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**FROM SPECIAL TO NORMAL RELATIONS THROUGH UNILATERALISM:  
HUNGARY'S POLICY TOWARDS UKRAINE, 1991-2002**

The evolution of the Hungarian policy towards Ukraine can be divided into five distinctive subperiods in the indicated period:

- 1990-1991: the period of special mutual relations;
- 1992-1994: the period of unilateralism;
- 1994-1998: the period of balanced relations;
- 1998-2002: unilateralism revisited
- 2002- on: rebalancing again

The paper will analyse the evolution of Hungarian-Ukrainian relations in the following dimension: beginning of relations, political relations, security-military ties, the issue of the Hungarian minority.

*The roots: the promise of a success story, 1990-1991<sup>1</sup>*

The origins of autonomous, direct Hungarian-Ukrainian relations go back to the mid-nineteen-eighties, and had to do first of all with economic relations. The Hungarian government proposed to the Soviet government in 1982, that negotiations on economic cooperation be conducted directly with the European republics of the USSR and not through the center exclusively. After the idea was approved by the central authorities meetings became regular between the appropriate ministries. Under perestroika this led to increased interest especially on the part of individual companies in the Ukrainian "market" and - in harmony with the Soviet laws - a dozen of companies took their share in the state sponsored Hungarian Commercial Representative Office in Kyiv founded in 1988.

The political-diplomatic presence of Hungary was provided by the general consulate in Kyiv. With the process of growing independence of Ukraine the necessity and feasibility of the creation of a new consulate in the Transcarpathian region, namely in Uzhgorod became more obvious, finally a consulate was opened on 10 August 1991.

The visit of Ukrainian foreign minister Zlenko to Budapest in August 1990 proved to be a cornerstone in building bilateral relations. "I consider the talks in Budapest historical, for we have set relations between Hungary and Ukraine on a new basis. With this trip a new era began

for Ukraine, because after the declaration of our independence this was our first international step ... that will reinforce the sovereignty of Ukraine, helps our struggle for independence and increases the international prestige of the country. I am convinced that the Hungarian government wants to maintain fair, good-neighborly relations with Ukraine, and that we will reciprocate in all aspects." - gave a strong evaluation the Ukrainian foreign minister.<sup>2</sup>

This visit provided an exceptionally good start to the evolution of direct bilateral relations between the two sides. The coincidence of interest of the two sides offered unique possibility: the Hungarian government in power that time gave high priority to the issue of Hungarian minorities living in the neighboring countries, while Ukraine was interested in finding partners for the international recognition of her independence.

Not negligible were the regional consequences of this visit. From this time on a real race among the Central European countries began for establishing direct political relations with Ukraine. According to Zlenko the rapid new wave of initiatives to establish contact was explicitly argued in the context of not wanting to be seen as lagging too far behind the Hungarians. "The most insistent was Polish foreign minister who wanted to come to Kiyv immediately with the aim of signing some kind of declaration on the new, democratic relations between Ukraine and Poland... (and) the Slovak government declared that it intended to open a consulate in Ukraine."<sup>3</sup> The Czechoslovak general consul in Kiyv told his Hungarian counterpart that the information on Zlenko's visit to Budapest was a "bomb" in Prague, where they realized that they were late in building relations with Ukraine.<sup>4</sup> What is even more interesting was the Czechoslovak interpretation of the Ukrainian-Hungarian rapprochement. Prague warned Kiyv about the political dangers of increased Hungarian-Ukrainian relations, claiming that "the Hungarians will never be friends of Ukraine, they insist on improving political relations and rapprochement to get in a stronger position vis-a-vis their neighbors. They especially would like to use the declaration on minorities in order to influence the minority policy of their Southern, South-Eastern and Northern neighbors."<sup>5</sup>

As the direct continuation of the fresh start of bilateral relations, Hungarian president Göncz visited Ukraine on 27-30 September 1990. He was the first foreign official guest who travelled specifically to Kiyv not - as it was accepted before - after a visit in Moscow. The two presidents agreed on beginning negotiations on a common declaration on minority rights and a new agreement on consular relations and on intensifying interministerial contacts. The elaboration of the first two documents did not go smoothly. The Hungarian side wanted to include the notion of collective rights of minorities in the text (a category which had not been internationally accepted), and on the other hand, hesitated to sign the consular agreement because of fears of spoiling relations with Moscow. Finally, it was agreed upon that instead of collective rights, minority rights can be practiced "individually and together with other persons within their groups". The compromise in the case of the consular agreement was to let it enter into force after the modification of a similar Hungarian-Soviet agreement (which in fact occurred as a result of the dissolution of the Soviet Union by the end of 1991). These two main documents were signed during the visit of president Kravchuk to Budapest on 31 May 1991. The visit also produced a

declaration on the basic principles of relations between the two countries signed by the two presidents.<sup>6</sup> With this visit, the framework for the successful development of Hungarian-Ukrainian relations was, in deed, laid down. The Hungarian side was satisfied with the fact of receiving from Ukraine a friendly, positive approach and with the fact that it achieved somewhat more on the issue of minorities than required by standard international norms. This was important for the Hungarian leaders because they hoped that other countries in the neighborhood would join the declaration on minorities thus providing a regional pattern of handling this issue. The Ukrainian side could boast the fact that their country was, in a way, recognized as a sovereign state, though still within the framework of the Soviet Union.

