

The Position of Carpathian Ruthenia in the Political System of the First Czechoslovak Republic on the Background of the Issue of Parliamentary Elections and Preferences of Main Political Currents by Carpathian-Ruthenian Voters (1918–1938)

*Andrej Tóth**

The study focuses, in the context of the position of Carpathian Ruthenia in the political system of the First Czechoslovak Republic, on the issue of the parliamentary elections, specifically on the representation of Carpathian Ruthenia in the Czechoslovak National Assembly. Within the issue of the parliamentary election, it highlights particularly the uneven limitations of the rules for election to the National Assembly for Carpathian Ruthenia, putting at disadvantage the easternmost tip of interwar Czechoslovakia in the central legislative body of the country. From the perspective of the political situation, it also summarizes the political stratification of the voters of the easternmost tip of the Czechoslovak Republic of that time, from the perspective of the Carpathian-Ruthenian results of the four parliamentary elections of the First Republic.

[Carpathian Ruthenia; First Czechoslovak Republic; political system; parliamentary elections]

The easternmost tip, Carpathian Ruthenia, constituted one of the most problematic territories of the interwar Czechoslovak state; the territory had been adjudged, together with Slovakia, to Czechoslovakia by the Paris Peace Conference after World War I. The two above stated eastern parts of the Czechoslovak Republic had constituted a part of Hungary before 1918, since the establishment of the Hungarian Kingdom at the turn

* Faculty of Economics / Faculty of International Relations, University of Economics in Prague, W. Churchill Sq. 1938/4, 130 67 Prague 3, Czech Republic.
E-mail: andrej.toth@seznam.cz.

of the 10th and 11th centuries. During the centuries, the Hungarian and Czech history had been several times influenced by their political affiliation to one common state within which both states had existed, with higher or lower autonomy, from 1526; but their political-social and broad socio-cultural development had of course been different in many aspects. Even the period of strong centralization of the state in the period of absolutism and neo-absolutism from the second half of the 17th century to the second half of the 19th century changed nothing about it. The socio-cultural structures of thinking of the inhabitants of the western and eastern halves of the common monarchy were affected by other historical-political experiences and aspects. They had roots not only deep in the history of both states but also in different political-social and economic determinants resulting from different broader regional geopolitical factors. Therefore Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia, while becoming a part of Czechoslovakia, had been politically and socially connected to a different political and socio-cultural centre for centuries. The most illustrative example of the socio-cultural contradiction of two different areas of the state included the Carpathian Germans in Slovakia who maintained political cooperation exclusively with the Hungarian minority political scene virtually all over the existence of the First Czechoslovak Republic. Any attempts for political convergence of the Slovak or Carpathian-Ruthenian Germans with the Sudeten Germans from the historical countries, i. e. from Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia had absolutely failed until the massive entrance of Konrad Heinlein's Sudeten German Party in mid 1930s.

Additionally, the idea of the unified Czechoslovak nation, which had helped in international political scene to implement the establishment of the independent state of Czechs and Slovaks with their "fragile" two-third supremacy over other large national groups, soon turned out to be very unstable, and from the second half of the 1920s, the diversion of the Slovaks from the centralist state became more and more obvious and the demand for an autonomist rearrangement of the state got more and more distinctive support among the Slovaks. The relation of the Ruthenians with the Czechoslovak state was much more fragile, which resulted not only from the very low number of representatives of their nation-conscious intelligence. The interconnection of the Ruthenian population with the Hungarian environment was much closer than that of the Slovaks.

The issue of the existence of Carpathian Ruthenia within the Czechoslovak Republic was specific also due to the fact that while Slovakia was connected to Czechoslovakia without further international-legal conditions specifically regulating its position within the newly created state, thanks to the concept of the unified, although artificially created Czechoslovak nation, the connection of Carpathian Ruthenia to the Czechoslovak Republic was conditioned by the Entente Powers by adjudgement of autonomous position to that part of the Czechoslovak state. Prague agreed with that international-legal commitment by signing the international treaty concluded in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, so called Small Saint-Germain Treaty, or Minority Treaty, on September 10, 1919. The Treaty was concluded between the Principal Allied and Entente Powers and Czechoslovakia and Chapter II obliged Czechoslovakia to establish a “territory of South-Carpathian Ruthenians” within the Czechoslovak state as an autonomous unit, “endowed with the broadest autonomy compatible with the unity of the Czechoslovak state”. Czechoslovakia was committed to establish an autonomous council in Carpathian Ruthenia, with “legislative power in language, education and religious matters, as well as in issues of local administration and in all other issues assigned to it by the laws of the Czechoslovak state”. By signing the international-legal document, Czechoslovakia also had to undertake to select the civil servants in Carpathian Ruthenia “if possible, from among the inhabitants of that territory”.¹

However, the award of autonomous status to Carpathian Ruthenia within the Czechoslovak state was initiated not only by the Entente Powers. The population of Carpathian Ruthenia claimed allegiance to the Czechoslovak Republic on May 8, 1919, through its Central Russian National Council in Uzhhorod just under the condition that the broadest possible autonomy would be awarded to them within the common state of the Czechs and Slovaks. Nevertheless, from the perspective of constitutional concept of the Czechoslovak Republic, such autonomy had to be compatible with the unity of the Czechoslovak state, as the Constitutional Deed of the Czechoslovak Republic declared. However, Prague, although

¹ See Art. 10, 11 and 12 of Chapter II of the quoted document in: Collection of Acts and Decrees (hereinafter referred to only as the CoAaD), Issue 134. Issued on December 31, 1920. Doc. No. 508. Traité entre les Principales Puissances Alliées et Associées et la Tchéco-Slovaquie signé à Saint-Germain-en-Laye, le 10 Septembre 1919 – Treaty between the Principal Allied and Entente Powers and Czechoslovakia, signed in Saint-Germain-en-Laye on September 10, 1919, pp. 2307–2308.

