

SOVIET HERITAGE AT THE ROMANIAN-UKRAINIAN BORDERLAND IN POST-SOCIALIST MARAMUREȘ LAND

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Abstract: Maramureș Land unitary space until 1920, but fragmented in the interwar period, with a North part in Czechoslovakia and a South part in Romania but permeable under goods and people circulation, became, once with the installation after the Second World War of the USSR on the North side of Tisa river, a sectioned one by a closed border. Although Ukraine was an independent state affiliated to ONU since 1945, it remained until 1990 as a component part of USSR. The Union presence in the border crossing area was realized through building but also destruction of some cultural or economic edifices. In this paper, we will analyze the *soviet inheritance* on one hand, with its icon constructions (railway, bridges, monuments), and on the other hand through the destruction of some icon territorial systems from pre-soviet period. Everything is reflected in what remained preserved, degraded, or (re)built in the Romanian area after the fall of the socialist system in 1990.

Key words: USSR, Ukraina, Romania, Maramureș Land, Romanian-Ukrainian border, soviet heritage

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INTRODUCTION

For the Maramureș Land, the 20th Century remains marked by profound structural and political mutations, pointed out through a new territorial design. For that matter, a continuum historical space, known under the name of Maramureș Land and geographically identified with the depressional space limited by representative mountain unities (Oaș-Gutâi-Țibleș, Rodna on West and South, Maramureș on East and Ukrainian Carpathians on North, consequence of the first global conflagration, was fragmented on the East-West direction by a

new political border, the Romanian-Czechoslovakian one (Figure 1). Although politically speaking there were two territorial systems connected on North and South by Tisa river (Ilieş and all., 2012), the circulation of goods and people had the same rhythm and way, situation facilitated by the 8 bridges (3 railways and 5 roads) that connected the two Tisa shores, but also by the ethnic structure of the population on both sides of the river, favorable in this situation. The Second World War brought for the first time as a neighbor on the North side of Tisa river USSR, as a super state over Ukraine (independent state affiliated to ONU from 1945). The border gradually closed, becoming a hermetic and with no border crossing traffic. Barbed wire, plough border area and extremely visible and strong military guard replaced the formalism of the Romanian-Czechoslovakian border. Nevertheless, the soviet benefited from “their socialist political system” and marked their territory through a serial of specific edifices: the railway with broad-gauge between the localities Valea Vişeuului and Câmpulung la Tisa (figure 1); the railway bridge between Câmpulung la Tisa and Teresva (figure 7); the border crossing point in Halmeu for the mining in Băița Bihor and other war debts that Romania was obliged to pay to the USSR; the soviet hero cemetery in Sighetu Marmăției (figure 5) and other Romanian cities, soviet monuments etc. On the opposite side we remember the gradual destruction of some symbols between the two sides of the Tisa River, like the 8 bridges (figures 3 and 8). Some of them were destroyed by Romania in 1968 in order to prevent a USSR invasion, similar to the one in Czechoslovakia, because of the Romania’s opposition actions to USSR and its Warsaw Pact alliances from that year.

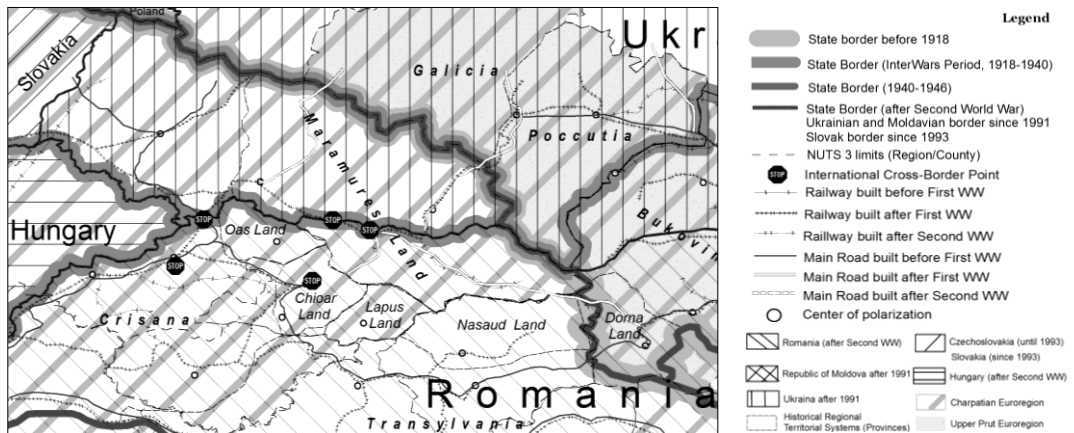


Figure 1. Borders, historical regions, euroregions and political territorial systems during the last Century (1916-2014) in the area of actual (2014) Romanian-Ukrainian border and borderlands

