

Another scandal between Ukraine and Hungary

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Since 2014, Ukraine has undergone territorial transformations. One of the initiatives being implemented is the creation of territorial units in Transcarpathia in which ethnic Hungarians will live.

This initiative, according to the Ukrainian authorities, is designed to help resolve the „Hungarian issue.” However, the deputy head of the Transcarpathian Regional Council, Josip Barto, expressed confidence that Ukrainian officials, instead of combining the places of compact residence of ethnic Hungarians, intend to divide them on the contrary.

Currently in Ukraine there are four areas of compact residence of Hungarians. This naturally does not contribute to improving the level of communication within the Hungarian community. Therefore, the main goal of the Hungarians is to create a new district in Beregovo, which could unite nine territorial communities. At the same time, the Hungarian population expresses dissatisfaction with the quality of the decentralization reform in Transcarpathia. Unlike the rest of the territory of Ukraine, where events were held by more than half, in Transcarpathia the communities are formed only by 6%.

With regards to Beregovo, which Josip Barto offers to choose as the center of the Hungarian region. Half of the city's population is ethnic Hungarians. And the city is noted for repeatedly speaking out against the policies pursued by Kiev. Last fall, the city became the center of scandal in connection with the mass issuance of Hungarian passports to residents of Ukraine. In connection with the incident, the consul of Hungary in Beregovo was expelled from Ukraine. A little earlier, in the spring of 2018, the population of the city

actively supported the anti-Ukrainian initiative of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary Peter Szijjarto to ban the restoration of the Ukrainian military unit in Beregovo.

It is very likely that the Ukrainian authorities are trying to reduce the influence of the Hungarian minority on the country's domestic policy. In favor of this is the fact of the disappearance from the lists of the Verkhovna Rada of the ninth convocation of the Hungarian representative Laszlo Brenzovic. Self-nominated Vladislav Polyak took his place in the parliamentary elections. This fact significantly reduced the ability of the Hungarian minority to influence political processes in the country. Now the Hungarians need to look for a new way to establish constructive interaction with the Ukrainian authorities.

Thus, two opposite trends are observed. The Ukrainian side is trying to reduce the influence of the Hungarians. The Hungarian community is the other way around. It is the desire to unite voters that can be the motives of Hungarian politicians.

Although, for the sake of fairness, it is worth noting that ethnic conflicts arise not only in Beregovo. Among those which come to mind over the past year, one can list the lawsuit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine to the Prosecutor General's Office and the Security Service of Ukraine in connection with the publication by the Carpathaliya newspaper (published by the Union of Hungarians of Transcarpathia) an article in which the Transcarpathian region is designated by Hungarian territory. In addition, the situation with the seizure by the Hungarian authorities of national passports issued to residents of Transcarpathia was widely publicized, since they were often received not by ethnic Hungarians, but by Ukrainians with fake documents.

In addition, there are contradictions at the high state level. The Hungarian authorities constantly claim non-compliance with

the rights of Transcarpathian Hungarians. A separate controversial issue in dual relations is the Ukrainian law „On Education”, which implies the use of only the Ukrainian language in educational institutions of the country. The repeal of the Law „On the Basics of State Language Policy” deprived the Hungarian language of regional status. In response, Hungary blocks all Ukraine’s aspirations to join the EU and NATO.

It is very likely that countries will not be able to find a common language and the existing contradictions will only grow. And the situation with the Hungarian community will give one more occasion for interested political forces to exacerbate the existing contradictions.

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