

UDC 94(477.87)"1945/1953":324:323.25:070

Myroslav Sakal,
Borys Grinchenko Kyiv Metropolitan University
ORCID ID: 0009-0002-0694-4363

THE SOVIET ELECTIONS IN TRANSCARPATHIA ACCORDING TO PRESS MATERIALS: PUBLIC MOOD AND THE POSITION OF THE UKRAINIAN INSURGENTS

Abstract. This paper explores the conduct of Soviet election campaigns in the territory of the Transcarpathian region within the Ukrainian SSR during 1946 – 1947. The study focuses on the mountainous settlements of the region, utilizing the Svaliava district as a representative administrative-territorial unit of that period. The main feature of this research is the selection of local periodicals as the primary source, as this type of source allows for a more detailed micro-historical investigation. Through proper analysis of contemporary periodicals combined with archival materials, it is possible to uncover events that were highlighted not only through an ideological lens but also through local social conflicts, administrative decisions, and public reactions.

Furthermore, this study allows us to trace whether the level of censorship in the local press was truly as extensive as often assumed. Even within Soviet publishing houses, there were editors and authors who could criticize local officials. However, this dynamic could work both ways. On one hand, some editors and authors condemned specific officials for their actions; on the other hand, there were those who condemned the residents of individual settlements for failing to fulfill assigned targets, which were set for ideological and propaganda purposes. The paper analyzes the methods of Soviet political integration alongside public reaction and the resistance efforts of the Ukrainian underground.

Keywords: Elections, press, Sovietization, agitation, propaganda, Transcarpathia, anti-Soviet protests.

During the first half of the 20th century, the local press was quite mosaic-like in terms of linguistic, ideological, and even ethnic criteria. With the establishment of Soviet power, the media space began to acquire a centralized character in both ideological and ethnic aspects. Clear tasks were set before what was effectively the only mass media outlet in Transcarpathia at the time-the press. The Soviet authorities utilized periodicals as an instrument to combat the newly constructed image of the enemy. This category included individuals who were in one way or another associated with the region's previous political regimes-the Czechoslovak and Hungarian administrations (Lenio, 2018: 130).

Additionally, representatives of the Carpathia-Ukraine government and their supporters were added to the category of "enemies of the people." Terms such as "*Voloshynivtsi*", "*Klochuraky*", and "*Brashchayky*" were applied to them (Lisovyi, 1958: 69). Furthermore, Russophiles were also classified as enemies of the people, being dubbed "*Fentsyktivtsi*" and

"*Brodiyivtsi*" (Lisovyi, 1958: 69). This confirms the thesis presented in an article by P. Lenio, which argues that the Soviet authorities attempted to impose an orientation on the population of Transcarpathia that was neither Ukrainophile, nor Rusynophile, nor even Russophile, but strictly Soviet (Lenio, 2018: 130).

It is important to understand that the concept of "Russophile" in the history of Transcarpathia shares much in common with "Rusynophile"; however, there are distinct differences between these notions. While proponents of the former oriented themselves toward Russia, the latter were more interested in the distinctiveness of their own sub-ethnos.

The Soviet authorities did not accept even the "Rusynophiles" who were loyal or occasionally sympathetic to Russia. This is illustrated in the periodicals, where editors could make the mistake of using the term "Rusyn" to refer to local residents. Such "errors" in turn provoked outrage among censorship officials and certain other editors, as noted in the dissertation of Larysa Kapitan (Kapitan, 2013: 59).

A distinct "Russophile" is evident in the Transcarpathian press, as indicated by numerous newspaper columns featuring articles on Russian culture and history alongside mentions of Soviet figures close to J. Stalin. Specifically, in the newspaper *Lenynskiy Shliakh*, in only four months of the second half of 1946, articles were published about M. Lermontov, A. Tsulukidze, L. Tolstoy, and N. Chernyshevsky (*Lenynskiy Shliakh*, 1946: 77, 58, 67, 81, 71, 74). Notably, M. Lermontov was mentioned twice, marking the anniversaries of both his birth and death. Such frequent focus on Russian figures suggests an attempt by the Soviet authorities to impose a cult of the Russian people as a "big brother." This figure was perceived as significantly more educated than the Ukrainian people, given that only two Ukrainian figures—M. Kotsiubynsky and U. Karmaliuk—were mentioned in associated articles (*Lenynskiy Shliakh*, 1946: 71, 74). Typically, these articles first appeared in regional periodicals before being reprinted in district newspapers (Lenio, 2018: 129).