bound by the international-legal and, after all, constitutional award of autonomy to Carpathian Ruthenia, did not take that step neither in the 1920s nor in the 1930s. The Czechoslovak governments refused to reflect the wish of the Ruthenian political representation permanently asking for adjudgement of full autonomous self-government of Carpathian Ruthenia, in spite of strongly rising autonomist tendency in the republic in the 1930s.² Even in the second decade of the existence of the Czechoslovak Republic, Prague adverted to low political and cultural maturity of the Carpathian-Ruthenian population that allegedly did not sufficiently guarantee the “trouble-free” autonomous administration of Carpathian Ruthenia, sufficiently immune against separatist tendencies of a part of its population that saw the future of Carpathian Ruthenia in its return under the administration of the Hungarian state. In many regards, the approach of the Czechoslovak government cabinets was incorrect. As incorrect can be identified also the attitude of the government to the extensive proposal of Carpathian-Ruthenian autonomy, submitted by Ivan Kurt’ak, deputy of so called Russian national bloc, in autumn 1930. The government did absolutely not reflect the deputy’s proposal, although elaborated in much detail.³

In spite of partial political concessions of the government towards Carpathian Ruthenia towards the end of the existence of the democratic First Republic, which, nevertheless, did not by far meet the political desires of the Carpathian-Ruthenian political representation, Prague was not able to settle successfully the Carpathian-Ruthenian issue in the dramatic period after the fourth parliamentary election held in 1935. At that time, unfortunately, the government was primarily occupied by the issue of the German minority, amounting to more than three million persons,

² Here, see CoAaD, Issue XXVI. Issued on March 6, 1920. Doc. No. 121. Act from 29 February 1920, introducing the Constitutional Deed of the Czechoslovak Republic, or the Constitutional Deed of the Czechoslovak Republic, respectively, pp. 256–257. The act stated, among other things, that the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic constituted a unified and indivisible whole and that the autonomous territory of Carpathian Ruthenia was an integral part of the Czechoslovak state “based on voluntary joining according to the treaty between the main and associated powers and the Czechoslovak Republic in Saint-Germain-en-Laye from 10 September 1919” and that that territory would be endowed with the broadest autonomy compatible with the unity of the Czechoslovak Republic. See *ibidem*, §§ 1 and 2 of the referred article.

³ Z. KONEČNÝ, “Zástupci Podkarpatské Rusi v poslanecké sněmovně”, in: *Sborník prací Filosofické fakulty Brněnské university*, C, Řada historická, roč. 19, č. C17, 1970, p. 132.

that was markedly supported by the strengthening Third Reich. Additionally, the pressure of the Hungarian and Slovak autonomist political representation, whose political base was still underrated by the government, become stronger as well. In the second half of the 1930s already, exclusive and consistent autonomization of the centralist Czechoslovak state became the main goal of the numerically crucial national groups of the First Czechoslovak Republic. The autonomy of Carpathian Ruthenia was enacted by the Constitutional Act on Autonomy of Carpathian Ruthenia only in the period of the Second Republic, on November 22, 1938. From the perspective of state-safety risks, the fears of the governments of the First Republic were substantiated; but from the perspective of international legal commitments of Czechoslovakia and from the perspective of the provisions of the Constitution, it must be stated that Prague did not meet its commitments.

From the beginning, the state-safety interests of the First Republic were determined primarily by the multi-coloured national structure of the population of the Czechoslovak state, strongly resembling the former Austria-Hungary. Out of the total number of 13,374,364 inhabitants of the Czechoslovak Republic, registered in the census of 1921, "only" 8,760,937 claimed allegiance to Czechoslovak nationality. That constituted "only" 65.5 % of all population. The rest consisted of members of large national groups, particularly Germans, Hungarians, Ruthenians and Poles. According to the census of 1921, 3,123,568 inhabitants of German nationality lived in Czechoslovakia, making 23.4 % of the total number of population of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1921. The second largest national minority of interwar Czechoslovakia consisted of the Hungarians. In 1921, 745,431 persons, i. e. 5.6 % of the inhabitants of the republic claimed allegiance to the Hungarian nationality. The third largest national group of the First Czechoslovak Republic consisted of the Ruthenians. In 1921, the number of inhabitants of Ruthenian nationality amounted to 461,849, i. e. 3.5 % of all population. In 1930, the number of inhabitants claiming allegiance to the Ruthenians increased to 549,169. So Czechoslovakia, similarly to other Central European or Central Eastern European states like Poland, the Kingdom of Serbians, Croats and Slovenians, the later Kingdom of Yugoslavia, or Romania proved the failure of the principle of right to self-determination according to Wilson's principles that had constituted the original foundations of the Paris Peace Conference. Although 11,000 kilometres of new borders and 14 new states were created

in the political map of post-war Europe, the number of inhabitants living in the status of national minority still amounted to a high figure – 60 million people in Europe and at least 15 to 17 million people in Central-Eastern Europe (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania; without the specific religious-national group of Jews).⁴

As that fact shows, the “creation” and subsequent assertion of the concept of the unified Czechoslovak nation was logically more than indispensable at the international political scene. Only in that way, the state-constituting nation of the new state, declared in the Constitutional Deed of the First Czechoslovak Republic, could achieve a two-third share in the total structure of the population.