(Ilieş & Wendt, 2014, 297); (data sources: Rey *et al.*, 2002, p. 17; Ilieş, 2007; Ştefănescu *et al.*, 2007a, p. 115-116; Ştefănescu *et al.*, 2007b, 119-120; Smolyoi, 2007, p. 22; Kocsis, 2007, p. 29; Hajdu, 2009, p. 23)

THOOLS AND METHODOLOGY

Another analysis in the border area is represented by a suitable approach in order to reach the objectives proposed in the study. The instruments and specific methodology used in a political geographical study with an inter-subject approach, are exploited in the specific literature of spatial nature with regional

impact (Foucher, 1991; Kleinschmager, 1993; Short, 1993; Glassner, 1995; Bodocan, 1997; Stamate, 1997; Ilieș, 2004; Popa, 2006; Ilieș, G., 2007; Ilieș & Grama, 2010a; Ilieș et al., 2012), territorial planning (Cunha, 1998; Ianoș, 2000, Ilieș and all, 2011a; 2011b); and territorial order (Boar, 2005; Johnson et al., 2011) but also geopolitical and geostrategic (Wendt, 2003; Neğuț et al., 2004; Bufon & Ilieș, 2011), historical approach (Mihaly de Apșa, 1900; Filipașcu, 2002; Boar, 2005 etc) represent arguments in favor of a believable scientific approach on one side and social utility on the other side. From several studies based on borderline (Bodocan, 1997; Ilieș, 2003, 2004; Boar, 2005; Popa, 2006; Ilieș D., 2008; Violante & Vitale, 2010; Ilieș et al., 2011; 2011a; 2012; Ilieș & Wendt, 2014), or on borderline domain and especially on the meaning of borderline systems and functions (Ilieș M. et al., 2010; Ilieș & Vlad, 2014), there are only a few research directions that operate with a big variety of instruments and analysis methods.

DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

Over the 20th Century the Romanian-Soviet continuity, especially the inclusion of Romania in the socialist space over lapses the period of 1948-1989. Until the Second World War, Romania's North neighbor in the Maramureș sector was Czechoslovakia (Figure 1; Boar, 2005; Ilieș et al., 2012; Ilieș & Wendt, 2014; Ilieș & Vlad, 2014), and beginning with 1991 (August) through attainment of independence, Ukraine becomes again a de facto neighbor to Romania. It is worth mentioned that once with the fall of socialist system in 1989, the period to the Ukraine's independence in 1991, USSR's place was taken by the The Commonwealth of Independent States (CSI).

