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## **Slovak-Ukrainian Relations**

### **1. Introduction**

Slovak-Ukrainian relations as to their changing bilateral agenda since 1993 when Slovakia became an independent state with its own foreign-policy making could be staggered into the following three distinct periods: 1) 1993-1998; 2) 1998-2000; and 3) since 2001.

The Slovak attitude toward Ukraine during the first period might be characterized like an „indifferent neighborhood”. The then Slovak governments were viewing Ukraine rather like a „gate to Russia,, than a partner worthy of attention for itself. In the Slovak eastern policy at that period Ukraine was simply overshadowed by Russia. The new Slovak government that came to power in afterwards of the September 1998 elections has proclaimed a will to change the attitudes and practices of the previous years, but without real results. Quite on the contrary, years of 1998-2000 could be characterized like the most problematic years in the Slovak-Ukrainian modern relationship since both countries gained independence at the beginning of 1990s.

The diplomatic competition of the both countries within the UN for chairmanship of the 52 General Assembly followed by the competition for a seat in the UN Security Council representing the Central-European group of countries, has stunned the Slovak-Ukrainian bilateral relations in period of 1998-2000. At that time Slovakia was supporting the Russian plan to construct a new natural gas pipeline – so called *Jamal 2* - bypassing the territory of Ukraine via Belarus, Poland and Slovakia - which brought new negative impulses into the Slovak-Ukrainian agenda. In addition, Slovak government decided to introduce visa regime against Ukrainian citizens in 2000 arguing that Slovakia must to bring its visa policy in a line with the EU, a step that Ukraine evaluated like being the „premature” one. Kyiv was arguing that unlike Slovakia other Western neighbors of Ukraine and namely Poland and Hungary that also follow the EU standards are not in a hurry in this regard. On its hand, Ukrainian government has decided to respond with denouncing the readmission treaty with Slovakia, etc.

The problems garnered in the course of 1998-2000 have refuted a perception of previous years on both sides that an „indifferent neighborhood” is an adequate attitude to the bilateral relationship. The Slovak-Ukrainian relations witnessed intense bilateral contacts on the high level in 2001 in an extent that was incomparable with a practice of the previous years. Both sides succeeded to reach an agreement on liberalization of the visa regime, Ukraine has stopped the process of denouncing the readmission treaty with Slovakia, both countries have reached an accord concerning cooperation in the transit of crude oil from the Caspian basin to the EU and Central-European markets, etc. Thus, the year of 2001 might be characterized like a new beginning in the modern Slovak-Ukrainian relationship.

## 2. Beginning of relations in the early 1990s

Both Ukraine and Slovakia are relatively new actors in international relations. They came into existence as independent states following the breakdown of the communist block and dissolution of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia at the beginning of 1990s. Ukraine has gained its independence at the end of 1991, and Slovakia respectively in 1993. At that time the Slovak elite was concentrated on reinforcing its national interests within the post-communist Czechoslovakia. Naturally, it reflected only such external actors that were relevant for pursuing its national agenda within Czechoslovakia. Ukraine as an independent state since the end of 1991 - not speaking about times it was just a part of the USSR at all - did not play any role in forming the Slovak elite's separate interests within Czechoslovakia in the early 1990's. It had no special political or economic importance for the newly born Slovak elite struggling for independence against the central power in Prague. This is why Ukraine was politically an unknown country for the then Slovak establishment, despite of fact that it is Slovakia's immediate neighbor in the east.

Slovakia shares the 98-kilometer-long border on Ukraine. It is possible to explain the main reason of the Slovak elite's lax attitude to Ukraine in following way. First of all, the center of political life of Slovakia is concentrated geographically in the western part of the country where the capital (Bratislava) is located. Capitals of Slovakia's neighbors such as Vienna, Budapest and Prague are located much more closely to Bratislava than relatively far-away Kiev. Despite of fact that Moscow is geographically much more distant to Bratislava, politically it is much more to Central Europe. Russia was and still is a partner that has immediate political influence in Central Europe, and has the capability to be a player in the political game, while Kiev at least at the beginning of 1990s had not. In other words, Moscow politically could be and has been used by Slovak elite in Czechoslovak domestic agenda at the beginning of 1990s while Kiev could not. Moreover, Ukraine gained its independence against Moscow while Slovakia used Moscow striving for independence against Prague. Therefore, despite the fact that both Ukraine and Slovakia were new independent states, the different international conditions surrounding their respective process of gaining independence caused that these processes could not create a platform of common interests.<sup>1</sup>

The pre-history of modern Slovak-Ukrainian relations may be narrowed in fact just to one issue coming from the Soviet past which remains unsolved to our day. It has to do with construction of a big metallurgic complex in Ukraine (Krivoy Rog - Dolinskaya), which was initiated by the governments of countries associated in former COMECON. Czechoslovakia has invested 10,8 billion KC's (Czechoslovak crowns - 360 million USD at current prices of 1990) in this construction. The actual activity of COMECON finished in 1990 as a result of the economic and political changes in its former member states, although the official date of the end of COMECON was 26 September 1991. The construction of the complex was stopped and Prague submitted claims to Moscow with the aim to receive compensation for the sources. Ukraine took over the duties stemming from common activities of COMECON on its own territory after gaining independence at the end of 1991.<sup>2</sup> On 29 December 1992, one of the leading Slovak companies VSZ Kosice (Eastern Slovak Ironworks) bought the Czechoslovak claims as well as took over their duties on finishing construction in Krivoy Rog. Thus, the construction of metallurgic complex in Ukraine became a subject of

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<sup>1</sup> For detail analysis see author's book *Ukrajina a Slovensko* (Ukraine and Slovakia). Bratislava: VEDA 2000.

<sup>2</sup> For more see V.I. Morozov, *Sud'ba imushchestva SEV: Pravoviye aspekty*, (Destiny of COMECON's Property: Legal Aspects) in *Gosudarstvo i pravo*, No. 8 (Moscow, 1993), pp. 116-121.

negotiations between VSZ Kosice (privatized in March 1994) and the Ukrainian government. VSZ conditioned its further participation in the construction on receiving compensation for the Ukrainian debt at that time estimated at sum \$360 million. Ukrainian side did not recognize this amount and therefore almost a decade of lasting negotiations are still in a blind alley.<sup>3</sup>

The issue of the Krivoy Rog metallurgic complex is only one concrete issue, which comes from the communist past and still remains in current Slovak-Ukrainian agenda. This issue was far from being a crucially important for the gaining Slovakia's independence in 1993. That is why, in the context of Slovakia's national interests, which could be realizable at all by „young” Slovak state elite in the early 1990's, neighboring Ukraine could play only a peripheral role.

### **3. Indifferent neighborhood, 1993-1998**

#### **Diplomatic contacts and political agenda**

During their first official meeting in June 1993 in Kyiv both presidents of Ukraine Leonid Kravchuk and Slovakia Michal Kovac signed the basic political treaty on good neighborhood and co-operation. Despite of that, the next high-level diplomatic contact did not take place until February 1994 when Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Anatoliy Zlenko visited Bratislava. The first meeting of prime ministers (Vladimir Meciar and Yevhen Marchuk) has been held in June 1995 in Kiev - two years after the signing of basic treaty. If take the fact that Slovakia and Ukraine are neighboring countries, such a long diplomatic hiatus in mutual relations seems troubling to say the least. In the respective period, Slovak-Russian relations did not register something like this.

During the time from signing the basic Slovak-Ukrainian treaty in June 1993 till the first meeting of both Slovak and Ukrainian prime ministers (henceforth - PM) in June 1995, Slovak PM Vladimir Meciar met his Russian counterpart Viktor Chernomyrdin on three occasions (twice in Moscow and once in Bratislava). The second meeting of governmental delegations headed by PMs Meciar and Yevhen Marchuk took place in Strbske Pleso (High Tatras in Slovakia) in January 1996 and the third one in March 1997 (Meciar – Pavlo Lazarenko) in Uzhgorod (Ukraine). While between the governmental Slovak-Ukrainian meetings there were periods of „deep diplomatic silence”, at the same time Slovak-Russian contacts were developing in a very intensive way. The average around six-seven high-level delegations have been exchanged between Moscow and Bratislava yearly in the course of 1993-1998 period.

From gaining independence in January 1993 Slovakia has concluded with the Russian Federation more than 90 new agreements (as of May 1998). At the same time, it has concluded with Ukraine around 40 agreements. To this one must add 44 additional agreements with Russia, which Slovakia inherited from Czechoslovakia. Thus, Slovak-Russian relations were regulated at the end of 1998 by more than 120 agreements while

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<sup>3</sup> See Alexander Buzinkay, Dohoda o pokračovaní vystavby Krivorožského kombinátu v Dolinskej v patovej situácii (Agreement on Construction of Krivoy Rog's Complex in Dolinskaya in a Blind Alley) in *Narodna obroda* (8 March 1997), p. 9.

Slovak-Ukrainian relations only by less than 40 ones.<sup>4</sup> This clearly illustrates the then priorities of Slovak foreign policies toward its Eastern neighbors and beyond. Slovakia has concluded with no another country of the world of such extremely high number of new treaties as it has done it with Russia since January 1993 till May 1998, before the Slovak national elections in 1998. Slovak diplomacy under Meciar premiership did not endeavor to make more balanced its relations with the two key post-Soviet countries - as from the Central-European perspective at least, - Russia and Ukraine. Quite on the contrary, it was performing a misbalanced eastern policy preferring one-sided relations with Moscow.

Another illustration of Slovakia's attitude to Ukraine is the fact that there has been no Slovak Ambassador in Kiev from June of 1996 when the then Ambassador Jozef Migas, resigned to his office, as he became party chairman of the Party of the Democratic Left. The absence of a country's ambassador is a typical means of protest in diplomatic communications when one country wants to express his protest against other country's policies concerning its interests. There was no reason for doing something like this in Slovak-Ukrainian relations. It was rather a direct effect of a „poor” agenda of mutual relations. But, it must be emphasized that Ukraine was the only neighboring country where Slovakia has not had an ambassador for such a long time. The next Slovak Ambassador in Ukraine has been inducted into office in 1999 under new government led by Mikulas Dzurinda elected in the September 1998 elections.