The national structure of Carpathian Ruthenia was multi-coloured as well. Its total number of population amounted to 599,808 in 1921, and less than ten years later, in 1930, to 709,129. The largest national group in Carpathian Ruthenia consisted, of course, of the Ruthenians. In 1921, their number amounted to 372,884, and in 1930, to 446,916.⁵ The Ruthenians in Carpathian Ruthenia achieved two-third majority within the total number of population of the region, similarly to the Czechoslovaks within the whole Czechoslovak Republic. In 1921, the Ruthenians constituted 62.2 % of the total number of the inhabitants of Carpathian Ruthenia, and in 1930, 63 %. The number of Ruthenians, who were summarily referred to as citizens of Russian nationality including the Great Russian, Ukrainian and Carpathian-Ruthenian identity within the census of 1921 and as citizens of Russian and Small Russian nationality in 1930, increased by 74,032 persons during the 1920s. Nevertheless, about 20 % of Ruthenian inhabitants lived outside the administration border of

⁴ Československá statistika (hereinafter referred to only as ČSS) – Volume 9. Series VI. (Sčítání lidu, Book 1), Sčítání lidu v Republice Československé ze dne 15. února 1921 (hereinafter referred to only as Sčítání lidu 1921), Part I, Praha 1924, Tab. 50, Národnost československých státních příslušníků. I., p. 60* and ČSS – Volume 98. Series VI. (Sčítání lidu, Book 7), Sčítání lidu v Republice Československé ze dne 1. prosince 1930 (hereinafter referred to only as Sčítání lidu 1930), Part I, Praha 1934, Přehled 36, Národnost domácího obyvatelstva r. 1920 a 1930 podle zemí, p. 46*; J. B. KLAUS, *Evropa v pohybu: Evropské migrace dvou staletí*, Praha 2005, p. 236; A. HAJN, *Problém ochrany menšin*, Praha 1923, pp. 60–61, 67, 70–71, 73, 76, 79–80.

⁵ Cf. ČSS, Sčítání lidu 1921, quot. Tab. 50, p. 60* a ČSS – Sčítání lidu 1930, quot. survey 36, p. 46*.

Carpathian Ruthenia. In 1921, 19.3 % Ruthenians lived outside the Carpathian-Ruthenian Region, and in 1930, 18.6 %.⁶

The second largest national group of the easternmost tip of the republic consisted, similarly to Slovakia, of the Hungarians – in 1921, 102,144 (17 %) of them lived there, and in 1930, 109,472 (15.4 %). The third largest national group of Carpathian Ruthenia consisted of the specific religious-national group of Jews. In 1921, 80,059 (13.3 %) persons claimed allegiance to Jewish nationality in Carpathian Ruthenia, and in 1930, 91,255 (12.9 %), i. e. by 11,196 inhabitants of Carpathian Ruthenia more than in the first census made in the Czechoslovak Republic. It is interesting that the number of Jews in Carpathian Ruthenia constituted almost one half of all Czechoslovak Jews. Let's state here that in 1921, 180,855 Jews in total lived all over Czechoslovakia and in 1930, 186,642 Jews in total. So in 1921, 44.3 % of all Czechoslovak Jews lived in Carpathian Ruthenia and in 1930, 48.9 %.⁷

The Germans also constituted a relatively strong national group of the easternmost tip of the republic. In 1921, 10,460 (1.8 %) people claimed allegiance to German nationality in Carpathian Ruthenia and in 1930, 13,249 (1.9 %). So the Germans constituted, after the members of the Czechoslovak nation,⁸ the fifth largest national group in that part of the republic.⁹ Poles were represented in a very low number in Carpathian Ruthenia. In 1921, only 297 (0.05 %) inhabitants of Carpathian Ruthenia claimed allegiance to Polish nationality, and in 1930, only 159 (0.02 %). The category of other nationalities included, in the statistics of 1921, 14,227 (2.4 %) inhabitants of Carpathian Ruthenia without specific nationality, and in 1930, 14,117 (2 %).¹⁰

In view of the multi-coloured national structure of the Czechoslovak Republic and of Carpathian Ruthenia, it is therefore logical that the approach of the Czechoslovak governments to national minorities, as well

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ Cf. ibidem.

⁸ In 1921, 19,737 inhabitants of Czechoslovak nationality lived in Carpathian Ruthenia; nevertheless, less than ten years later, there were 14,224 Czechoslovaks more, which means that in 1930, 33,961 citizens of Czechoslovak nationality lived there. Cf. ibidem.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ Ibidem. Let's add for complete overview that the total number of population of the First Czechoslovak Republic increased between 1921 and 1930 from 13,374,364 to 14,479,565 inhabitants, which means that during the observed period, the Czechoslovak population increased by 1,105,201. Cf. ibidem.

as to Carpathian Ruthenia, was strongly influenced by the strategic-safety interest of Prague governments. The stability of the multinational Czechoslovak state was to be guaranteed by the centralist administration of the country and the central role in the administration and determination of further development of the state fell upon the state-constituting Czechoslovak nation. In the course of time, it turned out that even the modern constitutional limitations of the Czech Republic, based on the western model of dominance of individual civil rights over collective rights were not favoured by the national minorities who gradually opposed the model. But that is logical, as an overwhelming majority of the society of that time, including the Czechoslovaks, asked for collective rights. The Ruthenians were classified as immature inhabitants of the republic even more than the Slovaks by the Prague government that believed that their internationally guaranteed rights had to be awarded to them only gradually. It is understandable that the arguments on the immaturity of the Carpathian-Ruthenian population offended the Ruthenians.

The Czechoslovak governments asserted the theory that the Carpathian-Ruthenian population, i. e. the Ruthenians, first had to mature in political respect. For that reason, not only the implementation of autonomy of Carpathian Ruthenia, but also the integration of the easternmost tip of the republic into the political system progressed very slowly and under more unfavourable conditions than in case of the other parts of the republic. With reference to the safety threats from the Hungarian state and from the part of Carpathian-Ruthenian population with Hungarophile mentality, consisting not only of the Carpathian-Ruthenian Hungarian national minority, i. e. with reference to general lack of consolidation of the situation in Carpathian Ruthenia, the dictatorship of military civil administration was established in the easternmost tip of the republic at the beginning. That administration lasted from 1919 to 1923, and the Ruthenian political representation perceived that step of Prague very negatively, which was understandable. While the first post-war parliamentary election was held in the remaining parts of the republic in 1920, in Carpathian Ruthenia it took place only in 1924, actually at the end of the first term of office of the Czechoslovak National Assembly. For that reason, the beginning of the period of democratic parliamentarism in Carpathian Ruthenia dates back only to 1923.¹¹