On 3 December 1991 Hungary was the first country to establish diplomatic relations with Ukraine and to open an embassy in the capital. The peak of the evolution of this successful first period was the signing of the Hungarian-Ukrainian basic treaty with Ukraine on 6 December. The Hungarian prime-minister arrived from Moscow to Kiyv after signing the Hungarian-Soviet basic treaty with Gorbachev and the Hungarian-Russian basic treaty with Yeltsin. The importance of the Hungarian-Ukrainian basic treaty was connected to the fact that it was the first such document that specifically ruled out any border changes between Hungary and a neighboring country.

#### *Unilateralism, 1992-1994*

##### *Political relations*

After this promising beginning the evolution of Hungarian-Ukrainian relations took a different direction that anticipated the unilateralism of the years to come: the Ukrainian side was always more interested in establishing broader contacts, while the Hungarian side was rather narrowly interested, that is, almost exclusively in the issue of the Hungarian minority. Hungarian foreign minister Jeszenszky's visit to Ukraine in August 1991 was the first sign of this changed pattern. Jeszenszky, after having postponed his visit to Kyiv several times, flew to Kiyv only to go afterwards to Uzhgorod to open the Hungarian consulate there, and to visit a number of other places in the Subcarpathian region<sup>7</sup> as a strong reminder of the historical Hungarian links to this part of Ukraine.

The political parties that came to power in Hungary in 1990 as a result of the first democratic elections after the change of system happened to represent a conservative-moderate-nationalist-christian-democratic orientation. The system of values represented by them were reflected in their foreign policy thinking, as well. Although, it was accepted as a commonplace that the new Hungarian foreign policy had three priorities, ie. Euro-atlantic integration, neighboring countries, and Hungarian minorities beyond the border, by the end of 1991 a special hierarchy seemed to emerge in this triple system. The third element, the issue of Hungarian minorities began to dominate over the other two, and became a kind of superpriority. This phenomenon received the term of Antall-doctrine in the Hungarian political discourse. The Antall-doctrine, named after the that time Hungarian prime-minister, consisted of two components: first, it stated

that those countries that do not treat the Hungarian minorities well, cannot count on good-neighborly relations with Hungary, second, the organizations that represent the Hungarian minorities have veto right on all interstate agreements to be concluded between the two concerned parties.

The good start of relations between Hungary and Ukraine continued with the opening of a Ukrainian embassy in Budapest on 25 March 1992. The importance of this act was increased by the fact that it was the first embassy established by the sovereign Ukraine. Soon after the Hungarian consulate in Uzhgorod was upgraded to general consulate on 2 June 1993.

The good start, however, by this time seemed to reach an end and a different pattern began to characterize the Hungarian-Ukrainian relations: "unilateral bilateralism". The top Ukrainian leadership visited Budapest several times, while their Hungarian counterparts met with them either in third places (on international fora), or in the Sub-Carpathian region where the Hungarian minority is concentrated.

In the period between 1992-1994, both the Ukrainian prime-minister and the president visited Budapest while only the Hungarian interior minister and a deputy foreign state secretary succeeded in arriving in Kyiv. The Hungarian officials, such as foreign minister and prime-minister went only as far as the border cities of Uzhgorod or Beregovo in the Sub-Carpathian region.

Hungarian foreign minister, Géza Jeszenszky visited Beregovo on 4 April 1992 where he met his Ukrainian colleague, Anatoly Zlenko, and later the two ministers continued their talks in Nyíregyháza (Hungary). At the invitation of Jeszenszky the presidential representative of the Sub-Carpathian region, Mikhailo Krayilo visited Budapest. All two trips were aimed at the preparation of the visit of Ukrainian prime-minister Vitold Fokin in May 1992. During these talks Hungarian prime-minister, József Antall declared that "Hungary aims at good relations with all the members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, but among them our relations with Ukraine are the primary ones".<sup>8</sup> The notion of declaring Ukraine as priority No. 1. in the CIS was an expression of the Hungarian interest, first in the Hungarian minority living in the Sub-Carpathian region, second in the possibility of participation in international development programs in Ukraine, and third, in the reduction of security risks linked to Ukraine. Interest in international development programs was aimed at the participation in the housing program of the Federal Republic of Germany and in other programs of the International Monetary Fund. The latter included Hungarian support for the transformation of Ukraine into a non-nuclear state and to prevent the massive flow of immigrants from that country.