The newspaper *Lenynskiy Shliakh* was established alongside other district publications in 1945 (Lenio, 2018: 129). It was published twice a week and served as a key ideological organ for the local administration (*Lenynskiy Shliakh*, 1946: 6). Strict control over all periodic and non-periodic publications was enforced across all districts during this period. To ensure ideological purity, the leadership of the censorship apparatus periodically inspected every publishing house. These inspections sought to identify undesirable literature or specific problematic pages of text (Mishchanyn, 2012: 166-172).

Simultaneously, there were periodic problems with the delivery of newspapers to certain settlements in the Svaliava district. The edition from August 25, 1946, noted that delivering a newspaper from Moscow to Kyiv took less time than local postal workers spent sorting them (*Lenynskiy Shliakh*, 1946: 61). Editors blamed the incompetence of district postal employees for these persistent delays, which were occasionally exacerbated by local government failures. For instance, a January 1947 article regarding the village of Olenyovo reported that although peasants had subscribed to one hundred copies, they could not receive them due to poor systematization (*Lenynskiy Shliakh*, 1947: 104). Furthermore, the most frequently mentioned issue was the non-payment of subscriptions by the peasantry, which cost 1.20 rubles per month (*Lenynskiy Shliakh*, 1946: 6). Party secretaries in villages like Keretsky were accused of failing to ensure the population fulfilled their subscription obligations (*Lenynskiy Shliakh*, 1946: 67).

From the moment the Transcarpathian region was created and throughout the period of intensive Sovietization, approximately three election campaigns were conducted. These included an all-Union election, one to the republican parliament, and one to local self-government bodies

(Ostapets, 2009: 114). The first of these, held on February 10, 1946, consisted of all-Union elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, the highest state authority (Leninskyi Shliakh, 1946: 5). The press performed one of the primary functions of agitation for these elections. Significant coverage was devoted to this event, as the newspaper *Leninskyi Shliakh* published fourteen articles specifically dedicated to this theme between January 10 and February 10. The main candidate from Transcarpathia was Ivan Ivanovych Turianytsia, the Chairman of the People's Council of Transcarpathian Ukraine (Ostapets, 2009: 114).

Turianytsia actively conducted various agitation events across all districts, including his visits to the Svaliava region. On January 17, he visited the timber and chemical plants in the city of Svaliava to meet with his constituents (Leninskyi Shliakh, 1946: 5). Polling stations were established in the local settlements, though their work was often described in the newspaper as unsatisfactorily organized. Notably, in these newspaper articles, individuals were usually mentioned without their first names, using only the abbreviation for "comrade" before the surname. For example, a January 17 article regarding the agitation point in the village of Hankovytsia accused the precinct chairman, Legeza, of neglect. The editor, Selekman, critiqued him sharply, stating that he "did not treat the important work in a Bolshevik manner" (Leninskyi Shliakh, 1946: 5).

From the establishment of the Transcarpathia region and throughout the period of intensive Sovietization, approximately three election campaigns were held: one all-Union, one to the republican parliament, and one to local self-government bodies (Ostapets, 2009: 114). The first of these was held on February 10, 1946, and it was an all-Union election, i.e., to the highest state authority of the Soviet Union the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (Leninskyi shliakh, 1946: 5).

The press performed one of the primary functions of agitation for these elections. Much attention was devoted to this event, as fourteen articles on the topic of these elections were published in the *Leninskyi shliakh* newspaper between January 10 and February 10. The main candidate from Transcarpathia was the head of the People's Council of Transcarpathian Ukraine, Ivan Ivanovych Turianytsia (Ostapets, 2009: 114), who actively conducted various campaigning events in all districts, including Svaliava. For instance, on January 17, he visited the sawmill and chemical plants in Svaliava and met with his voters (Leninskyi shliakh, 1946: 5).

Polling stations were established in the settlements, though their operation is sometimes described in the newspaper as poorly organized. It is worth noting that individuals in newspaper articles are usually mentioned without their first names, using only the abbreviation for the word "comrade" (c.) preceding their surname. Thus, on January 17, an article was published about an agitation center in the village of Hankovytsia, in which the editor, Selekman, blames the station head, Leheza, for the unsatisfactory state of the polling station: "The head of the polling station, c. Leheza, did not treat this important work in a Bolshevik manner. The polling station is not set up at all. There is no agitation center. This is a negligent attitude toward one's duties." (Leninskyi shliakh, 1946: 5).