The representation of Carpathian Ruthenia in the two chambers of the National Assembly of the First Czechoslovak Republic constituted one of the main areas in which different conditions were purposefully established for political-strategic reasons, putting Carpathian Ruthenia at partial disadvantage. The Prague governments considered the election a kind of political school for the Carpathian-Ruthenian inhabitants, which was reflected in difference of the election conditions applied in the historical countries and in the easternmost tip of the republic. The unequal conditions of representation of the Carpathian-Ruthenian population in the Czechoslovak Parliament were reflected particularly in the higher number of the inhabitants and of the electors falling upon one mandate, as compared to the historical countries, i. e. Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. While in the historical countries, 43,464 inhabitants fell on average upon one deputy mandate, as the statistical data of the first postwar parliamentary election show, in Carpathian Ruthenia, up to 67,303 inhabitants fell upon one deputy mandate, which means that one deputy elected in Carpathian Ruthenia represented almost 24,000 inhabitants more than one deputy elected in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. As for the number of inhabitants falling upon one senator mandate, the differences between the historical countries and the easternmost tip of the republic were even greater. One Carpathian-Ruthenian senator mandate had up to 151,433 inhabitants falling upon it (!), which was almost 65,000 inhabitants more than those represented, on average, by one senator mandate in the historical countries where 86,927 inhabitants fell on it on average.¹²

Carpathian Ruthenia also showed a high electoral number in the parliamentary elections, and the number increased in the course of the subsequent years faster than in the other parts of the republic, particularly as compared with the historical countries. In 1925, the electoral number for the Chamber of Deputies actually dropped in Carpathian Ruthenia from 28,245 to 27,304 votes, but in 1929, the electoral number in the eastern-

¹¹ J. ZATLOUKAL (ed.), *Podkarpatská Rus*, Bratislava 1936, p. 75; P. ŠVORC, *Zakletá zem: Podkarpatská Rus 1918–1946*, Praha 2007, p. 111.

¹² Cf. ČSS – Volume 1. Volby do Národního shromáždění v dubnu r. 1920 a všeobecné volby do obecních zastupitelstev v Čechách, na Moravě a ve Slezsku v červnu r. 1919 (hereinafter referred to only as Volby do NS 1920). S 10 kartogramy, Praha 1922, Tab. 1, p. 16*. Let's round off the picture by stating that, according to the census of 1920, Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia had 9,815,999, Slovakia 2,958,557 and Carpathian Ruthenia 599,808 inhabitants. Cf. ČSS, Sčítání lidu 1921, quot. Tab. 50, p. 60*.

most tip of the republic rose to 29,591 votes and in 1935, to 34,443 votes. In 1941, when the fifth parliamentary election was to take place, the electoral number for the Chamber of Deputies was expected to achieve 38,000 votes in Carpathian Ruthenia. In the third term of office, the higher increase of voters was caused by the fact that the busy emigration from Carpathian Ruthenia to other European countries for economic reasons¹³ had stopped after 1929.¹⁴

The number of voters falling upon one deputy mandate in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia oscillated (except for Prague) from some 24,000 to 26,500 in the first post-war parliamentary election. The number of voters falling upon one deputy mandate in Carpathian Ruthenia amounted to 28,245 voters in 1924, as stated above. However at that time, both electoral regions in Slovakia with Hungarian-speaking majority were in much more disadvantage – the number of voters falling upon one deputy mandate oscillated, on average, from 31,160 to 32,714 in 1920. But in the course of the subsequent years, the average number of voters per one deputy mandate increased at much faster rate in Carpathian Ruthenia than in the historical countries.¹⁵

With the increasing electoral number in Carpathian Ruthenia, the number of valid votes cast in the parliamentary elections in the easternmost tip

¹³ The emigration directed primarily to overseas countries was the most distinctive in the period of the First Czechoslovak Republic particularly in the eastern half of the republic, in Slovakia and in Carpathian Ruthenia. In late 1920s, emigration from Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia was 17.5 times higher than from Bohemia. The Ruthenians were those who left Carpathian Ruthenia in the highest numbers. In the period from 1923 to 1933, 11,249 Ruthenians left Carpathian Ruthenia for overseas countries or other parts of Europe, which constituted a very high number, as compared to other national groups living there. Within the emigration flows, Carpathian Ruthenia was left by 2,736 Hungarians, 1,978 Jews and 390 Germans in the said ten-year period. But the emigration process affected Carpathian Ruthenia markedly also in the preceding times. In the first nine months of 1921, 1,453 people (most of them in ages from 15 to 39 years) left Carpathian Ruthenia within the emigration processes, which constituted, when compared with the level of the whole republic, 10 % of all people who moved to overseas countries or to other parts of Europe. Emigration from Carpathian Ruthenia culminated in the second half of the 1920s. While in 1925, 930 inhabitants of Carpathian Ruthenia left the republic, in 1927, there were 1,873 and in 1929, there were 3,822 of them. Cf. J. BOTLIK, *Eduard Beneš and Podkarpatská Rus: Hungarians, Rusins and Czechs in Subcarpathia 1919–1938/1939*, Budapest 2008, pp. 120–121.

¹⁴ ZATLOUKAL, p. 76.