It was also typical for Slovak attitude to Ukraine that it was not politically „discovered” practically until 1995. Nevertheless, this took place only in relation to the importance of Ukraine for the development of Slovak-Russian relations. The then Slovak vice-premier Sergey Kozlik has expressed it realistically at the end of first governmental Slovak-Ukrainian meeting in June 1995. He said: „The Ukraine is a gate to the Russian market for us and its transit capabilities for Slovak goods must be increased in ten times at least.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, the Ukraine was important for Slovakia not for itself, but because of importance of Russia for Slovakia.

### **Economic agenda**

The Slovak side, referring on its good relations with Russia at that time, has proposed to Ukraine to become something as its barrister before Russia for solving Ukrainian energy debts to Russia and Turkmenistan. Slovak PM Meciar explained this idea in Kiev as follows: „Between Slovakia, Ukraine and Turkmenistan there exist unsettled liabilities and after our negotiations with our Ukrainian partners there is a real possibility for a mutually advantageous settlement. This system briefly means that Slovakia will supply Turkmenistan with consumer goods. Turkmenistan will decrease Ukrainian debts in this sum. Ukraine that will build four ships for Slovakia in the first phase will close the operation. Something similar could be done in connection with gas transit also in the Ukraine-Russia-Turkmenistan-Slovakia quadrangle.”<sup>6</sup> However, due to a variety of reasons the Slovak plan from 1995 could not be implemented.

We can register some positive changes in Slovak attitudes to Ukraine in late 1995. This was connected with the coming understanding that Ukraine is not only a „gate to the Russian market” for Slovakia but it is also a partner worthy of an attention for itself. This may be also

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<sup>4</sup> See Robert Matejovic, S Ukrajinou zatiaľ máme pomerne málo zmlúv (We have concluded with Ukraine relatively a little number of treaties, in *Slovensky profit*, No. 13 (1997), pp. 8-9.

<sup>5</sup> *Pravda* (16 June 1995).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

highlighted by understanding the fact that the „gate will remain closed” if the bilateral Slovak-Ukrainian political ties do not improve. On the other hand, for the then Slovak government it was not pleasant finding out that Slovakia is only neighboring country of the Ukraine with a stagnating bilateral trade exchange. While Ukrainian trade with Hungary, Poland and Russia has been increasing in the course of 1993-1995, Slovak-Ukrainian trade has been decreasing. The values of Slovak-Ukrainian trade accordingly to Slovak statistics during some last years were, as follows: 1993 - \$286 million; 1994 - \$240; and 1995 - \$310.<sup>7</sup> It was very hard to expect other results following the Slovak policy of „not-seeing” Ukraine followed during 1993-1995. During the governmental meeting in Strbske Pleso (Slovakia) in 1996, both governments have demonstrated their resolution to improve the state of common affairs.

Both Meciar and Marchuk were very optimistic in forecasting the growth of mutual trade exchange to around of \$1 billion in 1996. Moreover, they have evaluated optimal capabilities of Slovakia and the Ukraine, which would enable them to reach a mutual turnover in \$2 billion yearly. Slovak PM noted that the one of main tasks is to prepare a treaty on creation of a bilateral free trade zone between Slovakia and Ukraine.<sup>8</sup> The Ukrainian side has proposed to establish a bilateral joint-stock company with aim to finish a construction of production combine in Krivoy Rog - Dolinskaya. Only then, during the second governmental meeting in High Tatras has been signed such an important framework treaty as that on preventing of double taxation. The Slovak PM promised to his counterpart that Slovakia would try to use its CEFTA chairmanship in 1996 with aim to bring Ukraine closer to this organization, etc.<sup>9</sup>

One could expect that after the negotiations in High Tatras the year of 1996 would become a year of crucial change in Slovak-Ukrainian relations. But, such predictions proved wrong. After the meeting, Slovak-Ukrainian contacts got into another regular period of „diplomatic silence.” The turnover forecasted by both Prime ministers came not to be a reality and reached the sum \$410 million.<sup>10</sup> The joint company with aim to finish construction of production combine in Dolinskaya has not been established. Moreover, the Slovak government has refused to provide additional governmental guarantees to VSZ Kosice with this purpose. If take the vacant post of Slovak ambassador to Kiev and the insufficiently prepared March 1997 negotiations, we can conclude that the level of the Slovak-Ukrainian relations at the end of Meciar government election period might be compared to that somewhere before January 1996.

### **Problem agenda**

Despite of the weak level and short history of modern Slovak-Ukrainian relations as well as traditional diplomatic declarations from both sides such as – „we have no controversial issues (including those from the past) burdening our mutual relations,” - this was not entirely true. It is possible to specify at least two problems, which have for some times been a source of „tension” in Slovak-Ukrainian relations during years of 1993-1998. The first one has its roots just in the past and the second one is a product of the modern time. In the shadow of both problems - to a greater or lesser extent - was Russia and her interests.

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<sup>7</sup> *Slovensky profit*, No. 13 (1997).

<sup>8</sup> *Pravda* (23 January 1996).

<sup>9</sup> *Pravda*, above note.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Matejovic, *Ukrajina sa vymanuje z ekonomickej krizy* (Ukraine is setting free from economic slump) in: *Duel* No.10 (1996).

### ***Ethnic Rusyn question***

In the first case it concerns a minority issue or the so-called „Rusyn (or „Ruthenian”) question”. Any way, there is no political party in the Slovak parliament that wants to take in its political agenda a historical question about the Subcarpathian Rus’, i.e., present-day Transcarpathian Region of the Ukraine, which has been a part of the inter-war Czechoslovak Republic. In the Slovak-Ukrainian context this question does not have the same political implications as it would have theoretically in Czechoslovak-Ukrainian one.<sup>11</sup>

The breakdown of the communist system in Czechoslovakia has allowed the free ethnic identification of people living there. Rusyns got chance for the first time from 1930’s to announce their ethnic identity. In the time of socialist Czechoslovakia they could be registered as Ukrainians only. According to the 1991 census, 17,197 people (living mainly in north-eastern Slovakia) have indicated their ethnicity as Rusyn, and 13,281 people as Ukrainian, and in the 2001 census – 24,201 people have introduced the Rusyn ethnicity respectively 10,814 people the Ukrainian one, while in the both post-communist censuses of 1991 and 2001 around 50.000 people have indicated their mother language as Rusyn.<sup>12</sup> New organization Rusyn Renaissance (Rusinska obroda) representing the minority interests of Rusyns in Slovakia has been established. Thus, the minority was divided into two groups: one with recent „Ukrainian identity” and the second one with „Rusyn” (Ruthenian) identity (i.e., emphasizing an original Slavic nation that is not a part of Ukrainian nation). Newly born Rusyn organizations have emerged not only in Slovakia, but in the Transcarpathian Region of the Ukraine, Poland, Romania and Hungary as well (previously, they existed only in former Yugoslavia, Canada, USA etc.). All they rejected the so-called „Ukrainian national identity”, which they believed was imposed by communist parties and Ukrainian nationalists during the 1950 as they point out it. In Transcarpathian Region of Ukraine there has been established the Association of Subcarpathian Rusyns (henceforth ASR) that has formulated its demands to the Ukrainian government - to recognize the Rusyns as an original ethnic group and provide territorial autonomy for the Transcarpathian Region under its historical name – the Subcarpathian Rus’.

The ASR was established on 17 February 1990. On 29 March 1990, it issued a Declaration on Returning Statute of Autonomy Republic for Transcarpathian Region of the Ukraine, in which they question all legal acts passed by Supreme Councils both of Soviet Union and Ukrainian Soviet Republic in 1945-1946. They consider the Czechoslovak act of October 1938 as the only legal one, which established autonomy of the Subcarpathian Rus' within in the framework of Czechoslovakia. Subcarpathian Rus' was annexed to the Soviet Union on the basis of treaty signed between the governments of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union on 29 June 1945.<sup>13</sup> The first article of the treaty states: „Transcarpathian Ukraine, (whose name according to the Czechoslovak constitution is Subcarpathian Rus'), which became a part of the Czechoslovakia on the base of treaty concluded in Saint-Germain-en-Laye on 10

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<sup>11</sup> For more about Rusyns/Ruthenians generally and Rusyn question in interwar Czechoslovakia especially see Paul Robert Magoesi, *The Shaping of a National Identity: Subcarpathian Rus' 1848-1948* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1978, 1979).

<sup>12</sup> See Paukovic, Vladimir, „Etnicka struktura Slovenska, jej vyvoj, demograficke a socialne charakteristiky” (Ethnic Structure of Slovakia, its Development, Demographic and Social Characteristics), in *Sociologia*, 26, 1994; data quoted in the text are from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 1991 and respectively 2001.

<sup>13</sup> See *Programme Statement of the Provisional (Transitional) Government of Subcarpathian Rus* (Uzhgorod: 2 August 1993).

September 1919, taking the wish of people living there as well as in accordance with friendly agreement of negotiating sides, is uniting ... with Soviet Ukraine.”<sup>14</sup> ASR’ representatives point out that Subcarpathian Rus' has been attached to the Soviet Union, as a former entire component part of Czechoslovakia including its autonomous statute and thus, Soviet organs had no legal right to abolish it. Furthermore, ASR justifies its claims using the results of the referendum that took place in Transcarpathian Region of Ukraine in December 1991. In that referendum 78 percent of participants voted for an autonomous statute for the region in framework of the Ukraine. Because the government, president and parliament of Ukraine have ignored the results of the December 1991' referendum, on 15 May 1993 the ASR established a „provisional government that has been abolished by Stalin with aim to renew a statehood of the Subcarpathian Rus'.” The PM of this transitional government, Prof. Ivan Turyanitsya once said: „The independence of the Subcarpathian Rus' will be declared by Regional Council (parliament of the region or „oblast” – author”. This new state power will ask the Commonwealth of Independent States for regular membership.”<sup>15</sup>

The Ukrainian government rejected these claims, accusing the Rusyn movement of political separatism supported from Moscow. Ukrainian government addressed its Slovak counterpart in 1994 with the proposition to establish a Joint Committee on Minority Issues. Its main interest was to influence the Slovak government to reduce its support of Rusyn minority in Slovakia because of its indirect effects on increasing Rusyn separatism in Transcarpathian Region of Ukraine. During the first visit of Ukrainian Minister of Foreign Affairs Anatoliy Zlenko to Bratislava in February 1994, he commented that: „... separatism is a fear. I know that analogical problems exist in Slovakia too. Therefore, my opinion is that a co-operation and co-ordination of our countries in this field with the aim to neutralize those processes would be help us to create the basis for a fruitful relations between Ukraine and Slovakia and the same time it would strengthen the stability in the whole of region.”<sup>16</sup>

The so-called „Rusyn question” has been a really serious issue in Slovak-Ukrainian relations especially in 1993 and 1994. Any way, it remains a fact that Slovakia has officially recognized Ruthenians/Rusyns as an ethnic minority, while Ukraine did not. Since 1995 both government agreed a mechanism on dealing with the minorities issues in their bilateral relations (for more see part 8).