Serhii Hordiichuk's academic work "Anti-Soviet Sentiments of the Transcarpathia Population During the 'Stalinshchyna' Era" features excerpts from archival documents highlighting manifestations of anti-communist agitation in neighboring districts. For example, in the village of Poroshkovo in the Perechyn district, voters demonstratively tore up their ballots (Hordiichuk, 2015: 94).

Had such a phenomenon occurred in the Svaliava district, it is unlikely the newspaper would have covered it, and there is no information regarding such events in the Svaliava district

among the published archival documents. However, a highly valuable document described in the article by Nelia Zhulkanych and Vasyl Mishchanyn states that: "Twenty soldiers of the 3rd Carpathian Mountain Rifle Corps were sent to each of the Volivets [Volivskiy], Nyzhni Vorota [Nyzhnyoverechanskyy], and Svaliava districts," specifically to the villages of Poliana and Bereznyky (Zhulkanych, 2016: 57).

The involvement of military structures in the conduct of the elections indicates that the Soviet authorities expected sabotage during the election campaign, including within the Svaliava district. This is quite logical, as among the residents, particularly in the village of Bereznyky, many were accused of having ties with OUN members (Hordiichuk, 2016: 44). Another reason for the local authorities' apprehension was the fact that OUN member Semen Hut, under the pseudonym "Tymish," operated with his detachment in the territory of the Svaliava district, primarily in the Mount Stiy area (Mishchanyn, 2008: 44).

The next elections were held on February 9, 1947, during which deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR were elected. Obviously, the local authorities had already gained experience in conducting them from the previous election campaign, and during the second election, they decided not to change their tactics. Campaign work was conducted in the same way, with the press remaining one of the most important tools in this regard. The main candidate for the position of deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR in the Svaliava district was the head of the Transcarpathia Regional Council of Trade Unions, Ivan Dmytrovych Petrushchak (Leninskyi shliakh, 1947: 99).

Between January 5 and February 9 (election day), 1947, 37 articles regarding the election campaign were published. This is significantly more than during the previous elections. Many of them were dedicated to violations at polling stations; notably, on January 26, an article by editor M. Holovnia pointed out that members of the election commissions did not know what duties they were to perform on election day, blaming the head of the district executive committee, Karabelesh, because he had not conducted a single instructional seminar with the commission members (Leninskyi shliakh, 1947: 105).

Comparing the elections of 1946 and the first elections of 1947, they did not differ significantly in the actual process of their conduct. Moreover, the population already guessed that nothing depended on them (Mishchanyn, 2015: 55).

Even before the voting began, they were presented with the established fact that Ivan Petrushchak would become the deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, especially given that the number of mandates matched the number of candidates in the elections (Shershun, 1998: 71). It was also clear even before the elections themselves that the Communist Party would win them.

These elections also did not go without anti-Soviet protests. For instance, in the village of Pavlovo, nine ballots were found in a trash bin after the elections with the names of the candidates torn out (Shershun, 1998: 61), a fact not mentioned in the newspaper.

Overall, the voting dynamics in February 1946 and 1947 showed that the communists managed to increase the number of votes for the Communist Party by a full 7 percent over these two election campaigns (Shershun, 1998: 60).

The third election campaign since the creation of the Transcarpathia region was the first election to the local Soviets of Workers' Deputies. Between November 16 and December 21 (election day), forty-six articles dedicated to the election campaign were published. As can be observed, this is the largest increase in articles dedicated to the elections themselves compared to

the two previous campaigns. In the newspaper issue dated November 16, a full page is dedicated to stating that all peasants of the Svaliava district had chosen J. Stalin as their first candidate to the local councils of the regional council (Leninskyi shliakh, 1947: 200). The same phenomenon occurred during previous elections in the Rakhiv district, which V. Mishchanyn referred to in his article as "communist clowning" (Mishchanyn, 2015: 56).

There were significantly more candidates in these elections compared to the two previous election campaigns. Each enterprise nominated its own candidate; for example, workers of the Chynadiyevo Furniture Plant nominated Hanna Stepanivna Turianytsia, a worker in the parquet shop of the plant, as a candidate for deputy of the regional council (Leninskyi shliakh, 1947: 200).

Due to the population density characteristics of the Transcarpathia region, the minimum number of electoral districts was formed according to Article 121 of the 1937 Constitution of the Ukrainian SSR—70 districts, specifically for elections to the regional council (Leninskyi shliakh, 1947: 201). The first half of all articles published between November 16 and December 21 was dedicated to elections to the regional council, while starting from December 5, a list of candidates to the village Soviets of Workers' Deputies was published (Leninskyi shliakh, 1947: 209).