During his visit in Kyiv in June 1992 deputy foreign state secretary, Iván Bába insisted on the creation of a Hungarian autonomous region in the Sub-Carpathian region. The Ukrainian side rejected this approach but was not entirely against finding another special formula for the Hungarian minority at the level of self-governments.

Ukrainian president Leonid Kravchuk visited Hungary on 26-27 February 1993. Agreements were reached with regard to a simplified system of border crossing and deporting the illegal emigrants to Hungary from Ukraine. The Hungarian prime-minister repeated the previous notion that "special" Hungarian-Ukrainian relations are needed.<sup>9</sup> Finally, the Hungarian side expressed its interest to get back to Hungary the goods of art illegally transported to Ukraine during the second world war.

Two months later the Hungarian prime-minister visited Uzhgorod where he argued for the individual and cultural autonomy of the Hungarian minority, for the joint publishing of textbooks in Hungarian and the establishment of special economic zone in the Sub-Carpathian region. The last contact in this period between Hungarian and Ukrainian officials occurred once again in the Sub-Carpathian region in February 1994 when foreign minister Jeszenszky handed over the 20 million Hungarian Forints (appr. 100.000 USD) aid to the victims of the flood in the region.

The basic treaty signed between Hungary and Ukraine in December 1991 was submitted for ratification to the Hungarian parliament in May 1993. (The Verkhovna Rada ratified the document already in July 1992) Although the parliament ratified it with an overwhelming majority (223 yes, 39 no, 17 abstentions)<sup>10</sup>, this did not come easy. It is very telling that the whole opposition voted in favor and all votes against and abstentions came from the government coalition. The nationalist-conservative Hungarian government in office between 1990-1994 pursued a special policy towards neighboring countries. By giving superpriority to the issue of Hungarian minorities living abroad in the system of foreign policy priorities (Euro-atlantic integration, neighborly relations, Hungarian minorities) the question of borders became part of the political tactics and strategy. The government was of the view that in the basic treaties there was no need to reaffirm the inviolability of borders, and that it was enough to refer to the existing international agreements, first of all the Helsinki Final Act. This document excludes the change of borders by force, but provides for their change "in accordance with international law, by peaceful means and upon agreement". The sticking to the Helsinki formula by the Hungarian government resulted in increased mistrust in the majority of the neighboring countries, therefore these partners consistently opposed this formula and argued for the inclusion of a special clause in the treaties reaffirming the inviolability of borders. The Hungarian government made only one exception in this otherwise consistent course: in the case of the basic treaty with Ukraine. The second paragraph of article two of the ratified treaty does stipulate that "the Parties respect their territorial integrity and state that they do not have and will not have territorial claims to each other"<sup>11</sup>.

The multiple delay of submission to ratification of the document and the heated debate around the border clause sent negative signals to Ukraine. When evaluating the parliamentary debate the Ukrainian ambassador to Budapest criticized the „involvement of an outside country” (meaning Ukraine) in debate of domestic context and said that "certain people have a very special way of thinking by suggesting to drop the border clause and affirming not to have territorial claims"<sup>12</sup>. He also added that if the treaty is not approved (with the border clause included), "the whole

construction of bilateral relations will be ruined...we should have to rebuild our relations not from zero but from below zero...as we should have to work hard to convince the Ukrainian political forces that Hungary does not have territorial claims"<sup>13</sup>. Even though the border clause was included in the ratified treaty the Hungarian government wanted to underevaluate its importance. In the comments of the prime-minister and others it was emphasized that this should not be perceived by other neighboring countries as a precedent. Furthermore, the foreign ministry issued a special interpretation of the relevant clause of the treaty that stated that Hungary did not renounce any territory by this treaty :"...we have not renounced any possibility of lawful juridical acts provided by international law"<sup>14</sup>.

In the field of regional cooperation there were two of which both Hungary and Ukraine became members: Carpathian Euro-region and the Central European Initiative (CEI). The two countries were founding members in the first case while in the case of CEI Hungary was a founding member and Ukraine joined only later. The Carpathian Euro-region cooperation document was signed in Debrecen (Hungary) in February 1993 and the original signatories were Hungary, Poland and Ukraine (the two other possible participants Slovakia and Romania approached the initiative reluctantly)<sup>15</sup>. As to Ukraine's bid for membership in the CEI which was on the agenda since September 1993 Hungary neither was against nor was in favor of Ukraine's accession, and it did not articulate its position.