### ***Transit question***

Much more important was another problem of Slovak-Ukrainian relations which is not a legacy of the past, but it is rather a product of recent years, affecting the „living interests” of both actors. This conflict stems from the different positions of Ukraine and Slovakia on the issue of the transit of Russian energy raw materials through Ukrainian and Slovak territories to Western Europe.

A conflict of interests has emerged around the project of Jamal-Europe gas pipeline system in construction via Belarus and Poland, which was parallel to the existing transit network system crossing Ukraine and Slovakia. Slovakia and Ukraine are in the same situation in what concerns the transit of Russian gas and crude oil because both use the same transit system of

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted from Sergey M. Belousov, *Sjednotenie ukrajinskeho naroda v jedinom ukrajinskom state* (Uniting Ukrainian Nation in one Ukrainian State). Bratislava: SAV, 1953, p. 147.

<sup>15</sup> See Robert Matejovic, *Autonomia, ci dokonca nezavislost? (Autonomy or even Independence?)* in *Pravda* (9 December 1993).

<sup>16</sup> *Pravda*, (22 February 1994).

pipelines. In addition, a bilateral conflict on the „gas agenda” emerged, due to Ukraine and Slovakia’s different attitudes to the fees, which the Russian side should pay for the transit of the energy raw materials over their territories (this concerns first of all to Russian company Gasprom). Energy transit is one of the few things where Ukraine could and was trying in the recent past to exert pressure on Russia.

Kiev classified the Jamal-Europe project as an anti-Ukrainian one, because it limits Kiev’s actions toward Moscow.<sup>17</sup> Slovakia did not co-operate with Ukraine in this question but demanded to construct an extra pipeline from Poland over Slovakia to Southern Europe. Slovak PM Meciar before the first governmental negotiations in Kiev in June 1995 gave an extended interview to Ukrainian weekly *Kiyevskiye Vedomosti* in which he has directly accused Ukraine saying that „the fact that Jamal-Europe system is going to be constructed not over the territory of the Ukraine and Slovakia but over Belarus and Poland,” he considers „as the mistake in principle of the recent Ukrainian policy”.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, during 1996’ negotiations in High Tatras the then Ukrainian PM Marchuk outlined some possibilities of both countries’ coordinating their policies on the transit of Russian natural gas and oil.<sup>19</sup> Next Ukrainian PM Pavlo Lazarenko has repeated the same a year later during Slovak-Ukrainian government talks in Uzhgorod in March 1997.<sup>20</sup> But, no real results emerged. Similar story has been repeated some years after under the new Dzurinda cabinet this time in respect of the so-called Jamal 2 cause (for more see next part 4).

#### **4. Unavailing attempt at a change, 1998-2000**

From 1993 to 1998, during the Meciar government, relations with Ukraine has been subjugated to relations with Russia, even though Ukraine is the Slovakia’s largest and most populous neighbor. After the September 1998 parliamentary elections the new Mikulas Dzurinda government proclaimed that it will „pay constant attention to the development of relations with the Ukraine, which is our largest neighbor”.<sup>21</sup> In spite of this declared ambition, which was in a line with a program goal to restore Slovakia’s international position and improve relations with neighbors after the Meciar reign, the Slovak government was not able to achieve a significant improvement in ties with Ukraine in the course of its first two years at the rule, because of the conflict nature of the themes dominating Slovak-Ukrainian bilateral agenda from 1998 to 2000.

#### ***Struggle for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council***

Slovakia and Ukraine have twice experienced a collision of interests at the UN during the recent years. In 1997, Slovakia gave up its candidacy for chairmanship of the 52<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly, which it had inherited from the former Czechoslovak federation, in favor of Ukraine in order not to complicate the election of the Ukraine candidate, foreign minister Hennadiy Udovenko. Slovak deputy foreign minister Jaroslav Chlebo said that Slovakia had

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<sup>17</sup> See Akino, Y. and A. Smith Albion, *Russia-Ukraine-Visegrad Four: The Kozyrev Doctrine in Action*. Prague-New York: Institute of EastWest Studies 1993.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Vladimir Meciar in *Kiyevskiye Vedomosti*, (14 June 1995).

<sup>19</sup> *Pravda* (23 January 1996).

<sup>20</sup> See Robert Matejovic, Ruska surovinova kazajka (Russian raw material jacket), in *Slovensky profit* No. 12 (1997), p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Programove...1998*, op.cit.



expected Ukraine to do the same for the election of Slovakia as a new non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in 1999 following a „verbal gentlemen agreement” with Ukraine of 1997. The seat was to be for two years, and Slovakia, representing the group of central European countries, expected to have moral claim on the post following its generous behavior in 1997.<sup>22</sup>

Ukraine, however, did not give up its candidacy in favor of Slovakia, and during 1999 the two countries fought to win votes among UN members. Before the fourth round of voting, which took place on 14 October 1999, Slovakia withdrew its candidacy because of the way voting was developing in favor of Ukraine. According to then Ukraine foreign minister Boris Tarasiuk, the victory of Ukraine was decided by the fact that 15 of the 20 central European countries supported Ukraine, not Slovakia.<sup>23</sup> Asked why an agreement had not been forged in the central European group of countries in favor of Slovakia, Jaroslav Chlebo answered bitterly: „It is always possible to find agreement as long as both parties participate... it is simply unacceptable for us when a partner thinks that an agreement means concessions from our side only.”<sup>24</sup> The Slovak-Ukrainian contest in the UN that topped in 1999 has created a mentally negative framework for next diplomatic contacts.

### ***Imposing a visa regime***

Public discourse in Slovakia on the imposition of visa restrictions on Ukrainian citizens began in November 1998. Then Czech foreign minister Jan Kavan tabled the issue during his visit to Bratislava, when he declared „Czech Republic will tighten its border policy with Slovakia as long as Slovakia tightens controls on the Slovak-Ukraine border, and thus limits the flow of illegal immigrants across this porous border”.<sup>25</sup> Deputy foreign minister Jan Figel was the first Slovak state official to react publicly to the issue raised. Apart from the necessity of coordinating the Czech and Slovak approach in such a way that a Schengen border not arise between the Czech Republic and Slovakia, he used the „EU integration” argument, according to which Slovakia has to bring its visa policies into line those of the EU.<sup>26</sup> According to Figel, if Slovakia in future imposes a visa requirement on certain countries, this would not imply that the foreign policies of these countries were unsuccessful or untrustworthy, but would be a concrete measure to defend Slovakia’s national interests. Slovakia had above all to take effective measures against illegal migration and organized crime.<sup>27</sup> Interior Minister Ladislav Pittner added another argument: „One of the reasons behind the imposition of the visa requirement is also protecting the labor market, as Ukrainian nationals are ready to work under far worse conditions than are Slovak citizens”.<sup>28</sup>

The question of imposing visa regime against Ukraine was one of the main points of discussion between prime ministers of the Visegrad countries during the summit in the High Tatras on 16-17 October 1999. It was the only point of the meeting agenda, which drew

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<sup>22</sup> Interview by state secretary of Slovak MFA Jaroslav Chlebo for daily *Pravda* (20 September 1999).

<sup>23</sup> See Ihor Jarosewich, Foreign Affairs Minister Promotes Ukraine Candidacy for UN Security Council Seat, in *The Ukrainian Weekly*, 3 October 1999.

<sup>24</sup> Interview by Jaroslav Chlebo, op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> *Narodna obroda* (16 December 1998).

<sup>26</sup> *Narodna obroda* (19 January 1999).

<sup>27</sup> See Jan Figel, Slovensky migracny fenomen (Slovak Migration Phenomenon), in *Pravda* (2 August 1999).

<sup>28</sup> *SITA* (15 August 1999).

diverging opinions. The Czech and Slovak premiers supported the step, while the Polish and Hungarian premiers opposed it. Slovak PM Dzurinda said after the talks that the V4 countries want to coordinate their approach to the issue, which was why no final decision was taken during the summit.<sup>29</sup> Although, the V4 countries were in fact unable to coordinate their approach as the Czech Republic decided regardless of its V4 partners to introduce a visa regime on citizens of the Russian Federation and Belarus, to take effect on 29 May and on Ukrainian citizens as of 1 January 2000.<sup>30</sup> On 15 March 2000 followed the decision of the Slovak government to impose visa regime for Ukrainian citizens as of 29 June 2000 and of Russian, Belarus and Cuba nationals as of 1 January 2001.<sup>31</sup> The Ukrainian government replied in kind, imposing visa requirement on Slovak citizens as of 28 June 2000. Moreover, on 4 October 2000 the Ukrainian cabinet of ministers has taken a decision to denounce a readmission treaty with Slovakia, which would mean a radical step back in protection of common border and control of movement of illegal immigrants from the territory of Ukraine to Slovakia.<sup>32</sup>

Ukraine disagreed with the decision of the Slovak side to impose visa regime regarding it as being premature at least. According to the Ukrainian Ambassador to the Slovak Republic Jurij Rylac, the imposition of visa regime by Slovak side „was not absolutely imperative”.<sup>33</sup> In the evaluations made by Ukrainian representatives regarding the Slovak government’s visa decision, one could see the same bitterness, which had marked reactions of Slovak representatives after their diplomatic loss to Ukraine at the UN in October 1999.