This list is quite important, as it indicates the candidates themselves, their electoral district, their current position or professional activity, and their gender. Based on the data obtained, statistical information was generated regarding the composition of the population and its characteristics: out of all the settlements in the Svaliava district, of which there were 31, 358 individuals submitted applications to be candidates for deputies of local councils. The highest numbers of applications were submitted from settlements such as Svaliava, Chynadiyevo, and Keretsky. They reached the maximum number of candidates in a single settlement, twenty-five individuals. The village of Tybava had the lowest number, with nine candidates. A massive portion of all candidates were men—about 70% of all candidates, or 268 individuals. Furthermore, broken down by profession, female candidates were primarily engaged in agriculture, or worked as teachers, library managers, or medical workers, while men typically held managerial positions in enterprises (Leninskyi shliakh, 1947: 200).

The dominant group by employment type were people engaged in agriculture, i.e., peasants. They accounted for 51% of all candidates—183 out of 358. Interestingly, most peasant candidates typically applied in small populations, except for the village of Keretsky, which is one of the largest in the district, yet the number of applications among peasants accounted for nineteen out of twenty-five candidates. In second place after the peasantry in terms of application numbers were individuals working in enterprises. These were mostly forestry workers, who made up a sizable portion of the candidates in settlements such as Chynadiyevo, Svaliava, and Nelypyno. During these elections, another method was also used, which was quite unique for this micro-region—a newsreel that filmed how this election campaign took place in the village of Keretsky (Central State Audiovisual and Electronic Archive, 1947: 2256).

For all three election campaigns, one specific function was defined: stating the fact that the Communist Party was supported by the absolute majority of the Transcarpathia population. However, it became clear to residents after the first elections that nothing truly depended on them, but everyone feared the consequences of what would happen if they did not vote, and even more so if they voted in a way that was undesirable for the communist system.

Approximately half of all newspaper materials published during the election campaigns were dedicated specifically to the systematic work of agitators. These publications often appeared in the form of practical guides for organizing voter lists or provided laudatory reviews of well-

executed propaganda efforts within the district (Leninskyi Shliakh, 1947: 203). It is significant that the activity of agitators was not confined solely to the formal periods of election campaigns, as they remained highly active on the eves of all major Soviet holidays. For instance, in connection with the anniversary of the Stalin Constitution, a specialized article was published detailing the rights of a Soviet citizen to serve as a manual for these ideological workers (Leninskyi Shliakh, 1947: 204). This continuous involvement ensured that the state's ideological message remained omnipresent in the daily lives of the Transcarpathian population throughout the entire year. Such a method of communication allowed the authorities to maintain a high level of political mobilization and reinforce Soviet values among the local residents of the Svaliava district.

Between the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in 1946 and the republican elections to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, a difference can be seen in the number of articles during the campaign period, amounting to an increase of 23 publications: from 14 in February 1946 to 37 in February 1947. This increase is 164%. Moreover, if we compare the two election campaigns of 1947, between the elections in February and December, the increase was already 24%, or 9 publications. As a result of this statistical comparison, it can be concluded that with each subsequent election campaign, the importance of the press steadily grew. In addition, based on the analyzed texts, the following statistical data can be generated:

Popularity of candidate applications by professional sector in 1947:

Industry	Number of Candidates	Description
Agriculture	183	The largest group. Mostly listed as "peasant" (male or female).
Workers and Industry	63	Employees of timber industry enterprises, loggers, workers at chemical and spirit plants.
Local Government and Party	47	Chairmen and secretaries of village Soviets, district committee employees.
Education and Culture	37	Teachers, school directors, club, and library managers.
Employees and Trade	23	Trade, post office, consumer union, and bank employees.
Medicine	4	Feldsher-obstetricians and midwives.
Others	3	Post/communication managers and railway personnel.

**Data taken from the publication: "Workers of the Svaliava region nominate their candidates". Leninskyi Shliakh. 1947. 104(200). November 16. P. 2.*

Conclusions. Having analyzed the propaganda methods used by the Soviet authorities before the election campaigns, it was possible to determine the purpose of conducting them. Furthermore, based on distinct published data regarding candidates for higher positions, it was possible to characterize the composition of candidates in the Svaliava district at that time, which helped to better understand the level of professionalism of the individuals entrusted with power. The main task of the election campaigns was to consolidate Soviet power in Transcarpathia and to confirm the fact that it had the highest level of trust among the population through the quantitative percentage of votes for the Soviet party during the election campaigns, which, in reality, was driven by fear of the consequences of choosing an alternative to the Soviet regime.