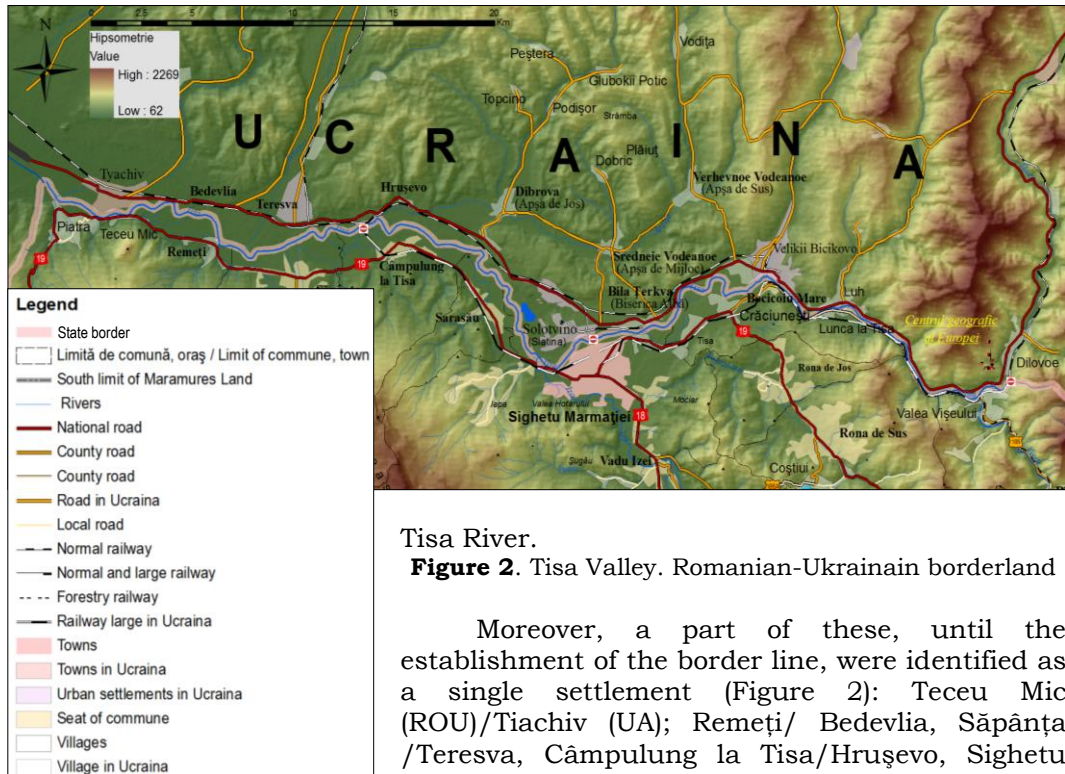
For that matter, the first Romanian contact in space with USSR takes place after the beginning of the Second World War through the occupation of Galicia, thus reaching in the East vicinity of Maramureș Land (Boar, 2005, 239). The profound contact inherited till present day happened on 28 of January 1946, when "*The Independent Sub-Carpathian Ukraine*" is transformed into Zakarpathia Region and incorporated to S.S.R. Ukraine as part of USSR (Boar, 2005, 241). The Soviet inheritance can have a historical dimension through facts and a geographical one through territorial realities. These two dimensions reflected by the approach ways of this study, show: elements "enlighten" in the socialist period and with a dominant soviet fingerprint; elements from Maramureș enlighten in the pre-soviet period, and that the socialist period brought them to ruin or destruction as consequence of USSR's actions.

Elements from Maramureș destroyed as a result of soviet neighboring

Most of these elements include buildings that during the socialist administration began to degrade or have been destroyed, being connected to the neighboring link and USSR's actions. In the same time, there were build other buildings whose utility served only the USSR. An important category is represented by the connection bridges between the two sides of Tisa River, the so called historical bridges.

a.) *The historical bridges.* The eight *historical bridges* over the Tisa River (3 railways and 5 roads) ensured until the Second World War the "historical" link between the two shores, previously mentioned in the Maramureș Land space, even though in the interwar period the North political vicinity was the

same with Czechoslovakia. Over a 60 km long (Stamate, 1997), corresponding with the hydrographical support mentioned and established after the First World War (1920), according to figure 2, we established no less than 18 double settlements, generated by a political border, placed "face to face" on both sides of



Tisa River.

Figure 2. Tisa Valley. Romanian-Ukrainian borderland

Moreover, a part of these, until the establishment of the border line, were identified as a single settlement (Figure 2): Teceu Mic (ROU)/Tiachiv (UA); Remeți/ Bedevlia, Săpânța /Teresva, Câmpulung la Tisa/Hrușevo, Sighetu Marmației/Soltvino (Slatina); Sighet (Cămara)/ Bila Țerkva (Biserica Albă); Lunca la Tisa/Luh; Bocicoiu Mare/Velikii Bicikiv, Valea Vișeuului/Khmeliu/Dilove. The intern systemic functionality over the Tisa River was assured by the eight bridges mentioned above.

1.) A first consequence of Soviet neighboring was the split of functional relations between the localities set on both sides of Tisa River, once with the inclusion of Transcarpathian Ukraine into USSR, and the transformation of the border from an opened one into a closed one.

Although some bridges continued to exist after 1945 but unfunctional, through a hermetic closed border, some other bridges were destroyed in 1968, dynamited by the Romanian administration. It happened as a result of USSR's threatens to invade Romania, because of Romania's refuse to join the Warsaw Pact Alliances to the Czechoslovakia's invasion. The only *material inheritance* that remained, is a half of a bridge in Teceu Mic (Figure 3), situated on the Ukrainian side on present day (ex-Soviet). A second proof is the Ukrainian part of the bridge in Camara Sighet, moved by the Ukrainian administration in 2003 on the *new historical bridge* (down river from the original place) and included in it (Figure 8). Other bridges can only be identified by their pillars or parts of pillars that certify their existence, for example the one in Lunca la Tisa and two others (railway and road) in Bocicoiu Mare.