### *The Jamal 2 case*

Added to the foregoing issues in the first half of 2000 was the case of the new gas pipeline, which was to go from Russia via Belarus and Poland to Slovakia, and which was thus to bypass Ukraine. The Russian gas giant Gazprom at the beginning of March 2000 has addressed the governments of Slovakia and Poland with the proposal to construct a new pipeline that would connect the Jamal gas pipeline leading from Belarus to Poland with the Slovak gas transit network, thus bypassing territory of Ukraine.<sup>34</sup>

Poland and Ukraine, unlike Slovakia, took a cautious approach to this project. Russian diplomacy worked extraordinarily hard to cement Slovakia in its positive and obliging position. At the official meetings of the top representatives from both sides during the respective period a common position of Russia and Slovakia on this issue has been stressed, providing a diplomatic opportunity to demonstrate a good shape of bilateral relationship, e.g. Russian president Vladimir Putin during the Slovak president Rudolf Schuster’s first official visit to Moscow in November 2001 underlined the importance of cooperation on the transit of Russian gas, and called Slovakia „the most accommodating and natural partner” for Russia on

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<sup>29</sup> *Sme* (18 October 1999).

<sup>30</sup> *CTK* (3 February 2000).

<sup>31</sup> *Pravda* (16 March 2000).

<sup>32</sup> For more see Alexander Duleba, *Vztahy s Ukrajinou na bode mrazu* (Relations with Ukraine at the freezing point) in *Profit*, No. 46, 2000.

<sup>33</sup> Jurij Rylac, *Skusky, premeny a predsavzatia. Ukrajina: devat rokov nezavislosti – devat rokov pozitivnych zmien* (Tests, Changes and Resolutions. Ukraine: Nine Years of Independence – Nine Years of Positive Changes) in *Pravda* (24 August 2000).

<sup>34</sup> For more see Karel Hirman, *Gazprom tlaci na Slovensko a Polsko* (Gazprom presses Slovakia and Poland). *Trend*, 8. 3. 2000.

this issue.<sup>35</sup> However, in February 2002 Gazprom has announced that it postpones the implementation of the Jamal 2 project. The reason was a new Russian-Ukrainian rapprochement on gas deals as well as no relevant shifts in negotiations between Russia and Poland. Slovak position on the subject being more close to the Russian one than to that of its direct neighbors Poland and Ukraine proved to be one of the biggest stumbles of the Slovak foreign policy under the Dzurinda government.<sup>36</sup> The Slovak side without discussing the issue with Ukraine supported the project.

An eventual implementation of the Jamal 2 project would mean a cut down of Russian gas quantity transported via territory of Ukraine and consequently a slump of gains from a transit fees. The planned capacity of the Jamal 2 pipeline was 30 billion of cubic meters of gas per year, which would bypass the territory of Ukraine and thus decrease the amount of gas transport through Ukraine from an actual level of 120 billion cubic meters of gas to 90 billion. Automatically, a decline of gains from the transit fees would be lower in about a quarter. Ukraine needs for its domestic consumption about 75 billion of cubic meters of gas annually of which 30 billion it receives from Russia like an equivalent counter-value to the price for transit of Russian gas. If Jamal 2 would become a reality that would mean for Ukraine that it has to buy additional amount of 7-8 billion of cubic meters of gas for about \$300-400 million annually according to the current gas prices as of 2000. Following these figures, it becomes natural that Ukrainian government could not welcome a positive approach of the Slovak side towards the Russian Jamal 2 project. Although, decision on denouncing the readmission treaty with Slovakia taken by the Ukrainian cabinet of ministers on 4 October 2000 was backed by so-called visa arguments, it is worthy to note that it followed the recent Slovak minister of economy Lubomir Harach's visit to Moscow at the end of September 2000 where he expressed an unambiguous support of Slovakia to the Jamal 2 project.<sup>37</sup>

### ***Long lasting problem of the metallurgic complex in Krivoy Rog***

As already mentioned, economic relations between Slovakia and Ukraine have long been troubled by construction of the metallurgic complex in Krivoy Rog (KTUK), the building of which was begun under the aegis of the former Eastern block economic organization COMECON (for a state in which both sides have inherited the issue from the Soviet time see part 2.1.). After the dissolution of COMECON in 1990 Czechoslovak government has asked the USSR for compensation of its investment of \$360 million in the complex, but without any results. After the break-up of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, the half-built KTUK became the property of Ukraine. In December 1992, the Slovak steel maker company VSZ Kosice bought the Czechoslovak government receivable. VSZ made its further participation in the construction of KTUK contingent on the payment of \$360 million in compensation by the Ukrainian government, partly in the form of imports of iron ore. Ukraine refused to accept these conditions and tabled them for discussion with Slovak government, because of inter-governmental contract on KTUK, not with a company that in March 1994 had become a private firm. Since then, talks have not progressed.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Vystupleniye...2001*, op. cit.

<sup>36</sup> For analysis see Alexander Duleba, *Jamalská lekcia – o chybách slovenskej diplomacie (A Jamal lesson on mistakes of Slovak diplomacy)*, in *Listy SFPA*, January – February 2002.

<sup>37</sup> Duleba (2000), op. cit.

<sup>38</sup> See Buzinkay (1997), op. cit.

VSZ since 1994 has invested SKK 820 million (Slovak crowns) in KTUK just to maintain the site, and should have received 17 million tones of iron ore from Ukraine in return as it was agreed with the Ukrainian ministry of economy. The Ukrainian side did not keep its commitment. Under impulse of VSZ, in April 2000, Slovak government decided to cancel its contractual relations concerning the KTUK and to demand compensation from Ukraine in a form of recognition of \$360 million as a state debt to Slovakia. Ukraine rejected the Slovak stance, and has proposed forming a multinational joint stock company on the basis of KTUK, which would own and operate the metallurgic complex after completing its construction. According to Slovak premier Slovakia would prefer to be given the Slovak part of the structure, along with financial compensation from Ukraine. At the same time he said Slovakia does not want to unilaterally withdraw from the contract, as this would complicate relations with Ukraine and lead to an international court battle”.<sup>39</sup>

### ***Public perception: a negative image of Ukraine***

A reversed public perception of Ukraine in Slovakia is one of the additional factors supporting rather a negative framework of bilateral relations. Public perception of Ukraine in Slovakia has been molded less by actual diplomatic or political agenda and more by social and economic factors under new post-communist conditions. And first of all, it relates to such issues like criminal activities of Ukrainian citizens in Slovakia and the illegal economic migrants coming mainly from neighboring regions of Ukraine.

In 2000, the one third of Slovak population perceived the crime as the most urgent social problem.<sup>40</sup> Crimes such as bombings, kidnappings, and hostage taking were almost totally unknown before 1989, while business crime such as racketeering, extortion, and money laundering did not even exist in the communist criminal code. It should be underlined that just these new types of violent and organized crime in Slovakia are often associated with Ukrainian nationals. In spite of fact that crimes perpetrated by foreigners share only 2-3 per cent of total number of proved penal offences per year (if take period of 1996-1998), there are expert estimations that their real share in crime (especially those coming from former Soviet republics) is much more higher. They are well organized and dispose with modern equipment, which is qualitatively better than that one of Slovak police and domestic criminals as well. Beginning from 1997, it became very often that Slovak entrepreneurs threatened by Slovak criminals used special services of Russian-speaking criminal groups as Russians and Ukrainians gained the reputation of being „honest criminals who keep to the rules of the game”.<sup>41</sup>

Slovak public opinion has been focused on such „special activities” of Ukrainian nationals in Slovakia especially due to the three most well-known and most publicly presented cases of the last decade. Firstly, when it became known that the personal guardians of the director

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<sup>39</sup> Quoted from Radoslav Bato, Vyhodene peniaze. Slovensko chce skoncit zmluvy k vystavbe KTUK Dolinska (Wasted Money: Slovakia wants to withdraw from contract on construction of the KTUK Dolinska) in *Pravda* (25 April 2000).

<sup>40</sup> Kollar, Michal and Meseznikov, Grigorij. (eds.) *Slovensko 2000. Suhrnna sprava o stave spolocnosti* (Slovakia 2000. A Global Report on the State of Society) (Bratislava: Institut pe verejne otazky, 2000), p. 283-284.

<sup>41</sup> See M. Ivantysyn – P. Vacok, „Bezpecnostna situacia” (State of security), in: Butora, Martin and Michal Ivantysyn (eds.), *Slovensko 1997. Suhrnna sprava o stave spolocnosti a trendoch na rok 1998* (Slovakia 1997. A Global Report on the State of Society and Trends on 1998) (Bratislava: Institut pre verejne otazky, 1998), pp. 657-674, here p. 673.

general and owner of the most popular Slovak private „TV Markiza” Pavel Rusko are of Ukrainian nationality.<sup>42</sup> Secondly, when it became known that „Ukrainian Mafia” took an active part in portioning of spheres of influence within criminal underground after the murder of Eduard Dinic who was considered to be a boss of Slovak organized crime.<sup>43</sup> And finally, when minister of interior Ladislav Pittner informed a general public that former minister of economics and then director general of Slovak Gas Industry was murdered very probably by persons coming from Ukraine.<sup>44</sup> Ducky’s case is very important for forming Slovak public opinion, as it was the first assassination in Slovakia at all since 1989.

Unemployment is an accompanying effect of the economic transformation and became also a new phenomenon for Slovak population since velvet revolution. Beginning from 1993, the unemployment is constantly among the most pressing social problems which is as such perceived by more than a half of Slovak population (1996 – 44 per cent, 1999 – 48 per cent, and 67 per cent in 2000).<sup>45</sup> Negative trend has been continuing also in 2000, when the unemployment have reached a rate of 19,4 % of total labor force in Slovakia and has been like this in the course of 2001 and 2002. This is why the competition on the country’s labor market is going to be increasingly sharper and the issue of economic migration, legal and illegal one as well, is becoming to be one of the most sensitively perceived social problems by Slovak citizens.