¹⁵ Cf. ČSS, Volby do NS 1920, quot. Tab. 1, pp. 12–13 and Tab. No. 1, p. 16*; ZATLOUKAL, p. 76.

of the republic increased continuously as well. An exception consisted in the first and the second parliamentary election in which, due to the drop of the electoral number, the number of the valid votes cast in the election for the Chamber of Deputies in 1924 dropped from 254,200 to 245,743 votes in 1925. But in the third parliamentary election in 1929, 266,324 valid votes were cast for the election to the Chamber of Deputies in the Carpathian-Ruthenian electoral regions, and in 1935, 323,645 valid votes. In the period from 1925 to 1929, i. e. in four years, the number of valid votes cast in the election to the Chamber of Deputies increased by 20,581, which means that the increase amounted to 5,145 per one year. But the increase of valid votes cast was much higher in 1929 to 1935 – in 1935, 57,321 valid votes more were cast in the election to the Chamber of Deputies as compared to the third parliamentary election in 1929. Due to the high natural increase of voters and in view of the high electoral number, the fight of the political parties in Carpathian Ruthenia was very sharp in all parliamentary elections, as in the 1930s, almost twenty different political parties struggled for 350,000 voters in Carpathian Ruthenia, as compared to early 1920s when “only” about ten political formations fought for the votes of the Carpathian-Ruthenian voters. Let’s state that from the total number of 300 deputy mandates, 9 mandates were filled in Carpathian Ruthenia, and from the total number of 150 senator mandates, 5.¹⁶

The Ruthenians belonged also to the national groups of the republic whose representation in the National Assembly did not correspond to their proportion in the total number of total population. The proportion of deputies of Ruthenian nationality in the structure of the Chamber of Deputies was only 1.7 % after the second parliamentary election that had reflected a stabilized political scene of the Czechoslovak state already, while their proportion in total number of population was twice as high. The representation of the Ruthenians in the Senate was much lower, achieving mere 0.3 %. The Hungarians had the same situation, as their representation in the second Chamber of Deputies of the National Assembly achieved a proportion of 3.3 %, while their total proportion in total population was also almost twice as high (5.6 %). However, in the Senate, their representation was slightly higher, achieving a proportion of 4 %. The proportional representation in the National Assembly corre-

¹⁶ Cf. ČSS, *Volby do NS 1920*, quot. Tab. 1, pp. 12–13 and Tab. No. 1, p. 16*; ZATLOUKAL, p. 76; B. ZSELICZKY, *Kárpátalja a cseh és szovjet politika érdekerében 1920–1945*, Budapest 1998, p. 31.

sponded to the proportional representation in total number of population in case of the Poles who were represented by 0.7 % in the second Chamber of deputies, and their proportion in total population was 0.6 % (they were not represented in the Senate). The Germans had the best situation from among the national minorities – their proportion in the Chamber of Deputies amounted to 25 % and in the Senate to 24 % in the second term of office of the National Assembly. Their total proportion in the population amounted to 23.4 %, as stated above. The best situation was, of course, that of the citizens of Czechoslovak nationality. Their proportion in the Chamber of Deputies amounted to 69 % and in the Senate to 70.7 % after 1925. The proportion of the Czechoslovaks in total population amounted to 65.5 %, according to statistical data from the first census made in 1920. The above stated asymmetry was caused particularly by the disproportions in the electoral regions, described above, but there were multiple factors playing a role.¹⁷

Additionally to the disproportion between the number of inhabitants and voters falling upon one mandate, Carpathian Ruthenia was put at disadvantage also due to the unequal conditions of candidacy for the National Assembly. While in the historical countries, the candidacy to the legislative body was bound to mere hundred voter signatures, in Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia, the candidacy to the legislative body had to be supported by thousand signatures. That exception had been determined at the very beginning of the republic, in 1920, by Act No. 123 from 29 February, issuing the code for election to the Chamber of Deputies. The Act also established that the said exception would be in effect for the eastern half of the republic, i. e. for Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia, until January 1, 1935 (!). Additionally, the signatures of the voters in electoral regions on the territory of Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia to which the validity of the candidate deed was bound, had to be authenticated also by the president of the political office of the second chair (province governor) of the province in whose territory the seat of the regional electoral commission was situated, or by a person authorized by him.¹⁸

¹⁷ V. ZÁDĚRA, *Politické strany v Národním shromáždění*, Praha 1929, p. 63; ČSS, *Sčítání lidu 1921*, quot. Tab. 50, p. 60*.

¹⁸ Cf. CoAaD, Volume 1920. Issue XXVII. Issued on March 6, 1920. No. 123. Act from 29 February 1920, issuing the code for election to the Chamber of Deputies, pp. 271–284, see § 21, p. 277.

As for the results of the parliamentary elections of the First Republic in Carpathian Ruthenia, we can see that the governmental direction did not find support among the Carpathian-Ruthenian voters. Except for 1929, opposition political parties won in Carpathian Ruthenia with considerable predominance. The government or pro-government political parties and of opposition political formations had the following proportions in the four parliamentary elections of the First Republic:

- 1924: government coalition 40 % of all votes / opposition 60 % of all votes
- 1925: government coalition 46 % of all votes / opposition 54 % of all votes
- 1929: government coalition 64 % of all votes / opposition 36 % of all votes
- 1935: government coalition 37 % of all votes / opposition 63 % of all votes

The above stated survey of proportional results of government and pro-government political forces and opposition political formations had a distinctive exception in 1929, when the third parliament election took place. Only at that time, the government and pro-government political parties had considerable success in Carpathian Ruthenia to detriment of the opposition. Nevertheless, in 1935, everything returned to its old ways and the opposition political parties had the greatest election gain in Carpathian Ruthenia, thanks to 63 % support of Carpathian-Ruthenian voters.¹⁹

Among the opposition political parties, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC) enjoyed the strongest support of Carpathian-Ruthenian voters. The communists got the most votes in Carpathian Ruthenia in the very first election, held in 1924, gaining support of 100,000 voters, which corresponded to almost 40 % from the total number of all valid votes cast. The KSC did not get such proportion of votes any more after that. In the second parliamentary election, its support among the Carpathian-Ruthenian voters dropped to 30.8 %, and in 1929, even to 15.2 %. The support of the party increased slightly in the last parliamentary election in 1935, when the party got 24.4 % of votes. In that year, the party was supported by 78,000 voters, i. e. by almost twice as many than in the third parliamentary election held in 1929. Nevertheless, the KSC took the first place in three parliamentary elections for the Chamber of Deputies in Carpathian Ruthenia, and only once, in 1929, was “only” third. So one of the most international workers’ parties, anti-autonomist