Figure 3. Rest of *Historical Bridge* over Tisa between Tiacev (Ukraina) and Teceu Mic (Romania) destroyed after The Second World War

Vicarious/restructured elements as a result of Soviet neighboring

b.) Railway. In the unitary period of Maramureș Land, placed under Austro-Hungarian administration, the Tisa River Valley was also an important circulation axis on the West-East, and the trans-Carpathian connection towards South, was done only by roads and cols. Regarding the railway, the first one built under Austro-Hungarian administration, was in 1872 (Boar, 2005, 212), on route from Khust towards Sighet with ramification at Valea Vișeuului (from 1894; Figure 2) from where a line continued along the Vișeu River, an tributary to Tisa River towards Borșa, built in 1913, and another one towards North, on Tisa Valley through Iasinia, with connection over the Ukrainian Carpathians towards Galicia and Bukovina. To these are added the narrow railways (mainly forest ones, built from 1883) that connected Sighet with the salt mining in Coștiui, Ocna Șugatag and, the forest area of Igniș-Gutâi Mountains up to the present day resort, named Izvoare. The first connection of the Romanian Maramureș railway (Sighet-Borșa) with the one in Transylvania, was made in the years that followed the Second World War, the 50's, (Pop, 1984) through the building of Salva-Vișeu section.

2.) *Another consequence of the soviet neighboring through a hermetic border is represented by the severance of the Tisa railway axis from Maramureș Land on the Câmpulung la Tisa-Valea Vișeuului-Borșa, that determined the built of Salva-Vișeu railway line.*

3.) *The third consequence with positive effects was the connection of the remaining railway sector in Transylvania, between the years 1946-1950, but with enormous spending and even human life loss, on one of the most difficult sites of that time (Salva-Vișeu).*

c.) The roads. In the same situation with the railways, the closing of the border with USSR, determined the amputation of the connections that ensured the 5 bridges and the reorientation of traffic from a transversal to a parallel one in relation to Tisa River (figure 2). In the new political-territorial design, the relations of Romanian historical Maramureș with the surrounding areas was realized exclusively through altitude and cols: Huta col towards West, towards Oaș Land Gutâi col, Rotunda and Setref towards South, to Transylvania; and Prislop col (1416 m) towards East, to Bukovina.

4.) *The new hermetic border over Tisa determined a reorganization of the communication system towards the interior of every border subsystem (Ilieș et al, 2012) through sectioning and blocking of the transversal connections over Tisa.*

d.) The creation of face to face localities. Regarding this, we mention the fact that until the establishment of the border with Czechoslovakia in 1920,

there were localities whose administrative territory developed on both sides of the Tisa River (Teceu, Bocicoiu Mare, Sighet and Lunca). If in the between wars period there appeared for the first time under administrative level the double localities, after the installation of soviet system, these became de facto parallel territorial systems, with no functional links (figure 2) and almost identical names. All these had an effect on the inter-human relations and the economic status of the population.

5.) *Another consequence is due to the consolidated division and restructure of some unitary and functional territorial systems, kind of localities through internal organization under double localities, with no functional connections and a separate and divergent evolution, under flux orientation and collaboration relations (Ilieş et al, 2012).*

e.) The role of impenetrable barrier with a dominant function of human flux control (no border crossing points) and the military state border. Thus, it appeared parallel communication and transport systems, *back to back* and no functional links (Boar, 2005, p.213).

Soviet elements inherited in the Romanian space

f.) Remembrance elements. In this category, we could include the soviet soldier's graveyard in Sighetu Marmăției, set presently in a very good preservation and maintenance (Figure 5A). These were built in 1944-1954 to sign of respect for the soviet army that crossed the Maramureş territory in the Second World War. On others monuments are in the center of the city were, till 1990, was a red star who was replace with white cross (Figure 5B).