The first two cases concerning a cheap labor force from Ukraine attracted the attention of Slovak public at the end of the last decade. It concerns two Slovak companies (JAS Bardejov – footwear and SVIK Svidnik – textile production) when employers refused demands of their Slovak employees to increase salaries, then dismissed them and occupied their jobs by Ukrainians. Thus, around three hundred of Ukrainians get jobs to the detriment of Slovak citizens. Moreover, both companies are located in north-eastern Slovakia (Presov’ Region), a region with the biggest rate of unemployment within Slovakia (almost 30 percent as to the end of 2000, 28 percent in 2001 and 26 percent in 2002). The other aspect of the same problem is an illegal economic migration. According to speaker of the Slovak Ministry of Interior, „there are problems especially with Ukrainians who cross state borders like tourists and do not respect terms of their staying in Slovakia. The first category of them is looking for „black jobs”, while the second one visit Slovakia with aim to commit crime”.<sup>46</sup>

Summarizing mentioned above, there are two main factors that influence Slovak public views on Ukraine under new political and social conditions. The first one is a crime committed by Ukrainian nationals in Slovakia and the second one is a problem of legal and also illegal economic migration mostly from the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine because of problems of economic transformation and a high rate of unemployment in Slovakia. These factors

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<sup>42</sup> E.g. see „Pohľad do dusneho zakulisia Markizy” (View on stuffy backstage of Markiza) in *Hospodarske noviny*, 22 January 1999; actually Mr. Pavol Rusko is leader of the new political party „Alliance of New Citizens” with a liberal program, which became a member of the second Dzurinda’s government elected in the September 2002 elections. The Rusko’s party received 8 percent of votes in the September 2002 elections.

<sup>43</sup> See e.g. „Ukrajinska mafia sa zmocnila domu E. Dinica” (Ukrainian Mafia took control over the House of E. Dinic) in *Sme*, 18 January 1999.

<sup>44</sup> See e.g. „Pachatelia vraždy J. Duckeho pravdepodobne pochadzaju z krajín byvaleho Sovietskeho zväzu” (Culprits of murder of J. Ducky probably come from the former Soviet country) in *Sme*, 18 January 1999.

<sup>45</sup> Kollar, M. and Meseznikov, G. (eds. 2000), op. cit., p. 284.

<sup>46</sup> See P. Ondera, „Skryte rizika ilegálnej migrácie” (Latent risks of illegal migration) in *Informacny bulletin*, No. 48 (Bratislava: Slovenska informacna agentura, 1997).

create rather a negative than positive image of Ukraine in the general Slovak public perception.

Despite the intention of the first 1998-2002 Dzurinda's government to change its approach to Ukraine, Slovak-Ukrainian relations have not experienced a change for the better and first of all because of the growing conflict agenda in the course of 1999-2000. Both sides so far have been demonstrating a lack of serious attempt to define their mutual interests, and to coordinate their approach to each other and the third parties.

### **5. 2001: a new beginning?**

Following the above bilateral agenda of 1999-2000 both sides had clearly learned that it is better to hold regular talks than to ignore the interests of a partner. Within the context of the former periods of 1993-1998 and especially that of 1999-2000, the year of 2001 might be characterized like a year of significant positive shift in Slovak-Ukrainian relationship. An overture to a new beginning took place at the end of 2000 when the then Ukrainian PM Viktor Yushchenko visited Slovakia.

Yushchenko visited Bratislava in December 2000 and it was the first visit by a Ukrainian PM to Slovakia since January 1993. The main topics of his talks with Slovak PM Dzurinda and president Rudolf Schuster were the effects of visa regime on bilateral relationship, the danger of Ukraine's reneging on its readmission treaty with Slovakia, the positions of both sides on the Russian proposal to build the Jamal 2 gas pipeline bypassing Ukraine, Slovak participation in the construction of the KTUK and finally a completely new theme in Slovak-Ukrainian dialogue and namely bilateral cooperation on getting Caspian oil to European markets through existing oil pipeline network shared by both Slovakia and Ukraine. The premiers achieved a significant progress on two of these topics: the visa regime and working together on transport of the Caspian oil.<sup>47</sup>

As far as visa issue is concerned both premiers reached an important agreement on the creation of a joint expert commission to take a look at the results of Slovakia's visa requirement for Ukraine nationals, and to script a liberalized regime that would interfere as little as possible with business, social, cultural and sport contacts. Ukraine at the same time was to stop the process of withdrawing from the readmission treaty with Slovakia, which it had launched by government decision on 4 October 2000. In February 2001 the two sides changed the visa regime, effective as of 1 March 2001, to eliminate the need to show a letter of invitation by citizens of both countries while getting a visa, and to provide free visas for children under 16, the issue of multi-use free visas for some categories of applicants who had cross the border often as air crews, river and sea-going boat crews, railway servicemen, truckers people living in bordering areas, and above all those with relatives on the opposite side of the state border, students, world war two veterans, etc. and a 50 percent savings on visas for people traveling on the basis of a mutual agreement, i.e. in culture, art, sport, church relations. Thus, the Yushchenko - Dzurinda accord from December 2000 has closed one of the most sensitive and problematic chapters in a modern Slovak-Ukrainian relationship.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> For more see Serhiy Solodkiy, 'Ukrainia – Slovachchyna: chas priynyattya rishen' (Ukraine - Slovakia: a time to make decisions) in *Den* (7 December 2000).

<sup>48</sup> See Duleba (ed, 2001), Chapter I: Visa regime in Slovak-Ukrainian relations, pp. 30-41; and respective Chapter 2: Fighting illegal migration and readmission treaty, pp. 42-54.

Another positive result of talks between heads of Slovak and Ukrainian government held in Bratislava in December 2000 was an agreement on transport of Caspian oil to Europe through Ukraine and Slovakia. As the Ukrainian PM visited Slovak oil transiting company Transpetrol, a project was being presented for an oil pipeline link between the Yuzhny sea oil terminal at Odessa and the Brody compressor station being located on the Slovak arm of the Druzhba oil pipeline, which had been developed by Ukrainian state companies Ukrnaftohaz and Mahistral'ni naftoprovody Druzhba (Magistral Druzhba Pipelines). On the Odessa – Brody arm it was expected that 28 to 67 million tons of oil would be transported annually. While the Slovak arm of Druzhba pipelines transports only 21 million tons of oil a year, it is being used at less than a half of its capacity.<sup>49</sup> Slovakia's strategic interests here is not so much the transit fees it might gain, but the fact that the country could finally diversify its sources of oil imports having an access to Caspian resources, and in reducing reliance on Russian oil thereby increase the country's energy security. The Ukrainian-Slovak agreement was in the strategic interests of both countries, and following Yushchenko – Dzurinda's talks Slovak officials became more cautious on the subject of building a southern arm to the Jamal gas pipeline that would bypass Ukraine.<sup>50</sup> In context of the previous practice of Slovak-Ukrainian relations, the most important fact is that both countries raised a new positive topic of their bilateral agenda, which was quite a unique element in their bilateral relationship.

In afterwards of meeting of the heads of government, Slovak-Ukrainian relations improved sharply as shown by the number of official visits by top Ukrainian officials. Foreign minister Anatoliy Zlenko and finally president Leonid Kuchma have shortly followed the Ukrainian PM. Kuchma paid an official visit to Slovakia on 12-14 June 2001, the first by a Ukraine head of state since 1993. The three days visit of Ukrainian president gave a boost to bilateral relations and was the summit of the attempts by the two countries to change relations from what they had been in the previous periods. However, the visit took place against the background of growing criticism of the Ukrainian president from the EU and NATO countries because of Kuchma's undemocratic style of rule and his restriction of media freedom in Ukraine. But, this Slovak reception was one of the warmest Kuchma got at that time with Slovak president Schuster saying he was not aware of any democratic deficit in Ukraine. However, Slovak PM Dzurinda after meeting Ukrainian president has invited the Slovak NGOs to be more active in helping Ukrainian counterparts to build a democratic society diplomatically to say to balance Slovak president's words on the subject.<sup>51</sup> In December 2002 the Slovak president Schuster paid his reciprocal visit to Ukraine.

Nevertheless, diverging assessments of the Kuchma regime by two top Slovak leaders concerning its democratic character did not affect bilateral relationship between the both countries. As whole, it might be concluded that Slovak-Ukrainian relations started to experience a new era in the course of 2001 and 2002 thanks to principal agreements reached by heads of government in December 2000.

## **6. Slovak-Ukrainian trade exchange and economic cooperation**

Ukraine is among the 10 most significant of Slovakia's economic and trade partners. In terms of trade turnover, 1999 was the worst in the last seven years, falling to \$281 million after hitting \$410,4 million in 1998 and \$520,7 million in 1997 when it topped since the beginning

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<sup>49</sup> Ibidem – see Chapter V: Transport of natural gas and oil to European markets, pp. 76-80.

<sup>50</sup> Javurkova, 2001, op. cit.

<sup>51</sup> See Blazej Panik, Priatel'ia – prezidenti (Presidents - Friends) in *Narodna obroda* (15 June 2001).

of Slovak-Ukrainian trade exchange in 1993. One of the key reasons for this decline was the difficult economic situation in Ukraine, which in 1999 was only just recovering from the Russian financial crisis in 1998. Russia is a key business partner for Ukraine, absorbing almost 25 percent of Ukraine annual exports and providing about 59 percent Ukraine imports. Beginning from 2000 the Slovak-Ukrainian trade exchange shows a slight growth.