¹⁹ ZATLOUKAL, p. 83.

and supranational, got convincing electoral support in Carpathian Ruthenia. For example, the communists always got more votes than the opposition conservative national Hungarian parties in Carpathian Ruthenia even in districts with prevailing Hungarian speaking inhabitants. However, since 1925, thanks to instructions from the Comintern, the Communist Party also contributed distinctively to strengthening of pro-Ukrainian national identity of the Ruthenian population, which was in contradiction with the effort of the Czechoslovak governments; in other words, the KSČ considered the Slavic population Ukrainian, not Ruthenian, since the second half of the 1920s.²⁰

Election Results of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in Carpathian Ruthenia in 1924–1935²¹

Election	Number of valid votes cast	Proportion from total number of valid votes cast	Proportional result of the party placed <i>before</i> and their ranking	Proportional result of the party placed <i>after</i> ranking	Ranking
1924	100,242	39.4 %	–	110.0 % ²²	1 st
1925	75,669	30.8 %	–	14.2 % ²³	1 st
1929	40,583	15.2 %	18.3 % (2.) ²⁴ 29.1 % (1.) ²⁵	11.4 % ²⁶	3 rd
1935	78,334	24.4 %	–	19.0 % ²⁷	1 st

²⁰ ZATLOUKAL, pp. 76–82; N. BÁRDI – C. FEDINEC – L. SZARKA (eds.), *Kisebbségi magyar közösségek a 20. században*, Budapest 2008, p. 106; ZESLÍČKY, p. 33.

²¹ ZATLOUKAL, p. 76–82; C. FEDINEC – M. VEHEŠ (eds.), *Kárpátalja 1919–2009: Történelem, politika, kultúra*, Budapest 2010, pp. 71–75.

²² Autonomist party of Original Inhabitants of Carpathian Ruthenia.

²³ Governmental Republican Party of Farming and Smallholding People, or the agrarians.

²⁴ Ruthenian national bloc of smaller autonomous parties including the central Carpathian-Ruthenian autonomist party called Autonomous Agrarian Union in connection with the Czechoslovak National Democracy.

²⁵ Governmental Republican Party of Farming and Smallholding People, or the agrarians.

²⁶ Union of Hungarian parties. In 1920 to 1936, both central Hungarian opposition political parties (Smallholder, Trade and Agrarian Party, later Hungarian National Party and Land Christian-Socialist Party) were united in a joint party bloc in Carpathia Ruthenia until 1936 when both parties merged into one political subject at nationwide level. The Carpathian-Ruthenian Hungarian parties collaborated closely with Slovak Hungarian parties of the same names, but not within a united state-wide party organization. The Hungarian political parties in Carpathian Ruthenia acted as independent parties. Cf. BÁRDI – FEDINEC – SZARKA, p. 105.

²⁷ Governmental Republican Party of Farming and Smallholding People, or the agrarians.

The massive support to the Communist Party in Carpathian Ruthenia at the same time reflected the dominance of the social issue as the primary political issue among the Carpathian-Ruthenian voters; the social issue dominated in fact strongly over the issue of full autonomous administration of Carpathian Ruthenia that was restricted virtually exclusively to representatives of the intelligentsia. In view of the election results of the parliamentary election of the First Republic, the issue of the Carpathian-Ruthenian autonomy in Carpathian Ruthenia really seems to be rather a marginal issue. That finding is confirmed also by the fact that up to 70 % of the population of Carpathian Ruthenia supported workers' parties, making Carpathian Ruthenia the most left-wing oriented region of the First Czechoslovak Republic. So centralist parties had distinctive superiority over the autonomists. In view of that fact, it can be stated that the half-hearted approach of Prague governments to the autonomy of Carpathian Ruthenia was virtually not reflected in the election results, as the results of the autonomist political groups were not noticeable in any respect, although opposition political formations prevailed over the government and pro-government parties. That applies to the first three parliamentary elections. The situation in the fourth parliamentary election was different, as the autonomist direction achieved total proportional result of up to 40 % of all valid votes cast. The main determinants of the policy of the Carpathian-Ruthenian political scene consisted in fight for a new economic-social structure of the easternmost tip of the republic and fight for new political constellation of the region. The first one was characterized by the conflict between the political direction of the Agrarian Party and the communists; the second one, by the conflict between the central governmental political course and the autonomist political forces that were more and more affected by nationalism and separatism.²⁸

Nevertheless, the support to the strongest government left-wing party and another left-wing party with parliamentary representation, the Czechoslovak Social Democratic party was not much significant. Its electoral support in Carpathian Ruthenia oscillated between 18 and less than 30,000 votes, which was about 9 % of all valid votes cast. In 1924, Social Democracy took the third place; in 1925, the sixth place; in 1929, the fifth place, keeping it also in the election of 1935.²⁹

²⁸ ZATLOUKAL, pp. 78–79; FEDINEC – VEHEŠ, pp. 71–75.

²⁹ ZATLOUKAL, pp. 78–79, 86; FEDINEC – VEHEŠ, pp. 71–75.

