, on October 28, 1935, during the celebration of the national holiday in Jakubany, a local priest “left the church provocatively at the time when the teachers began to sing the national anthem” (SNA, KÚ, k. 297, pp. 175, 189). In Giraltovce, priests “stop speaking Hungarian in public” (SNA, KÚ, k. 297, p. 177). In reports, the Slovak officials stated that in the majority of districts the Greek Catholic fathers support the Autonomous Agricultural Union politically (SNA, KÚ, k. 297, p. 199). At the parishes in Sobrance, Michalovce, Trebišov and Snina districts, which belonged to Uzhhorod Diocese, Uzhhorod

Bishop did not appoint priests from Slovakia (SNA, KÚ, k. 297, pp. 199–200).

At the same time, in solving the Ruthenian issue, the Slovak authorities resorted to persecuting the Greek Catholic priests. Thus, a case was opened against the priest Dudinskyi from Hodemarek of Kežmarok district regarding the “Ruthenization of his Slovak believers” on October 22, 1936 (SNA, KÚ, k. 237, p. 2). On April 20, 1937, in Olšavica of Levoča district, a local district Chief noted that “the church is the Greek-Catholic with a Ruthenian service” (SNA, KÚ, k. 237, p. 2).

The activity of the local Slovak authorities, representatives of the Slovak League, and as a result the accelerated Slovakization led to a decrease in the area of use of the Ruthenian language, especially on the Slovak-Ukrainian ethnic border. Thus, on June 22, 1937, Giraltovce district government official reported that in Benediktovce “the majority speak the Ruthenian dialect”, but the school in this village was the Slovak one. The same situation was observed in Rusky Kručov and Ruska Voľa. At the same time, the Slovak and the Ruthenian languages were partly used in Soboš, Šapinec, Štiavnik, Štefurov, although, as the official noted, the Slovak is used “in life”. At that time, the local population in Ďurd’oš, Fijaš, Chmeľov, Kobylnice, Kožany spoke Slovak (SNA, KÚ, k. 237, p. 2).

On August 23, 1937, Sabinov district Chief singled out 12 settlements with the Ruthenian majority (Bajerovce, Čirč, Hanigovce, Jakubany, Jastrabie, Kyjov, Ľutina, Olejníkov, Orlov, Renčišov, Újak, Vislanka). At the same time, he noted that in Ľutina, Olejníkov and Vyslanka, “a strong campaign is being conducted for the introduction of the Ruthenian teaching language” (SNA, KÚ, k. 237, p. 2).

On October 7, 1937, the district Chief in Michalovce noted that the campaign aims “to have the border of Subcarpathian Rus end as far as Poprad” and “to have all Slovaks of the Greek-Catholic faith declare themselves as the Ruthenian nationals” (SNA, KÚ, k. 237, p. 2).

On April 29, 1937, another meeting of the Slovak League was held in Bratislava regarding the Ruthenian issue and the situation of the Ruthenians in Slovakia. It was decided to demand the adoption of Constitutional Law on defining the borders of the Slovak and Subcarpathian lands, the creation of the Slovak Greek-Catholic bishopric, the construction of the Slovak public schools on the Ruthenian-Slovak border, as well as to develop a programme of economic, social and cultural work, to emphasize the need for reliable national public representation in the Eastern Slovak language, as well as requirements for political parties and magazines so that they did not excessively force the language requirements of the Ruthenian minority, publishers of the Slovak Greek-Catholic magazines, a detailed linguistic study of Eastern Slovakia and to focus on the importance of the future census (SNA, KÚ, k. 297, pp. 18–20).

The events were held to honour famous Slovaks on the initiative of the Slovak League. One of them was the action of the Council of Young Slovaks in Eastern Slovakia and Zemplín, Šariš and Košice Academic Unions on February 25, 1938 regarding the installation of monuments to famous Slovak figures in Košice, Michalovce, Prešov and Trebišov to the 20th anniversary of the creation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (AOPCR, in. č. 691, D 4296, k. 57).

The Conclusions. Thus, in connection with the intensification of the socio-political life of the Ruthenians in Eastern Slovakia and their defense of their own national rights, the Slovak authorities, fearing irredentist tendencies in the east, resorted to active observation of the Ruthenian issue with its subsequent resolution. In this context, the Slovak League took practical steps in solving it. Actually, in 1934 – 1938, the Ruthenian issue became the subject

of consideration at its Congresses and meetings. The actual development of recipes for solving the Ruthenian issue by the Slovak League led to the implementation of its ideas by the Slovak authorities, namely the strengthening of the total Slovakization of the educational network, banning of the Ruthenian associations and unions, persecution of Ruthenian figures and even the Slovakization of a religious sphere. Another fact is that the Slovak defensive reflex was not adequate and in fact caused damage to the Ruthenian community in Eastern Slovakia, and therefore on the Slovak-Ruthenian relations. In fact, the Slovak League also played an important role. This issue has a significant potential for a new perspective on the Slovak-Ruthenian relations in north-eastern Slovakia.

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