Slovak and Ukrainian economic experts share an estimation that there is a potential for at least doubling of the bilateral trade turnover in the future. The main challenge of the Slovak-Ukraine trade follows the fact that both countries have limited rooms for its bilateral liberalization. In the foreign trade relations Slovakia must follow international commitments resulting from its membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) as well as the European Agreement with the EU, and finally the Agreement on Customs Union with the Czech Republic. Unfortunately, Ukraine is not a part of the above preferential system of the Slovak foreign trade relations and first of all because it is still not a member of the World Trade Organization. As Slovak and Ukrainian experts point it out the Ukraine membership in the WTO will significantly improve prospects for further liberalization of the bilateral trade and consequently will lead to the growing trade turnover.<sup>52</sup>

#### Slovakia's trade with Ukraine (in \$ million, current prices)

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	I-IX/2002
<b>Exports</b>	130,9	119,1	121,7	177,0	270,0	229,2	136,2	147,1	145,5	111,6
<b>Imports</b>	142,4	121,0	188,7	241,3	250,7	181,2	144,8	189,0	194,1	133,9
<b>Total</b>	273,3	240,1	310,4	418,3	520,7	410,4	281,0	336,1	339,6	245,5
<b>Balance</b>	- 11,5	- 1,9	- 67,0	- 64,3	19,3	48,0	- 8,6	- 41,9	- 48,6	- 22,3

*Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic*

Slovak companies and banks invested around \$300 million abroad since 1993 till the end of 2000. At that period Ukraine occupied the third place as to the Slovak foreign investment with \$43 million following the Czech Republic (\$108 million) and the United Kingdom (59 million).<sup>53</sup> Although, since April 2001 it reached the first place in this ranking thanks to \$230 million investment of the East-Slovak Energy Company (Kosice) to the regional energy distribution companies in the following four Ukrainian regions: Zhitomir, Sevastopol, Kirovograd, and Kherson. These Ukrainian regions together with the Luck region in north-western Ukraine (\$22 million USD investment of the Chemosvit Svit joint stock company located also in Eastern Slovakia) are major recipients of the Slovak direct investments.

According to data given by the Transcarpathian Regional Administration, Slovak companies invested \$1.7 million within 5 business project in the region as to the end of September 2000. Slovakia's investment activity in the Transcarpathia follows Hungary with \$128 million, Austria (9.3), Germany (8.7), and the U.S. (2.6).<sup>54</sup> The major flow of Slovak investments to Ukraine comes from the Eastern Slovak companies, but the neighboring Transcarpathia is far

<sup>52</sup> For more see: *Sprava z 9. zasadnutia Medzivladnej komisie pre obchodno-hospodarsku a vedecko-technicku spolupracu medzi Slovenskou republikou a Ukrajinou* (Report on the 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation between the Slovak Republic and Ukraine). Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, 2002.

<sup>53</sup> Source: National Bank of Slovakia, 2001.

<sup>54</sup> Source: The State Administration of the Transcarpathian Region of Ukraine, 2000.



from being a main destination of these Slovak investments. This is one of the main paradoxes of the Slovak-Ukrainian economic cooperation at the present as well as a challenge for the future of cross-border cooperation between Slovak and Ukrainian border regions.

## **7. Transborder cooperation: a Eastern Slovak perspective**

The legal and organizational framework for the transborder co-operation within the Carpathian Euroregion has been established on February 14, 1993, in Debrecen when ministers of foreign affairs, governmental, regional and local representatives of Ukraine, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary and Romania signed founding documents of the Carpathian Euroregion. The neighboring regions of Slovakia (Presov and Kosice) and Ukraine (Transcarpathian region) are members of the Carpathian Euroregion.

The representatives of Slovak local authorities and self-governments in Eastern Slovakia were active and enthusiastic in launching an interregional cooperation with neighboring partners from Poland, Ukraine and Hungary. What did they expect from development of such co-operation? The answer may be outlined as follows: successful transborder cooperation will promote revitalization and development of the Eastern Slovakia. The lack of governmental investment in the transport and communication infrastructure of the region, private business support, and educational and cultural programs in Eastern Slovakia could be at least partly compensated by the activities of the Carpathian Euroregion. These expectations were increased due to the fact that some Western financial institutions have manifested their readiness to support the Carpathian Euroregion, e.g. EU within its programs on regional development and transborder cooperation (PHARE, CREDO), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and some US private funds.<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, their vision was that Eastern Slovakia occupies not only the central geographic position in the area of Carpathian Euroregion, but it has also the most developed economic capacity of the five border regions. Eastern Slovakia thus could serve as the building stone in developing programs within Carpathian Euroregion. They thought that this would be profitable for the region of Eastern Slovakia, but also for Slovakia as a whole. An active role of Slovakia in development of Carpathian Euroregion activities could strengthen the Slovak Republic's international position in the CEE sub-region enhancing its reputation as a serious and constructive actor in regional and also European affairs. They have hoped that central government will understand this and will support their transfrontier activities.<sup>56</sup> But, they were wrong at least up to the end of 1998 when new Slovak government came to power after the parliamentary elections in September 1998. In November 1999, East-Slovak regions of Presov and Kosice signed accession agreements and became members of the Carpathian Euroregion.

However, transborder cooperation within the Carpathian Euroregion did not meet East-Slovak expectations as of beginning the 1990s. In 1998 during the ceremony commemorating the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Carpathian Euroregion many distinguished

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<sup>55</sup> Author's interviews with Slovak activists, e.g. Mr. Michal Pado - former Principle of the Administration of Michalovce district and chair of the Carpathian Region Association of 6 East-Slovak districts established with aim to promote transborder co-operation with regions of neighboring countries, Mr. Tibor Ico - speaker of the Association, and Mr. Rudolf Bauer - mayor of Kosice a.o. This association was the official representative of the Slovak part in the Carpathian Euroregion since February 1993 till November 1999. For more see Duleba, Alexander, Karpatsky euroregion - geneza projektu transhranicnej spoluprace (The Carpathian Euroregion - A Genesis of the Transborder Cooperation Project ), in *Medzinarodne otázky*, 1993, 4, pp. 93-115.

<sup>56</sup> Ibidem.

speakers and founders of the Carpathian Euroregion expressed their concern about the future attractiveness of cross-border cooperation.<sup>57</sup> As they pointed out, at the beginning the expectations from member regions were too big. However, the Carpathian Euroregion could not raise sufficient resources for its programs in order to be able to meet such expectations.

## **8. Minorities in Slovak-Ukrainian relations**

As already mentioned (see part 3) the question about the ethnic „Rusyn minority” has a political dimension in the modern Slovak-Ukrainian relations.

### **Ethnic Ukrainians/Rusyns in Slovakia**

#### ***Ukrainian/Rusyn question in Slovakia before 1989***

Since the 19th century, leaders of the Rusyn minority living on the territory of the present Slovakia have argued about their national identity. Some have felt Rusyns to be a branch of Russians, others a branch of Ukrainians, still others that they form a distinct Slavic nationality. Each orientation has used a different language, whether Russian, Ukrainian, or Rusyn, as a means to identify themselves. The leaders of the first revival elite of Rusyns living in the Hungarian part of Habsburg monarchy felt that Rusyns were a branch of Russians (Adolf Dobriansky) and that their literary language should be Russian (Alexander Dukhnovych). Many representatives of the Greek Catholic clergy supported a Rusynophile orientation. Ukrainophile and Russophile tendencies were strengthened by the large influx of „white” Russian and Ukrainian emigrants to Czechoslovakia after World War I and „Bolshevik revolution” in Russia.<sup>58</sup>

The attitude of the communist parties in Eastern Europe after World War II towards the Rusyn question was determined in 1924, when the Fifth congress of the Comintern in Moscow passed a resolution on the so-called „Ukrainian question”. According to this, Rusyns were simply Ukrainians and the communist parties of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania had to support their unification with the Ukrainian Soviet Republic in the Soviet Union.<sup>59</sup> In the 1950s, the Communist party of Czechoslovakia after it came into power in 1948 started a process of Ukrainization in education and culture, prohibiting the Greek Catholic Church. Similar processes took place in Poland and Romania. Only after the collapse of communism after 1989, the Rusynophile movement has been revived. But the process of ethnic self-identification of Rusyns is still not completed.<sup>60</sup> To this day, there are two main national orientations among Rusyns in Slovakia, but also in Ukraine, Poland, etc. – Rusyn and Ukrainian.

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<sup>57</sup> Fifth Anniversary of the Carpathian Euroregion took place on 13-14 February 1998 in Debrecen at the Hotel Arabynika where the founding documents of the Carpathian Euroregion were signed.

<sup>58</sup> For more see Magocsi, Paul Robert, *The Shaping of a National Identity. Subcarpathian Rus', 1848-1948* (London, Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1978); and also his *Of the Making of Nationalities. There is No End*, Vol. I-II (New York: Columbia University Press, East European Monographs, No. DXL, 1999).

<sup>59</sup> Bajcura, Ivan, *Ukrajinska otazka v CSSR* (Ukrainian Question in the CSSR) (Kosice: Vychodoslovenske vydavatelstvo, 1967), pp. 57-58.

<sup>60</sup> For more see *Rusini: otazky dejin a kultury* (Rusyns: Issues of History and Culture; Almanac of the Conference „Rusyns in Period of the Slavic Revival” held in Bardejovske kupele, Slovak Republic on October 15-16, 1994) (Presov: Rusinska obroda, 1994); Stanislav Konecny and Mikulas Musinka, *Rusini/Ukrajinci v zrkadle polstorocia* (Rusyns/Ukrainians in the Mirror of Half Century) (Presov, Uzhorod: Universum, 1999), etc.

### ***Ukrainian/Rusyn question in Slovakia after 1989: a divided minority***

The main institution allowed by the communist party to represent minority interests of Ukrainians in Slovakia after World War II was the Cultural Association of Ukrainian Workers (Kulturny zväz ukrajinskych pracujucich - KZUP) set up in the early 1950s. After its last congress in 1990, the KZUP was dissolved and two separate new organizations were established: the Union of Rusyns-Ukrainians in Slovakia (Zväz Rusinov-Ukrajincov Slovenska - ZRUS) and the Rusyn Renaissance (Rusinska Obroda - RO). In terms of national self-identification, the ZRUS supports a Ukrainian and the RO a Rusyn orientation. The ZRUS continues to publish periodicals issued by the former KZUP (the bi-weekly „Nove Zytta” /”New Life”/ and the two-monthly journal „Druzno vpered” /”Friendly forward”/) while the RO has started two new periodicals (the bi-weekly „Narodny novynky” /”National newsletters”/ and the two-monthly journal „Rusyn”).