Preferences

Central State Archive of Film, Photo and Phono Documents (TsDKFFA). *Ukrainokhronika. Collection of newsreels*. 1947. Archival number: 2256. Film document [in Ukrainian] https://avd.archives.gov.ua/files/kino-doc.php?od_obl=2256

Hordiichuk, S. 2015. Political repressions in Transcarpathia in 1944 – 1991. Candidate of Historical Sciences dissertation: 07.00.01. Uzhhorod National University. Uzhhorod, 264 [in Ukrainian].

Hordiichuk, S. 2016. Activities of anti-Soviet youth organizations in Transcarpathia (1946 – 1956). *Scientific Issues of Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University. Series: History*. Issue one, Part 1. 75–82 [in Ukrainian]
<https://journals.tnpu.ternopil.ua/index.php/history/article/view/1970/1766>

Kapitan, L.I. 2013. Transcarpathia in the post-war period: problems of ethno-cultural development in the context of the Sovietization of the region. Doctor of Historical Sciences dissertation: 07.00.01. *Institute of History of Ukraine*. Kyiv, 529 [in Ukrainian].

Leninskyi shliakh newspaper. 1946. Svaliava. Organ of the Svaliava District Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine and the People's Council [in Ukrainian].

Leninskyi shliakh newspaper. 1947. Svaliava. Organ of the Svaliava District Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine and the People's Council [in Ukrainian].

Lenio, P.Yu. 2018. Regional press as a means of shaping the identity of the population of Transcarpathia in 1914 – 1953. *Scientific Herald of Uzhhorod University. Series: History*. Uzhhorod, 2 (39). 128-133 [in Ukrainian]
<https://dspace.uzhnu.edu.ua/server/api/core/bitstreams/e4b4b400-aeb2-45c4-8082-707700259367/content>

Lisovyi, P.M. 1958. The newspaper "Karpatska Pravda" in the struggle against Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism. *Scientific Notes*. 33. *Ukrainian and Russian literature*. Uzhhorod, 3-20 [in Ukrainian] <https://dspace.uzhnu.edu.ua/items/37254e73-5c42-4640-a3a9-5dae1c1c8a19>

Mishchanyn, V. 2012. Censorship intervention in the activities of newspaper editorial offices, libraries, and book trade in Transcarpathia in 1944 – 1950. *Scientific Herald of Uzhhorod University. Series: Philology. Social Communications*. Uzhhorod: Hoverla, 27. 166-172 [in Ukrainian] <https://dspace.uzhnu.edu.ua/server/api/core/bitstreams/7741da5e-eda0-4061-ae9f-d038829bd6fc/content>

Mishchanyn, V. 2008. The struggle of the OUN-UPA in Transcarpathia against the collectivization policy in the second half of the 1940s. *Scientific Herald of Uzhhorod University: History Series*. Uzhhorod: Hoverla, 21. 43-47 [in Ukrainian]
<https://dspace.uzhnu.edu.ua/items/cfd00a5b-2402-4df4-b070-04365fe4aa48>

Mishchanyn, V. 2015. The first Soviet elections in Transcarpathia to the republican parliament (February 9, 1947): analysis, course, and results. *Scientific Herald of Mykolaiv V.O. Sukhomlynskyi National University. Historical Sciences: collection of scientific papers*. Mykolaiv: V.O. Sukhomlynskyi MNU. Uzhhorod, 2 (40). 54-62 [in Ukrainian].

Ostapets, Yu. 2009. Transcarpathia through the prism of political elections. All-Ukrainian State Publishing House "Karpaty". Uzhhorod, 408 [in Ukrainian]
<https://dspace.uzhnu.edu.ua/server/api/core/bitstreams/6e04d38c-4ed5-4341-826d-0c02d9cf2d7a/content>

Shershun, I. 1998. On the issue of the transfer of power in Transcarpathia from people's committees to local Soviets of Workers' Deputies. *Scientific Herald of Uzhhorod University. Series: History*. UzhDU Publishing, Uzhhorod, 2. 71-76 [in Ukrainian]
<https://dspace.uzhnu.edu.ua/items/66524d99-e20a-4f5f-95e5-18cfecb7ff89>

Zhulkanych, N., & Mishchanyn, V. 2015. The first "Soviet" elections in Transcarpathia (elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on February 10, 1946). *Scientific Journal of National Pedagogical Dragomanov University*. Kyiv. Series 6. *Historical Sciences: collection of scientific papers*. 13. 52-60. [in Ukrainian]
<https://enpuirb.udu.edu.ua/server/api/core/bitstreams/dee61ecc-59cb-4e22-8c3c-857404cb4878/content>