### *Balanced relations, 1994-1998*

#### *Political relations*

The new Hungarian government that came to power - the coalition of socialists and free democrats - brought about considerable changes in the foreign policy concept of the previous government<sup>16</sup>. First of all, it rejected the Antall-doctrine and consequently it devaluated the issue of Hungarian minorities that was previously handled as superpriority. It reversed the logic of the neighborhood policy: it wanted to help the Hungarian minority living abroad by developing relations with these countries which was the diagonal opposite of the previous concept. Furthermore, it wanted to promote Hungary's security less by relying on external guarantees but by a more active policy towards neighboring countries. Finally, it intended to put an end to the previous practice of disregarding the Eastern dimension of Hungarian foreign policy. As a result of this, relations with Ukraine gained much more weight and balanced character: the Hungarian minority was no more the almost exclusive driving force in building the relations, the Hungarian aspiration to become NATO-member was not contrary to discussing this issue with the Ukrainian leaders, and the region to the East of Hungary was not regarded as a culturally inferior or politically underdeveloped one.

After the change of government immediate and regular contacts began at the highest level. First, Hungarian defence minister, Keleti visited Kyiv then, Oleksandr Moroz, the speaker of the Ukrainian parliament came to Hungary in September 1994, followed by the trip of Hungarian

minister of culture and education, Fodor to Ukraine in April 1995. The importance of this visit lied in the fact that an important issue of the past was, finally settled: the issue of the works of art (pictures, books etc.) taken away by the Soviet army from Hungary. After two years of negotiations it was agreed that a mixed commission would be set up to investigate the destiny of the Hungarian works of art that could supposedly be found in Ukraine

After four years, finally the new Hungarian prime-minister visited Ukraine in May 1995. Gyula Horn travelled there in the company of the ministers of interior, agriculture, transport, representatives of the ministry of finance and the head of the Customs Police. During this visit eight agreements were signed on the regulations concerning the state borders, terrorism, organized crime, and drug trafficking among others. It is worth noting that Horn did not include in his visit the previously almost „obligatory” travel to the Sub-Carpathian region. An agreement was reached as to the reconstruction of the only bridge between the two countries joining Záhony in Hungary and Chop in Ukraine. This political pledge was concretized by the agreement of the two ministers of transport in January 1996, and the modernized widened bridge was opened in July 1997. The importance of this bridge is in the fact that approximately 10% of the foreign visitors to Hungary come from Ukraine (app. 4.5 million visitors use the Hungarian-Ukrainian border crossings from both sides, primarily for „chelnok” purposes) annually.

In November 1996 president Göncz once again visited Ukraine. After the failed attempt to erect a monument to the memory of the millenium of the Hungarians' coming to the Carpathian basin president Göncz proposed the creation of a joint committee of historians for the study of the common past. The visit of the Hungarian president also offered an opportunity to present the Ukrainian approach to Hungary's intention to join NATO. The Ukrainian formula this time was that Ukraine was not against Hungary's accession, or as phrased by the speaker of the Hungarian president "Ukraine almost supported Hungary's aim of Euro-atlantic integration"<sup>17</sup>.

### *Unilateralism revisited, 1998-2002*

#### *The conceptual design*

Beginning from mid-1998 a new coalition formed the foreign policy of Hungary, that of FIDESZ-MPP (FIDESZ-Hungarian Civic Party) and MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum), a formation that very much relied on the system of values of the first democratic government in office between 1990-1994. This period of the Hungarian „Eastern policy” was characterized by a certain internal contradiction, namely: on the one hand the first ever conceptual foreign policy document was produced in this era, on the other hand the same kind of unilateralism and limited interest seemed to reappear again that had been very much typical during 1990-1994.

The strategy document entitled „Hungary’s relations with the post-Soviet states” was adopted in November 1999 departs from the fact that Hungary’s membership in NATO and the ongoing negotiations with the EU „makes it necessary and topical to make a review of the foreign policy

with the neighboring countries”<sup>18</sup>. In the same spirit – that is in the context of Hungary’s memberships in the euroatlantic structures – the document emphasized that it took into account EU’s strategy towards Russia and the NATO-Russia Founding Act. The MFA document qualifies Ukraine as a „regional medium power” whose role increased in international affairs, praises it for not opposing NATO’s eastern enlargement, and argues for the development of transborder cooperation.

Against this theoretical-strategic background it is all the more strange and contradictory that the practice of the Hungarian foreign policy showed a Ukraine that is not at all a regional medium power, nor its international prestige was increasing, whose importance was taken into account more or less as a country hosting a considerable number of Hungarians, as a minority. Another element of the official Hungarian position vis-à-vis Ukraine that can be identified comes from a document entitled the „National Security Strategy”<sup>19</sup> that was adopted in the final days of the functioning of the outgoing government to be substituted in April 2002. The message of this paper is that Hungary is very much interested in the independent and stable Ukraine, implying that Ukraine is needed as a buffer state and it is a factor of instability in the sense that it can transmit some of the crises of the post-Soviet space.