Both organizations compete with each other in persuading Rusyns/Ukrainians living in Slovakia about their national identity and in attempts to win government support. Because some important minority institutions set up after World War II (i.e. the Museum of Rusyn-Ukrainian Culture in Svidnik, the Theatre of Alexander Duchnovic in Presov, the Ukrainian Branch of Slovak Radio in Presov, the Department of Ukrainian Language and Literature at Presov University, etc.) are in the hold of former KZUP-representatives who have joined the ZRUS, the RO requires its own share of the former KZUP property or the establishment of parallel Rusyn institutions. These demands have been a constant source of conflict between the two organizations since the dissolution of the KZUP. For its part, the Slovak government has recognized the right of Rusyns to define themselves as Rusyns, but on the redistribution of KZUP property it has taken a reserved position, arguing that the two new organizations must find agreement between themselves.<sup>61</sup>

In 1995, Rusyn Renaissance codified a separate Rusyn language as this was a main prerequisite for introducing Rusyn at primary schools as well as in state TV and radio minority broadcasting. The ZRUS protested the move, claiming that Rusyn is only a dialect of the Ukrainian language and that Rusyn nation does not exist. Leaders of the Rusyns argue that the Slovak government is subject to pressure by Kiev, which views efforts to recognize a separate Rusyn nationality as an anti-Ukrainian move. The Slovak government has refuted such allegations.<sup>62</sup> Any way, with the start of academic year of 1998/99 Rusyn parents could for the first time decide if they wish their children to be taught in Rusyn at primary schools, at least for some hours every week.

Another factor indicating a strong process of assimilation of Rusyns is the number of Orthodox and Greek-Catholic believers in today's Slovakia. While Slovaks were historically Catholics or Protestants, Rusyns were mainly Orthodox and, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, also Greek-Catholics. According to the 1991 census, 178,733 persons indicated their religion as Greek-Catholic and 34,376 as Orthodox.<sup>63</sup> The 2001 census has showed a growth in number

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<sup>61</sup> See M. Gajdos – S. Konecny (eds., 1997), op. cit., p. 85.

<sup>62</sup> For more see i.e. Musynka, Mykola, *Politicnyj Rusynism na praktyci* (Political Rusynism in the Practise) (Chrest: 1992); Stec, Mykola, *Do pytannya „rusynskoji” literaturnoji movy* (On the Question of the „Rusyn” Literary Language) (Presov: Sojuz Rusyniv-Ukrajinciv CSFR, 1992); Vanat, Ivan, *Do pytannya pro tak zvanu ukrajinizaciju rusyniv Pryasivscyny* (On the Question of so-called Ukrainization of Rusyns in the Presov Region) (Presov: Nove Zyttya, Addition to the No. 50-51/1993), etc.

<sup>63</sup> Statistical Yearbook of the Slovak Republic 1998 (Bratislava: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 1998), p. 526.

of believers of the both churches: 219,831 people introduced their religion as Greek-Catholic and respectively 50,363 as the Orthodox.<sup>64</sup> These figures are much higher than the number of people identifying themselves as having Rusyn or Ukrainian national identity in Slovakia.

The communist regime in Czechoslovakia followed the longstanding Russian and Soviet practice of opposing the Uniate Church (linked to Rome) in favor of the orthodox clergy. In 1950s, the Greek-Catholic Church was banned while the Orthodox Church took over its property and parishes. Uniate clergymen were imprisoned or sent into exile. Uniate believers responded with various forms of resistance, ranging from leaving churches whenever an orthodox priest arrived to holding services among themselves. In time of „Prague Spring” of the late 1960s, following seizures of churches by Uniates, the government promised a solution. The Greek-Catholic Church was officially recognized in 1968, but the poverty disputes between the Uniate and Orthodox churches were left unsettled.<sup>65</sup> The problem flared up again after the 1989 revolution, when Greek-Catholics began seizing churches by force, resulting in a series of violent acts throughout northeastern Slovakia. Many Rusyn villages were divided into two hostile groups following different religious orientations.

The Slovak government faced up to the problem by arranging negotiations between representatives of both churches, which resulted in series of administrative measures. The first were the Act on the Settlement of Property Injustices Caused to Churches and Religious Societies (so-called „Restitution Act”) and a legal measure passed by the Presidium of the Slovak National Council „On Defining Financial Relations Between the Greek Catholic and the Orthodox Churches” (No. 211/1990 of the Legal Code).<sup>66</sup> As a result, the property seized by the Orthodox Church in the 1950s has been given back to the Greek Catholics, while both churches have agreed on a list of churches for common use until new orthodox churches will be built. The Slovak government has passed a financial program to support the construction of new orthodox churches. Thus, the problem was solved quite successfully by the mid-1990s and, today many Rusyn villages and towns have Greek Catholic and Orthodox churches. Nevertheless, the memory of recent acts of violence remains fresh and mentally still divides Rusyns living in communities where both confessions are practiced.

It should be underlined that the religious division of Rusyns and Ukrainians does not correspond to their differences in national self-identification. Thus, many Rusyns who feel they to be Rusyns are of both Orthodox and Greek-Catholic religion. The same is true for those who feel themselves to be Ukrainians. This is a positive factor, which helps to pacify tensions and conflicts in the Rusyn/Ukrainian minority in Slovakia.

In summary, it must be underlined that the process of democratization set off after the velvet revolution of the late 1980s has revived the old historical „Rusyn question” which had been frozen under the communist regime. Formerly one Rusyn/Ukrainian minority living in northeastern Slovakia is now divided into two groups concerning national self-identification (Rusyn and Ukrainian) as well as their religious orientation (Orthodox and Greek Catholic). The organizations representing parts of the divided minority compete with each other in the fields of national orientation, culture, education and politics. The consolidation of the Rusyn/Ukrainian minority in Slovakia seems to be a long-term process.

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<sup>64</sup> Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2001.

<sup>65</sup> For more see Konecny, Stanislav, „K niektorým otázkam pravoslávizácie na Slovensku v roku 1950” (On the Some Questions of the Orthodoxization in Slovakia in 1950), in *Rusini: otázky dejín a kultúry* (Rusyns: Issues of History and Culture)(Presov: Rusinska obroda, 1994), pp. 125-133.

<sup>66</sup> See *Legal Status of Registered Churches and Religious Societies in the Slovak Republic* (Bratislava: Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, 1997).

## Ethnic Slovaks in Ukraine

According to the last Soviet census of 1989, the number of ethnic Slovaks living in Ukraine was 7,329 (0,02 per cent of the total Ukrainian population), of whom 94 per cent live in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine.<sup>67</sup> While Rusyns/Ukrainians are original inhabitants of northeastern Slovakia, the Slovak population in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine stems mainly from economic migration, beginning in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Slovak settlers were invited to move to Subcarpathia to work at the emerging new smelting works, sawmills and water supply systems, but also as woodcutters.<sup>68</sup>

According to the last Hungarian census (1900), the number of Slovaks living in the Subcarpathian region was around 7,300. After the creation of the Czechoslovak State in 1918, the number increased significantly to 19,930 in 1921 and 37,900 in 1930. After the World War II the censuses show a reverse trend, from 13,400 Slovaks in 1946 to 7,329 in 1989.<sup>69</sup> Many Slovaks moved back to Slovakia after the Hungarian occupation of Carpathian Ukraine in 1939 and others assimilated in post-war Soviet Ukraine. It must be noted that according to the 1989 census, only 2,555 of the 7,329 persons registered as ethnic Slovaks indicated that their mother tongue is Slovak, while 2,433 indicated Ukrainian, 1,890 Hungarian and the remaining group Russian.<sup>70</sup>

At the same time, national culture and consciousness of Transcarpathian Slovaks have become more active since the early 1990s. While there was no primary school teaching Slovak in the post-war period, a first such school has been set up in Storoznica in 1993, while Slovak (as optional subject) is taught at primary schools in Velyky Berezny, Seredne and Uzhgorod. Slovak language and literature have been introduced as a new section at Uzhgorod University with the aim of preparing primary and secondary school teachers. In late 1992, the cultural organization Slovak Matica was established in Uzhgorod, while the Ludovit Stur's Association of Slovaks in Transcarpathia was set up in Storoznica.<sup>71</sup> These organizations, which have become centers of national life for Slovaks in Transcarpathia, are supported by Slovak non-governmental organizations, such as the Slovak Matica, the House of Foreign Slovaks and the Slovak government. An official framework for these cultural links is provided in agreements between the Slovak and Ukrainian governments.

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<sup>67</sup> Jevtuch, Volodymyr, Josyp Isyp and Serhij Suhlobin, (eds.), *Etnopolitycna situacia v Ukraini: sprobny naukovej interpretacii* (Ethnic-Political Situation in Ukraine: An Attempt of Scientific Interpretation) (Kiev: Institut sociolohii AN Ukrainy, 1993), p. 30.

<sup>68</sup> Haraksim, Ludovit, „O minulosti Slovakov na Zakarpatsku” (About the Slovaks' Past in the Transcarpathia), in Cani, Ladislav (ed.), *Slovaci na Zakarpatskej Ukrajine* (Slovaks in the Transcarpathian Ukraine) (Bratislava: Dom zahraničných Slovakov, 1998), pp. 9-17, here p. 13.

<sup>69</sup> Hajnis, Jozef „Spolkova cinnost a duchovny zivot Slovakov na Zakarpatskej Ukrajine” (Community Activities and Spiritual Life of Slovaks in Transcarpathian Ukraine), in Cani, Ladislav (ed.), op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>70</sup> Makara, Mykola and Ivan Myhovec, *Karpatamy poridneni. Narys etnopolitycnoi istorii i sucasnoho stanu ukrajinsko-slovackych vzajemyn* (Connected by Carpathian Mountains. An Outline of Ethnic-Political History and Actual State of Ukrainian-Slovak Relations) (Uzhgorod: Uzhgorodsky universitet, Instytut sociolohii NAN Ukrainy, 1997), p. 62.

<sup>71</sup> See Hajnis, op. cit. Ludovit Stur was a leading representative of the Slovak national awakening in 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## Governmental attitudes

In 1994, a year after the signing of the basic treaty between Slovakia and Ukraine, the Ukrainian government proposed to set up a bilateral committee on minority issues. As mentioned earlier, according to the then Ukrainian foreign minister Anatolij Zlenko, the task of such a committee would be to prevent ethnic separatism. Behind this proposition, however, were fears on the Ukrainian side concerning possible „Rusyn separatism” in the Transcarpathian Region. Slovak government has accepted proposition of its Ukrainian counterpart.

The bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak Committee for National Minorities, Education and Cultural Affairs held its first session in Kiev in February 1995. Both sides agreed that the committee would meet regularly at least once a year. So far, committee meetings have been held in Bratislava (October 1996), Uzhgorod (December 1997), Presov (December 1998), Uzhgorod (May 2001) and Bratislava (October 2002). The Slovak side is chaired by the director general of the Department for Cooperation with Foreign Slovaks, Press and Humanitarian Relations of the Slovak Foreign Ministry, while Ukraine is represented by the first deputy Head of the State Committee for Minorities and Migration. At the second meeting in Bratislava in 1996, both sides stressed that any demand for territorial, administrative or other forms of autonomy based on ethnic principles is unacceptable and refused any ethnic separatism which could destabilize this region of Central and Eastern Europe. They also demanded that representatives of the two minorities profess loyalty to the respective states in which they live.<sup>72</sup>

In other words, the Slovak side accepted Ukrainian fears of concerning so-called „Rusyn separatism” in Transcarpathia, while Ukraine accepted Slovak fears with regard to so-called „Hungarian separatism” in Slovakia. According to the Protocol of the Fourth Committee Session in 1998, both sides agreed to include representatives of two minority organizations - the Association of Rusyns-Ukrainians in Slovakia (ZRUS) and Slovak Matica in Uzhgorod - in the Committee.<sup>73</sup> As a result, half of members of the former Ukrainian minority in Slovakia, which feel themselves to be Rusyn, is excluded from official Slovak-Ukrainian cooperation on minority issues. Also, it should be underlined that the Slovak government does not question recognition of Rusyns as the national minority different to Ukrainian one in Slovakia with full rights and privileges in accordance with the Slovak minority legislation.<sup>74</sup>

Although a first agreement on cooperation in culture and academic exchanges was signed in 1994, the government committee became the center initiating Slovak-Ukrainian cultural cooperation as of 1995. It has been agreed to establish centers for minority culture in Uzhgorod (Slovak) and in Presov (Ukrainian). The Slovak Culture Ministry gives financial support to festivals organized by the Association of Rusyns-Ukrainians every year and has agreed to help organizing Ukrainian theatre festivals in Slovakia, especially in areas inhabited by ethnic Ukrainians. On its side, the Ukrainian Culture Ministry supports a festival organized by Slovak Matica and the Ludovit Stur’s Association in Storoznica. The bilateral committee also initiated negotiations on expert level for an agreement on cooperation in

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<sup>72</sup> *Protokol druhoho zasadanna Dvostoronnei ukraïnsko-slovackoi komisii z pytan nacionalnych mensyn, osvity i kultury* (Protocol of the Second Session of Bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak Committee for National Minorities, Education and Culture Affairs) (Bratislava: October 22-24, 1996).

<sup>73</sup> *Protocol of the Committee’s Fourth Session held in Presov, on December 8-9, 1998.*

<sup>74</sup> For more see Sutaj, Stefan and Milan Olejnik, „Slovak Report”, in: Kranz, Jerzy and Herbert Kupper (ed.), *Law and Practice of Central European Countries in the Field of National Minorities Protection After 1989* (Warsaw: Center for International Relations, 1998), pp. 269-321.

information exchanges. This will promote regular exchanges of TV and radio broadcasting programs, cooperation of the state information agencies, the supply of literature for minority organizations, etc.<sup>75</sup>

Similarly, the committee initiated negotiations on an intergovernmental agreement ensuring recognition of academic certificates and degrees. Academic working groups have been set up with the aim to prepare text books for primary schools teaching in Slovak or Ukrainian. The Institute of Social Sciences in Kosice and the Institute of Sociology in Kiev will cooperate in research on the subject of „Slovaks in Ukraine and Ukrainians in Slovakia”, the results of which are to be used by the government committee. Both sides have agreed to organize and finance long-term exchanges of two teachers a year with the aim of improving their language and pedagogical capabilities. For short-term stays and seminars, both sides have agreed to accept 15 teachers of Ukrainian and Slovak language every year. Ukraine has also agreed to cover yearly two-month stays for some 20 Slovak university students who will study Ukrainian language and literature, etc.<sup>76</sup> As to other sciences, the protocol signed by the Slovak and Ukrainian Education Ministries on Cooperation and Academic Exchanges (for the years 1998-2000) in April 1998, foresees that both sides accept 6 students for full university courses every year, 3 students for limited courses, and 3 researchers staying up to 10 months every year.<sup>77</sup>

## 9. The EU context and impact of visa-regime

The imposition of visa regime in the Slovak-Ukrainian relations as of 29 June 2000 – a step initiated by Slovak side following the need to bring the visa policy in a line with the EU standards within the accession process - led to a significant drop in number of Ukrainian citizens' crossings through the common state border. There are two main negative impacts of the visa regime that could be learned from the short Slovak-Ukrainian experience – first of all contacts between members of the ethnic minorities living on both sides of state border became more complicated and finally, visa regime in Ukraine's relations with Slovakia, but as well with the Czech Republic has challenged the labor market in the Transcarpathian Region of Ukraine.

As to the Czech Ministry of Interior' estimation the number of illegal economic migrants from Ukraine by the end 1998 was almost 200.000 of which majority came from the Western regions of Ukraine (Lviv, Lutsk, Rivne, Ivano-Frankivsk, Tchernivtsy, and Uzhgorod) and accordingly the Slovak Ministry of Interior published data before introduction of visas in 2000 that estimated number of illegal economic migrants from Ukraine in Slovakia as about 60.000 of which a majority likewise comes from the Western Ukraine.<sup>78</sup> These figures are very important in the light of demographic statistics of the Transcarpathian Region of Ukraine from 1993 according to which the total population of the region was 1,2 million of persons of

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<sup>75</sup> Protocol of the Committee's Fourth Session..., op. cit.

<sup>76</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>77</sup> See *Protokol miz Ministerstvom osvity Ukrainy ta Ministerstvom osvity Slovacckoi Respubliky pro spivrobotnyctvo ta obminy v haluzi osvity na 1998-2000 roky* (Protocol of the Ministry of Education of Ukraine and the Ministry of Education of Slovak Republic on Co-operation and Academic Exchanges for Academic Years of 1998-2000) (signed in Kiev on April 18, 1998).

<sup>78</sup> Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic, 1999; Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, 2000; see *Narodna obroda*, 26.01.1999, *Hospodarske noviny*, 5.02.1999, and *Pravda*, 9.06.2000.

which adult male population in the age between 18 and 50 years was about 270.000 persons.<sup>79</sup> The imposition of visa regime in Slovak-Ukrainian relations in June 2000 has significantly effected the movement of persons through the common state border as follows: number of Ukrainian citizens crossing the Slovak-Ukrainian border decreased significantly from 1,7 mil of persons in 1998 till 0,3 mil in 2001, which means a reduction in 5,6 times, while the total movement of persons through the section of the Slovak-Ukrainian border decreased almost in 5 times since 1998.<sup>80</sup>

The above impacts have led both Ukrainian and Slovak governments to negotiate a liberalization of the visa regime aiming at mitigating its negative impact on bilateral relations. As mentioned above (see parts 4-5) the principal accord has been reached at the end of 2000 when the then Ukrainian prime minister Yushchenko paid visit to Slovakia. As far as visa issue is concerned both premiers reached an important agreement on the creation of a joint expert commission to take a look at the results of Slovakia's visa requirement for Ukraine nationals, and to script a liberalized regime that would interfere as little as possible with business, social, cultural and sport contacts. Ukraine at the same time was to stop the process of withdrawing from the readmission treaty with Slovakia, which it had launched by government decision on 4 October 2000 as a response to the Slovakia's decision to impose visa requirements for Ukrainian citizens. In February 2001 the two sides changed the visa regime, effective as of 1 March 2001, to eliminate the need to show a letter of invitation by citizens of both countries while getting a visa, and to provide free visas for children under 16, the issue of multi-use free visas for some categories of applicants who had cross the border often as air crews, river and sea-going boat crews, railway servicemen, truckers people living in bordering areas, and above all those with relatives on the opposite side of the state border, students, world war two veterans, etc. and a 50 percent savings on visas for people traveling on the basis of a mutual agreement, i.e. in culture, art, sport, church relations.<sup>81</sup> Even though Slovakia and Ukraine made a significant step in confronting negative impacts of the implementation of the Schengen provisions on the common state border, the reduction of the Ukrainian citizens' crossings through the border in 5,6 times because of imposition of visa regime required by the EU is too drastic drop to ignore it. The 2002 data only might prove whether the statistics in this regard is changing in a more positive direction.

The Slovak „Schengen” experience with its border on Ukraine has highlighted a substantial challenge which candidate countries that will be sharing external borders of EU in the future once they become members will face in the coming years. The Schengen dilemma that results from the Slovak-Ukrainian case could be couched in the following way: how to make the future borders of an enlarged EU on its Eastern neighbors safe and effective as much as possible in terms of confronting illegal migration, organized crime, international terrorism, etc. and at the same time to keep them open as much as possible for movement of citizens of the neighboring countries. Definitely, there is a need to develop special assistance programs

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<sup>79</sup> For demographic statistics of the Transcarpathian Region of Ukraine see Jevtuch, Volodymyr, Josyp Isyp and Serhij Suhlobin, (eds.), 1993, op. cit.

<sup>80</sup> The data come from the ongoing project „Carpathian Euroregion and external borders of an enlarged EU: confronting the challenge of Schengen” which is conducted by the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association in cooperation with the Regional Analysis and Information Center (Uzhgorod), and the European Study Center (Nyiregyhaza) within the research program of the Carpathian Foundation (Kosice), 2001-2003.

<sup>81</sup> For more see Alexander Duleba (ed, 2001), *Ukrajina a Slovensko. Hľadanie spoločných záujmov* (Ukraine and Slovakia. Searching for Common Interests), Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Friedrich Ebert Foundation; especially Chapter I: Visa regime in Slovak-Ukrainian relations, pp. 30-41; and respective Chapter 2: Fighting illegal migration and readmission treaty, pp. 42-54.



within the EU helping at least the neighboring regions of future Eastern neighbors aiming at the stabilization of their labor markets as well as improving facilities for contacts between members of ethnic minorities living on both sides of the future external „Schengen” border of an enlarged EU.