From the perspective of the left-wing and pro-government political spectrum in Carpathian Ruthenia, the left-wing Zionist Jewish Party deserves to be mentioned. As stated above, virtually a half of the Israelites lived in the easternmost tip of the republic, which was reflected there in their self-standing political organization. The left-wing Zionist Jewish Party whose members came from among the intelligentsia and the workers was the strongest party of the Carpathian-Ruthenian Jews. Its ideas were closest to the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, closely cooperating with it in political, economic and cultural issues. But in the first three parliamentary elections, the party never achieved the electoral number. However, in 1935 it made a joint list of candidates with Social Democracy, and thanks to that election coalition, it got direct representation in the National Assembly with one mandate. When the party had run for election independently in 1924 to 1929, it was supported by about 17 to 19,000 voters, i. e. the party got 6.3 % to 8 % of all valid votes cast. In 1924, it took the sixth place, in 1925, the fifth, and in 1929, the sixth place again. The party got virtually the same political support in Carpathian Ruthenia as the Czechoslovak Social Democracy.³⁰

As compared to the election results of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, the election results of the Carpathian-Ruthenian autonomists were not convincing at all. The Autonomous Agrarian Union (ASZ), founded in early 1920s, was the central political party of the autonomists in Carpathian Ruthenia. It was an exclusively Ruthenian party whose voters came from among the Ruthenian smallholders, teachers and Greek Orthodox priests. Originally, the party had asserted immediate implementation of autonomy of Carpathian Ruthenia in practice, but later, it turned its back to the republic and asserted organization of a plebiscite on rejoining Hungary. Nevertheless, the representation of ASZ in the National Assembly was virtually insignificant. In the Chamber of Deputies of the Czechoslovak Parliament, it was always represented by one deputy and one senator. Its very low political force allowed it to run for the election independently only in 1924 and 1925. In the third parliamentary election, it made an election coalition, together with smaller and insignificant Carpathian-Ruthenian autonomous political formations, with the state-wide Czechoslovak National Democratic Party that was more significant. The motive consisted in the danger that without a broader election list

³⁰ ZATLOUKAL, p. 78; FEDINEC – VEHEŠ, pp. 71–73.

of candidates, it would not achieve an electoral number in the third parliamentary election. The Autonomous Agrarian Union proceeded in the same manner also in the fourth parliamentary election. At that time, it united with the central Slovak autonomist political party, the leading political subject in the Slovak political scene, with Hlinka's Slovak People's Party. In 1935, there was danger for Autonomous Agrarian Union not to achieve the minimal number of votes (quorum) needed in the parliamentary election and prescribed by the new act. The main political subject of Carpathian-Ruthenian autonomism was thus able to survive in the official Czechoslovak political scene only in election coalitions after 1929. While the Communist party was getting 75,000 to 100,000 votes in parliamentary elections in Carpathian Ruthenia, ASZ was obtaining only 21,000 to less than 45,000 votes, i. e. 8.4 % to 13.9 % of the valid votes cast. In the first two elections in which it ran independently, ASZ took the fourth place. But in 1924, another autonomist formation, the Autonomist Party of Ancient Inhabitants of Carpathian Ruthenia took the second place, getting 11.0 % of votes. But that political formation was pro-Hungary oriented and acted only until 1927, so it did not run in next election any more. ASZ achieved a considerably distinctive election success in election coalitions of 1929 and 1935, taking the second and the third place, respectively.³¹

Election Results of the Central Autonomist Party of the Autonomous Agrarian Union in Carpathian Ruthenia in 1924–1935³²

Election	Number of valid votes cast	Proportion from total number of valid votes cast	Proportional result of the party placed <i>before</i> and their ranking	Proportional result of the party placed <i>after</i> ranking	Ranking
1924	21,161	8.4 %	9.4 % ³³	8.0 % ³⁴	4 th
1925	28,799	11.6 %	11.8 % ³⁵	8.0 % ³⁶	4 th
1929	48,509	18.2 % ³⁷	29.1 % ³⁸	15.2 % ³⁹	2 nd
1935	44,982	13.9 % ⁴⁰	19.0 % ⁴¹	10.6 % ⁴²	3 rd

³¹ ZATLOUKAL, p. 81; ZSELICZKY, p. 32; FEDINEC – VEHEŠ, pp. 71–75; BÁRDI – FEDINEC – SZARKA, p. 105.

³² ZATLOUKAL, pp. 76–82; FEDINEC – VEHEŠ, pp. 71–75.

³³ Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party.

³⁴ Coalition election list of candidates of the Ruthenian Trud (Worker's) Party with the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party.

³⁵ Union of Hungarian parties, i. e. union of Hungarian and German parties at that time.

Let's look at the results of the central and governmental party of the First Czechoslovak Republic, or the most influential political party of the First Republic, Republican Party of Farming and Smallholding People, i. e. the agrarian party. The agrarian party representing the governmental politics had very low support in the first two parliamentary elections in Carpathian Ruthenia, held in 1924 and 1925. In 1924, the agrarians took only the seventh place with total number of 16,300 votes, i. e. only 6.4 % of all valid votes cast. But in the following year already, the agrarian party registered twice as high election result, 34,916 votes, and took the second place; nevertheless, the number of votes was only half the election result of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia that took the first place at that time. The agrarians achieved the best election result in 1929, getting approximately the same number of votes as KSČ in 1925 and taking the first place; that result was interpreted by the governmental circles as the victory of the idea of the Czechoslovak state and of the work of the Czechoslovak state administration in Carpathian Ruthenia. But the party was not able to repeat the proportional result of 29.1 % in subsequent elections any more. In 1935, the central governmental party of the country got only about 17,000 votes less, 60,747 votes, in Carpathian Ruthenia; but that result represented only 19.0 % of all valid votes cast at that time, placing the party second in overall score. It is interesting that the winning Communist Party of Czechoslovakia that took the first place again got approximately the same number of votes more, as compared to the number of votes the central party lost in the fourth parliamentary election of 1935 as against 1929. In view of the election results in 1935 in which also autonomist political forces registered quite distinctive success, it had to be stated: *"Statehood, loyalty and political consolidation suffered a defeat and strongly declined."* The causes of the landslide defeat of the governmental course in Carpathian Ruthenia were seen particularly in the economic crisis, lack of jobs, in the customs war with Hungary, in the revisionist movement in Hungary and in the tense relation

³⁶ Zionist Jewish Party.

³⁷ Coalition election list of candidates (see the main text above).

³⁸ Governmental agrarian party.

³⁹ Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

⁴⁰ Coalition election list of candidates (see the main text above).

⁴¹ Governmental agrarian party.