### *Political relations*

The high level visits in the given period show a more or less balanced record between the two sides. Besides the three so called „informal” meetings of the presidents within the framework of the summit of the presidents of the Central European countries, Hungarian foreign minister Martonyi visited Kyiv in October 1998 that was reciprocated in April 2000 by his Ukrainian counterpart, Tarasyuk. President Kuchma made an official visit to Budapest in October 1998, while Hungarian prime-minister Orbán visited Ukraine in February 2000. This was reciprocated by the first foreign visit of the newly appointed Ukrainian prime minister, Kinah to Budapest in April 2001. Kuchma’s visit was reciprocated by Hungarian president Mádl in February 2002.

In spite of the fact of quite regular exchange of visits between the two sides the content of these relations boiled down to Sub-Carpathia involving three issues: the Hungarian minority, and fighting the consequences of the floods, and transborder cooperation. As to the first, the Hungarian government did not elaborate any special initiative but rather as part of its so called „nation-policy” it adopted the law on the status of Hungarians living beyond the borders<sup>20</sup>. This law was heavily criticized by Bratislava and Bucharest, and it was Budapest’s eminent interest not to let Kyiv join the group of opponents. Indeed the Ukrainian leadership kept low profile on this debated issue, and only after the Hungarian elections of 2002 it raised the issue in the sense of further negotiation on the application of this law<sup>21</sup>. As to the floods, the Hungarian government gave material and financial support – of the amount of 200 millions of HUF (appr. 800 thousand USD) for easing the heavy consequences. With regard to the third issue, the two sides – upon Hungarian initiative – agreed on promoting the special economic zone type of relations between Sub-Carpathia and the neighboring Hungarian counties, both sides appointed special representatives for the elaboration and supervision of the idea. Furthermore, in the

medium term development plans of the Hungarian government the construction of a highway was adopted that would reach the Ukrainian borders. In addition, looking ahead towards Hungary's foreseeable joining the EU the Hungarian foreign ministry initiated that a common efforts begin on behalf of the Visegrád countries to prepare for an effective border regime by the time the Schengen-regime is to be implemented.

In the last days of the outgoing Hungarian government one issue caused some trouble in the bilateral relations, namely Budapest openly criticized Kyiv because of the alleged illegal circumstances of the election of the only Hungarian MP in the Rada who ran against another ethnic Hungarian, favored by Budapest<sup>22</sup>.

Finally, a very characteristic feature of the way of thinking of the that time governing political coalition can be revealed by the following fact. In summary on the results of an opinion poll of the Office for Hungarians Beyond the Border - which is a part of the Foreign Ministry – one of the findings was the alleged fact that 40,3% of Hungarians would support the peaceful change which means a considerable shift from the previous ratio of 34%.<sup>23</sup>

#### *Towards rebalancing relations*

The new socialist-liberal Hungarian government will most probably continue the kind of much more balanced policy that was characteristic for the period between 1994-1998. The law on status has been being renegotiated with the neighbors and the main aim is to put it into harmony with the national legislations and interest of those countries, as well. The new head of government plans to visit Kyiv next Spring.

#### *Security-military links*

In the period between 1992-1994, the Ukrainian minister of defence visited Budapest twice, while his Hungarian counterpart was in Kiyv once. During his visit to Hungary Konstantin Morozov, Ukrainian minister of defence signed an agreement on cooperation between the two armies. The areas of cooperation included the exchange of information, training and cooperation in the defence industry.

Lajos Für, Hungarian minister of defence reciprocated this visit in May 1993. Für called the military relations between Hungary and Ukraine the "most active" among all neighboring countries<sup>24</sup>. The two ministers agreed on the training of 10-12 Hungarian air force officers in Ukrainian military facilities. Lack of money prevented the two sides from significant arm trade, and Hungary limited herself by buying spare parts for its army. The search for and maintenance of military graves was also discussed.

Together with the other Central European countries, Hungary had a lukewarm reaction to the initiative of president Kravchuk presented in Budapest in February 1993, proposing the creation of "zone of stability and cooperation" in the region between Russia and Western Europe. Hungary was always cautious with regard to ideas that could be interpreted as substitute for the integration efforts aimed at NATO or EU<sup>25</sup>.

