

Shandor, Vincent. *Podkarpatská Rus od vzniku ČSR po sovětskou anexi*. Praha: Rybka publishers, 2013. ISBN: 978-80-87067-06-2. 312 pp.

The book offers the point of view of its author, who was a representative of the Carpathian-Ukrainian government in Prague in 1938–1939. The author does not hold it as a secret, that he counts himself among the supporters of the Ukrainian state, which his opinion on the role of Ruthenia (present Transcarpathian region) in the establishment of the Czechoslovakian republic and also on the role of the Carpathian region in the establishment of Ukraine stem out of.

The book is divided in the thematic manner into three large parts that are arranged in a chronological manner. The first part is concerned with the interwar era of 1918–1938, as its title would suggest. In this part, the author describes the circumstances that led to the annexation of Ruthenia to Czechoslovakia. He takes note of the contradiction between the opinion of the Ruthenian immigrants in the USA, who were in favour of the annexation to Czechoslovakia, and the domestic group, which expressed its doubts at first, but ultimately agreed with the annexation. The author expresses his critique towards Edvard Beneš, who, according to his opinion, did not deliver on his promises, that he had given to the Ruthenian representatives and wilfully only demarcated the Slovak-Ruthenian border. This is followed by an analysis, in which the author, who is a lawyer, draws attention to the inconsistency between Czechoslovakia's debts towards Ruthenia negotiated in the St. Germain agreement, and the Czechoslovakian constitution from 1920. At this point, he criticizes the overly vague formulations in the constitution concerning the role of Ruthenia, which do not correspond with the debts included in the St. Germain agreement. The first part also deals with the question of legitimacy of Hungary's claim on the Ruthenian region, and with the events that were tied to the 1938's Vienna Arbitrage. The author, based on his own analysis, considers Hungary's claims to be illegitimate, and thus the results of the Vienna Arbitrage to be illegitimate. This part marks the first appearance of author's

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strong dislike towards Hungary. For example, the author argues with the state ideology in the name of the Crown on St. Stephen. This begs the question, whether this point is relevant to the book's subject at all.

The second part is the largest, concerning its themes, and deals with the era between the Munich Agreement and the disintegration of Czechoslovakia in 1939. The author draws mainly from his own experience from working as a Carpatho-Ukrainian representative in Prague. He expresses his positive evaluation of Ruthenia's progress in nearly two decades, in the areas of society, agriculture and culture. He then states, that the change of the constitutional arrangement finally meets the constitutional role within the Czechoslovakian republic, as was promised. He describes the duties, that he was obliged to perform, given his title, mainly trade agreements, his activities National Agricultural Counsel, communication with media and solving sudden problems that were mostly financial. This part's main subject is the crisis of Carpathian Ukraine, concerning the international situation and politics. Carpathian Ukraine wished to maintain the standing system of arrangements of Czechoslovakia, but this proved very difficult, for which it blames mainly Hungary, but also Poland, which, using provocation on a smaller scale, made communication with Czech authorities difficult. This part is finished with Carpathian Ukraine's declaration of independence on the 15 March 1939 and the following annexation by the Hungarian army. The text of this part is pleasantly charged with emotional description of events, e.g. description of Hitler's arrival in Prague, or the circumstances of Carpathian Ukraine's declaration of independence, which allows the reader to feel the uneasy tone of the era.

The third part of the book is concerned with the Second World War. It comprises two large subjects, first of which being the Hungarian occupation, and the second of which the circumstances of Carpathian Ukraine's annexation to the Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine. The Hungarian occupation is described using several examples of the Hungarian behaviour on the occupied land, e.g. violence towards the inhabitants and the process of Hungarization,

mainly through the means of closing Ukrainian schools, Hungarian names and implementing the Hungarian language as the sole official language. The annexation to the USSR is mildly described in the list of negotiations between Czechoslovak and Soviet representatives. Again, he expresses his critique of Beneš's actions, mainly the inaccurate interpretation of Stalin's plans. Nonetheless, he admits that the contemporary international political reality did not offer many alternatives. He interprets the annexation to the Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine, and therefore to the USSR, as a result, that many advocates of Carpathian Ukraine's Pro-Russian direction had wished, but that, ultimately, proved to be wrong.

The book offers the point of view on events that, on a large scale, changed the world in the end of the first half of the 20th century, of a direct witness. The author describes himself as a supporter of an independent Ukrainian state, which is a thought that is present throughout the whole book. The same goes for his strong dislike aimed towards Hungary. Although he sees the beginning of the connection with Czechoslovakia as an injustice, as a whole, he evaluates the era of the connection positively, mostly due to the progress of the region in nearly two decades. The book includes several emotional parts, which reflect author's personal experience and bring the reader closer to the events of those uneasy years. The book is not without some factual errors, e.g. the interpretation of T. G. Masaryk's relationship with the socialist revolution in Russia, some conclusions can be seen as speculative, however this can be pardoned due to author's personal connection with those events and his Pro-Ukrainian attitude. The author lived to see the constitution of an independent Ukrainian state in the beginning of the 90's, which he feels as a journey's end, and, more importantly, he foretells that Ukraine will become a region that will prevent Germany's expanse to the east, or Russia's expanse to the west, in the future.

David Almer