⁴² Union of Hungarian parties, i. e. union of Hungarian and German parties at that time.

of Czechoslovakia to Poland. But the electoral defeat of the governmental direction was contributed also by frictions among individual coalition parties and the quite unstable situation in the party organizations of the governmental Republican Party in Carpathian Ruthenia. Additionally, the pro-Ukrainian fraction of the agrarian party in Carpathian Ruthenia got considerably stronger within the generally strengthening Ukrainian feeling of a part of the Ruthenians in 1934. The majority Ruthenian wing of the party tried to suppress the pro-Ukrainian fraction, not allowing any candidate from the Ukrainian fraction of the party to be put in the list of candidates. To round off the picture, let's add that the agrarian party did not succeed in becoming the leading political force in Carpathian Ruthenia in spite of disposing of the largest network of hobby and trade union organizations directed at intelligentsia, clerks, youth, workers or agrarians and smallholders. The agrarian party was not able to make use of the broad network of its secretariats. The main handicap of the party consisted in the fact that its political organizations were very weak and non-operational, and therefore it was primarily supported by the official state apparatus. Further, the voters of the agrarian party came mainly from among farmers, not only of Ruthenian but also of Hungarian, Jewish and Czech nationalities. It found lower support among urban intelligentsia where it was supported mainly by Czechs, Ruthenians and Jews.⁴³

Election Results of the Central Governmental and most Influential Political Party of Czechoslovakia, the Republican Party of Farming and Smallholding People in Carpathian Ruthenia in 1924–1935⁴⁴

Election	Number of valid votes cast	Proportion from total number of valid votes cast	Proportional result of the party placed <i>before</i> and their ranking	Proportional result of the party placed <i>after</i> ranking	Ranking
1924	16,300	6.4 %	7.0 % ⁴⁵	4.4 % ⁴⁶	7 th
1925	34,916	14.2 %	30.8 % ⁴⁷	11.8 % ⁴⁸	2 nd
1929	77,519	29.1 %	–	18.2 % ⁴⁹	1 st
1935	60,747	19.0 %	24.4 % ⁵⁰	13.9 % ⁵¹	2 nd

⁴³ ZATLOUKAL, pp. 79–80, 83; FEDINEC – VEHEŠ, pp. 73–75.

⁴⁴ ZATLOUKAL, pp. 76–82; FEDINEC – VEHEŠ, pp. 71–75.

⁴⁵ Zionist Jewish Party.

⁴⁶ Ruthenian Agrarian Party in coalition with Czechoslovak People's Party.

⁴⁷ Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

⁴⁸ Union of Hungarian parties, i. e. union of Hungarian and German parties at that time.

⁴⁹ Coalition election list of candidates of autonomist parties, led by the Autonomous Agrar-

Let's look in brief at the political parties to which the individual nationalities living in Carpathian Ruthenia inclined. The Ruthenians claimed mostly allegiance to the agrarian party, to the communists, to the Party of National Unification, to the Autonomous Agrarian Union and to social democracy. Hungarians, the largest Carpathian-Ruthenian national minority, sympathized not only with their Hungarian minority political representation but, similarly to the situation in Slovakia, and even more strongly, they favoured also Czechoslovak parties, the communists and social democracy; additionally, the agrarians found support among the Hungarian speaking voters. The Carpathian-Ruthenian Jews favoured most the left-wing parties, the communists and social democracy, trusting also the agrarians and political traders. The Germans, low in number, did not have any national political ambitions before Konrad Henlein entered the Czechoslovak political scene. After the Sudeten German Party came to the political scene and the German speaking population in Czechoslovakia was generally nationalized, the Carpathian-Ruthenian Germans inclined primarily to this party. But the agrarians and social democrats enjoyed liking of a part of the Germans in Carpathian Ruthenia too.⁵²

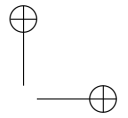
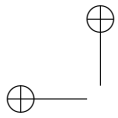
Carpathian Ruthenia rather did not succeed in finding its new identity within Czechoslovakia, which would integrate it more closely into the union of the common state of Czechs and Slovaks. Its population had to cope with burdensome social issues, predestined in many respects by the economic consequences of the politics of the Hungarian governments from the period before 1918. The situation was deteriorated in many regards by the economic crisis at the turn of 1920s and 1930s. The left-wing tendencies in the eastern tip of the Republic achieved significant victories, which could result from the international platform of local population. The population convulsed in a national-identity crisis. The Ruthenians were not able to assume a unified position on a common, clearly defined Ruthenian national basis that could isolate them more strongly both from the Hungarian past and from the increasing national Ukrainian tendencies. Both tendencies slowed down their integration into the Czechoslovak state with the Slavic majority, based on the original

ian Union and the Czechoslovak National Democratic Party.

⁵⁰ Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

⁵¹ Coalition election list of candidates of the Autonomous Agrarian Union with Hlinka's Slovak People's Party.

⁵² Cf. ZÁDĚRA, p. 86.



constitutional base of the Czechoslovak state. Additionally, the stabilization of Carpathian Ruthenia in a union with the Czechoslovak state was not favoured by foreign political situation that supported strengthening of pro-Hungarian and pro-Ukrainian tendencies. Carpathian Ruthenia was a specific region that required different political approach of Prague governments, in all areas of political-social life, including economy. A limiting factor for the central Czechoslovak governments consisted particularly in the state and national strategic interests within which Prague decided to approach Carpathian Ruthenia in a more cautious manner, which resulted also in the weaker representation of Carpathian Ruthenia in the National Assembly, mentioned above in the study. It is hard to estimate whether the Ruthenian nation would have to “mature” politically in compliance with the vision of the Czechoslovak governments. The twenty years between the two wars constituted a too short period for the socio-cultural thinking of the Ruthenians to match up with the ideas of the Czechoslovak state that had been the base of the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918. The economic crisis and the subsequent nationalization of Europe liquidated virtually completely any positive results of the development of the 1920s.