Finally, the first foreign trip of the new Ukrainian defence minister, Vitaly Radetsky led to Budapest in February 1994. In theory both sides expressed readiness to cooperate within the framework of the newly established Partnership for Peace program but in practice nothing substantial happened

The first minister to visit Kiyv after the change of government was that of defence in August 1994. During the negotiations with his Ukrainian partner Keleti clarified that there was no money for large-scale business but he proposed two lower-scale initiatives. First, in a barter context Hungary could buy weapons and, in return, offered medical supplies, food and other goods. Second, as according to international agreements Ukraine had to dispose of a certain amount of weapons, Keleti proposed that Hungary could receive such military hardware thus helping modernize the Hungarian army and at the same time saving Ukraine from the costs of destruction. The idea concerned receiving Ukrainian tanks and armoured vehicles, and this solution seemed to be an innovative one (later we will see that such kind of deal came about with Belarus).

The next meeting between the two ministers took place in December 1995 when the Ukrainian defence minister visited Hungary and agreed that Hungary will get spare parts in exchange for medicines, and for this aim a joint commission was established. In addition, an agreement was reached that 12 Hungarian officers would study at Ukrainian military academies. In exchange, Ukrainian officers would participate in language courses in Hungary. The idea of the extension of the Open Sky agreement was also raised. Finally, there was agreement about the transit through Hungarian territory of Ukrainian peacekeepers to Bosnia.

One of the few acts in this field in this period was the signing of a document between the two countries about steps aimed at confidence- and security-building measures in October 1998 in accordance with the Vienna Document of the OSCE adopted in 1994, so this was rather a technical document. Hungarian soldiers – usually some dozens for some months duration - continued to participate in training courses in Ukraine<sup>26</sup>.

The most important initiative was related to the floods of 1998, as a result of which the idea of creating a quadrangular military formation came up. The Slovak, Romanian, Ukrainian and Hungarian ministers of defence met in Uzhgorod in May 2000 and agreed on the establishment of an engineer unit called the Tisza Battalion with the aim of collective efforts in case of natural disasters such as the flood.

## *The Hungarian minority in Ukraine*

According to the available census there were 163.111 Hungarians living in Ukraine and 151.711 living in the Sub-Carpathian region<sup>27</sup> but it is estimated by the local Hungarians that their number reaches 200.000 . Immigration to Hungary or elsewhere was not typical for this minority, and the number of those moving to Hungary was below a thousand annually. The Hungarian minority formed its organisation named the Cultural Union of Sub-Carpathian Hungarians (CUSCH) in 1989. Using the new possibilities offered by perestroika, this body defined itself as a cultural-interest representation organization and later gradually widened this definition to include political activities, as well. Over the years, CUSCH, being the only Hungarian organization in Ukraine did not avoid the destiny of becoming divided by internal platforms and the appearance of alternative Hungarian organizations. As a result of the general elections in 1994 one representative of the Hungarian minority, was elected member of Ukrainian parliament.

From the point of view of the Hungarian minority the signing of the Hungarian-Ukrainian declaration on national minorities on 31 May 1991 was of outstanding importance. This declaration acknowledged national minorities as factors constituting the state, and it went beyond standard international formula providing for their *de facto* collective rights. Further, a joint Hungarian-Ukrainian committee began to monitor the ongoing cooperation, which became a unique verification instrument in the practice of the region's countries.

An important step in assuring minority rights was the law on national minorities adopted by the Ukrainian parliament on 20 June 1992. This law gives guarantees for the use of Hungarian language and national symbols locally at the local level.

The referendum of 1 December 1991 decided in favor of the creation of "special self-governmental status" of the Sub-Carpathian region with 78% of the local population in favor. But the Ukrainian parliament rejected the approval of the law on the creation of special zone for Sub-Carpathia, thus denying the desire of not only the Hungarians but the majority of the people of the region.

It was in September 1991 that the leadership of the Hungarian minority decided to support the idea of the Association of the Sub-Carpathian Ruthenians to restore the status of the Republic of Sub-Carpathia, if the autonomy of the Hungarian minority is guaranteed. Later, however, the Hungarian-Ruthenian cooperation did not continue, and the Hungarian minority pursued its own path to reach some kind of autonomy. On this way the elaboration of the idea of the so called Hungarian Autonomous District which was rejected by the local authorities.

The organizations of the Hungarian minority played a role in interstate relations, as well. The representatives of the Hungarian minority organizations participate in the work of the Hungarian-Ukrainian mixed commission on the question of minorities, a body that was created in July 1992. Since then on this commission holds meetings every half a year. In the last phase of the period under analysis (April 1994) this body formulated concrete proposals for the Hungarian and Ukrainian governments<sup>28</sup>.