Figure 5. Sighetu Marmăției. The Soviet Monument cemetery (A) and Monument (former Soviet) from the center of the city (B)

6.) *This monument cemetery points (Figure 5A) out Romania's respect over the soviet soldiers fallen in the Second World War, in Maramureş area.*

g.) Broad-gauge railway. Because of the inadequate relief conditions to built on the right side of Tisa River, between Soltvino/Slatina and Dilove, after the Second World War, USSR built a railway under soviet norms (large: 1520 mm) and used only for the soviet trains, using the route existing in the Austro-Hungarian period. So, we consider that this is the only place in Romania, where on the same embankment are two types of railway: an old one with European gauge and the soviet type with big gauge. Only the Câmpulung la Tisa-Teresva sector is exclusively with soviet type line (Figure 6). This railway ensured the connection of that on the USSR's territory between Teresva to vest

and Dilove to East (Figure 2). Through the building of this railway on the Romanian side, according to international legislation but also, through the leader of the socialist world position that USSR had, Romania commissioned a part of its territorial sovereignty to USSR through the rights of utility and transit of this railway and means of transportation on Romanian territory. It was exclusively built for merchandise transportation. After 1990, after Ukraine's independence and reopening of people's transit, gradually this railway was used mainly by a Ukrainian train (Figure 6), for people transportation and connected the localities Tiaciv-Câmpulung la Tisa-Sighetu Marmației-Valea Vișeuului-Rahiv (Figure 2). The increase of border crossing criminality (smuggling of cigarettes especially) determined the Ukrainians in 2007 to suspend this route. Today, the railway is unexploited, abandoned (no current maintenance). With all this, taking into consideration the fact that the border with Ukraine is an external EU and NATO one, Romania undertook a serial of works regarding the protection of the railway (Figure 6), including reconstruction works after the flooding in 2000.

7.) *The railway with big wheelbase is an important objective of the Soviet inheritance in the Romanian area and could be rehabilitated and used with success as a new touristic landmark in the ex-Soviet space*



Figure 6. Large railway (ex-Soviet and Ukrainian) on the Romanian territory and Ukrainian train

h.) Iron Railway Bridge from Câmpulung Tisa-Teresva (Figure 7). Is an economical building, built in 1872 (Horvath & Kubinsky) and survived the socialist period due to its extremely important role in ensuring the connection of the soviet railway line on the right side of Tisa. This bridge played an important role in the reopening of border crossing after 1990 through the opening in 1992 of the first pedestrian Romanian-Ukrainian border crossing point in the Maramureș space, for the small traffic and resident's people access.



Figure 7. Iron Bridge over Tisa between Câmpulung la Tisa (Romania) and Teresva (Ukraina)

i.) The historical wooden bridge between Sighet and Solotvino (Slatina), (Figure 8). Is in fact a building enlighten after the fall of the socialist system, (building started after 1999) that tie the historical communication connections in this area. It is remembered in this study because of its delocalization and insertion in its structure, by the Ukrainian side, of two segments from the old historical bridge in the soviet period and located in Cămara Sighet-Bila Țerkva (figure 8).



Figure 8. Historical bridge over Tisa between Sighetu Marmăției and Solotvino. The metal part is part of old *historical bridge* between Sighetu Marmăției (Cămara Sighet) and Bila Țerkva/Biserica Albă (Ukraina), destroyed after The IInd World War.

CONCLUSIONS

This study brings out two categories of elements that remind and identify with the soviet inheritance which put its fingerprint in the Maramureș space over a period of 45 years. The first category shows infrastructure elements that ensured in the pre soviet period the functionality of Maramureș Land, and disappeared gradually in the socialist period as a consequence of some USSR's activity. We remember here the destruction of the bridges, the tear of road and railway connections over Tisa, the consolidation and the functional reorientation of double localities connections. The second category include USSR's fingerprint-elements in the Romanian space, like railways with big wheelbase between the localities Câmpulung la Tisa and Valea Vișeuului, the railway bridge in Câmpulung la Tisa/Teresva, maintained and reconstructed in USSR's gain, soviet heroes graveyard in Sighetu Marmăției. All this elements, many of them included in the collective memory of population can be part of a border crossing regional development strategy, through inclusion in the touristic circuit of Maramureș Land. According to field literature, the railway sector in Câmpulung la Tisa-Sighetu Marmăției-Valea Vișeuului is the only ex-soviet European space

with two types of railway on the same embankment. For the Maramureș space, this economic objective deserved to be transformed in one with touristic functionality. Even if there are moments, benchmark or buildings that remind us of a less glamorous time for Maramureș Land, and in present, these could play a double role: the historical one in order not to repeat the mistakes of the past; the contemporary one that includes the historical inheritance in knowing under objectives form and touristic activities.

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