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Relative Deprivation, Protest Sentiments, and the Normalization of Violence in Sub- carpathian Rus' in the Interwar Period

The political and social development of Subcarpathian Rus' during the interwar period was highly dynamic. Political processes in the region were marked by strong protest sentiments and widespread dissatisfaction among the population, caused by economic backwardness, social inequality, and the arrival of Czech and Slovak officials. This dissatisfaction was primarily exploited by opposition political parties critical of the Prague government's policies. The most pronounced anti-government discourse emerged in the activities of the local regional committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ). The Subcarpathian Regional Committee of the KSČ successfully instrumentalized this discontent and transformed it into strike actions and protests, which repeatedly ended in violent clashes with the police and, in some cases, in the deaths of protesters. Beyond political actors, social dissatisfaction was also mobilized within religious conflicts between the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic Churches, where the level of violence reached an exceptionally high intensity.

In my future research, I will focus on analyzing the relationship between the general frustration of Subcarpathian Ruthenian society and the processes of its radicalization, the increase in levels of violence, and its gradual normalization. The main hypothesis of the research is that relative deprivation constituted the principal source of protest sentiments among the population, and that this dissatisfaction was subsequently instrumentalized by political and religious elites, leading to the radicalization of society and the normalization of political violence.

The main research questions are as follows: What was the relationship between socio-economic dissatisfaction and political violence in Subcarpathian Rus'? Which social groups were most prone to radicalization? How did political and religious elites influence protests and violent events?

The research will employ both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component will be based on an analysis of the number of protests and incidents of physical violence. In this part, their nature and causes will be examined. The variables for this part of the research will be derived from police and administrative records.

The qualitative component will primarily involve discourse analysis of political speeches and the press, with a focus on the instrumentalization of social and economic demands. Particular attention will be paid to the radicalization of discourse, dehumanizing rhetoric, calls for violence, and the construction of the image of the enemy. The analysis will primarily focus on the discourse and political practice of the Subcarpathian Regional Committee of the KSC as one of the most radical and influential political actors in the region. However, other opposition political parties employing autonomist and anti-government rhetoric (for instance Autonomous Agrarian Union) as well as processes of radicalization within religious conflicts will also be considered.

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