1996 was the year of the millenium of the entrance of Hungarians into the Carpathian basin and the final settlement of Hungarian tribes in the territory of the present Hungary. The entering point is situated in present Ukraine at the Verecke mountain pass. To commemorate this anniversary the Hungarian organizations decided to erect a monument at that place in the Carpathians. The official Ukrainian memorial commission decided not to prevent any commemoration activities but rejected the idea of the monument in July 1996. It decided so because of the protest of the Sub-Carpathian local leadership and the local nationalist forces. According to the public declaration of some nationalist organizations the monument at Verecke would be a target of terrorism<sup>29</sup>. Later the official state organ dealing with this issue took a resolution that instead of the Verecke mountain pass monument, another monument should be built at a place defined by the public administration of Sub-Carpathia. The atmosphere around this planned monument was characterized by the statement of one of the representatives of this commission: "in case that a monument is erected either with or without permission, the Ukrainian nationalist organizations will begin a counter-construction around it in the memory of the victims of the Horthy-era"<sup>30</sup>.

Among the other grievances of the Hungarian minority were the following items. The Ukrainian parliament did not abolish the 1944 resolution declaring the German and Hungarian people the "eternal enemy" of the Ukrainian nation. The obligatory passing of examination in Ukrainian language to enter a higher education institute. The problems around the financing of the printed and electronic Hungarian language media also caused uncertainty among Hungarians. A special protest was issued with regard to the new so called multicultural/policultural education model of the ministry of education unveiled in Ukraine in June 1996.<sup>31</sup> The work of the mixed Hungarian-Ukrainian minority commission continued in an quite irregular way<sup>32</sup>.

After the coming to power of the new Hungarian government in 1998 Budapest's policy vis-à-vis the Hungarian minority in Ukraine gain more activism within the framework of the that time introduced so called „nation-policy” (see political relations). The first session of the Hungarian-Ukrainian mixed comission on minorities held in December 1998 agreed upon a number of items to be examined and possibly implemented<sup>33</sup>.

Paralel to the unsolved issues that were listed in the above mentioned protocol, new problems occurred in 1999. The draft law on language was perceived as limitation of the use of Hungarian publicly, and the decision to pass the maturity examination also in Ukrainian caused considerable concern among the Hungarians. In December 1999 not as a response, however the main representative body of the Hungarian minority reanimated the concept of an autonomous

administrative entity under the name of Tisza-area district with Beregovo in the center originally framed in 1992.

As to the latest number of Hungarians applied for the ID Card provided by the law on status, it has gone beyond 90 thousands.

### *Conclusion*

Hungarian-Ukrainian relations in the period 1990-2002 went through different phases. They began with an exceptionally good start. At the conjunction of a rare historical moment the two countries could give each other something that they did not get elsewhere: Hungary supported Ukrainian independence, while Ukraine signed a minority document of model importance. This was followed by a strange phase when the Hungarian side did not reciprocate the Ukrainian interest in developing relations. This was the phase of unilateral bilateralism when the general distrust in the Eastern neighbor and the limited interest (Hungarians of Sub-Carpathea) on behalf of the national-conservative Hungarian government contributed to the stagnation of relations. The change of government in Hungary in 1994 brought about a changed Hungarian approach towards Ukraine. While not giving up its foreign policy priorities Hungary reassessed the importance of its Eastern neighbors, and began to evaluate Ukraine's role in Central Europe more realistically. This pragmatic course began to rebalance bilateral relations, and by 1998 these relations could be characterized by the fact that all questions related to the past were solved, and normal interstate relations evolved. The government in office between 1998-2002 in many ways reanimated the policy line of the first Hungarian government applied to the new circumstances and very much focused on the minority issue, and was rather passive in other dimensions.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter considerably draws on the memoirs of the first Hungarian ambassador to Kyiv, as a unique source of information of that period. See: Páldi András, *Egyre távolabb Moszkvától* (Farther and farther away from Moscow), Budapest, Belvárosi Könyvkiadó, 1996

<sup>2</sup> Note No. VI. p. 199.

<sup>3</sup> Note No. VI. p. 202.

<sup>4</sup> Note No. VI. p. 203.

<sup>5</sup> Note No. VI. p. 204.

<sup>6</sup> Nyilatkozat az Ukrán Szovjet Szocialista Köztársaság és a Magyar Köztársaság kapcsolatainak alapjairól, Kárpáti Igaz Szó, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> The name Sub-Carpathian region is the equivalent of the official name of the „Trans-Carpathian” region in the Hungarian political discourse, and it offers a different geopolitical approach towards that area, that is viewing it not from the perspective of Kyiv (Trans), but from the one of Budapest (Sub).

<sup>8</sup> Ukrajna az első (Ukraine is the first), *Népszabadság* (Hungarian daily), 22 May 1992, p.1.

<sup>9</sup> Antall különleges magyar-ukrán viszonyt sürget (Antall urges special Hungarian-Ukrainian relations), *Népszabadság*, 27 February 1993 p.3.

<sup>10</sup> Elfogadták a magyar-ukrán alapszerződést (The Hungarian-Ukrainian Basic Treaty Approved), *Népszabadság* 12 May 1993 p. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Sajtóközlemény (Press release) 1993/28, Budapest, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

<sup>12</sup> Az alapszerződés vitája megosztja a koalíciót (The debate on the basic treaty divides the coalition), *Népszabadság*, 11 May 1993, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> See previous footnote.

<sup>14</sup> Sajtóközlemény (Press release) 1993/28, Budapest, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

<sup>15</sup> Later, during the fifth session of the Council of the Carpathian Euro-region in Debrecen further Ukrainian counties were accepted as members: Lvov, Chernovtsi, Ivano-Frankovsk

<sup>16</sup> Kormányprogram, *Magyar Hírlap* (Hungarian daily), 27 June 1994 p.13.

<sup>17</sup> Göncz Árpád Ukrajnában (Árpád Göncz in Ukraine), *Népszabadság*, 15 November 1996 p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> [www.kum.hu/siwwwwa/online/10014740.html](http://www.kum.hu/siwwwwa/online/10014740.html)

<sup>19</sup> A Magyar Köztársaság nemzeti biztonsági stratégiája (The national security strategy of the Republic of Hungary) Government resolution 2144/2002 (V.06.)

<sup>20</sup> The law was adopted 19 June 2001 and entered into force 1 January 2002 [www.htmh.hu](http://www.htmh.hu)

<sup>21</sup> The main points of criticisms is the so called extra-territorial character of the law that is it can be interpreted that it brings under Hungarian jurisdiction foreign citizens, and its alleged discriminative character, that is, it gives advantages to individuals on the basis of ethnic belonging.

<sup>22</sup> Among the grievances of the Hungarians in connection with the election disctrict were the following: for the first time no Hungarian language voting sheet was provided, 8 settlements with Hungarian majority were excluded from the traditional Hungarian minority dominated election district No. 72., after the election (still the favored candidate winning) the Central Election Committee eliminated the result of four voting circle, thus making possible the victory of the pro-power Hungarian candidate.

<sup>23</sup> [www.htmh.hu/bfi0111.htm](http://www.htmh.hu/bfi0111.htm)

<sup>24</sup> Für: Kijevvel a legaktívabb a katonai viszonyunk (Für: we have the most active relations with Kyiv), *Népszabadság*, 29 May 1997, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> The initiative was meant - by the Ukrainian side - to be the Eastern version of the Balladur-sponsored Stability Pact, but it, finally, lost its meaning after the launching of the Partnership for Peace program.

<sup>26</sup> Author's interview with the Hungarian defence attache in Kyiv in early 2002.

<sup>27</sup> Although there has been another census this year, the exact number of Hungarians living in Ukraine is still not available. From the other censuses in the neighboring countries it has become obvious – to the shock of many – that the number of Hungarians living in the Carpathian basin has markedly decreased, and there is good reason to believe that Ukraine was no exception to this either.

<sup>28</sup> The commission urged the broadening of four border crossing points, and initiated the signing of a cooperation agreement between the two ministries of culture. In this framework the two ministries should create a joint committee on the elaboration of common textbooks of history and geography, and finally, proposed the creation of a Hungarian-language higher education structure for the training of teachers and kindergarten teachers.

<sup>29</sup> Verecke emlékmű nélkül (Verecke without monument), *Magyar dokumentáció* July 1996 p.455.

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<sup>30</sup> Kárpátalján nem épülhet fel a honfoglalási emlékmű (The monument of conquest of the homeland cannot be built in Sub-Carpathia), Magyar dokumentáció, August 1996, p.518.

<sup>31</sup> This plan was aimed at teaching in the languages of the minorities (including the Hungarians) only those subjects that were related to the given nations, thus narrowing the use of minority language education.

<sup>32</sup> In its March 1995 session the commission adopted a couple of suggestions including the prohibition of the change of ethnic composition of territories inhabited by minorities. Furthermore, this body decided to examine the possibility of creating a Foundation for the Development of Entrepreneurship. This was the first occasion when the economic dimension of the minority issue was seriously taken into account. As a result of the decision of the same mixed commission in June 1996 the two year long debate on the permission of the Pedagogical Institute in Beregovo was completed with a positive result. Finally, in April 1997 the next session of the same commission approved the suggestion that university entrance examinations be held in Hungarian.

<sup>33</sup> The restoration of the historical names of a number of settlements in Sub-Carpathia, the placement of Hungarian language signs in public areas, the use of Hungarian versions of the names in the IDs/passports, the passing of the law on rehabilitation, opening of new border crossing points.