

# The Sub-Carpathian Messenger

Newsletter of the Study Circle  
for the Postal History of the Carpatho-Ukraine

Number 35 - November 2015



Nunnery at Drachyno (2012)

## About us and the Newsletter

The Study Circle is a loose group of persons who are interested in the postal (and general) history of the area known as Kárpátalja in Hungarian, as Podkarpatská Rus during the First Czechoslovak Republic, which had a short day of independence as Carpatho Ukraine, and later was integrated into the Ukrainian SSR in the Soviet Union as the 'Zakarpatskaja Oblast'. Since 1991 it is ЗАКАРПАТТЯ, the westernmost administrative district in the now independent Ukraine.

The Newsletter came out of a meeting of a few collectors during the PRAHA 2008, its first number appeared in November 2008. In the last years we have always produced at least four issues per year but may not be able to keep this high level due to a substantial lack of contributions. On the other hand, as we can see from the access counts at the public web site, this Newsletter is read by hundreds of people.

We send our regards and best wishes to all members of the Study Circle.

## Distribution method

All issues of the »Sub-Carpathian Messenger« can be browsed at and downloaded from the Internet address

<http://www.slideshare.net/subcarpathian>

For those who have no Internet access and/or no e-mail, the distribution method is still the same: you will receive a colour print-out by air/surface mail as you did in the past.

Everybody can freely access the uploaded numbers of the Newsletter but the notification service for new numbers (including an easy download web datalink) is limited to the actual members of the Study Circle.

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Participation in the Study Circle is not bound to a formal membership and does not include the duty to pay a membership fee. There is a moral obligation to support the Newsletter from time to time by sending some article, some interesting piece of information, some question, some answer or whatever.

We will "print" everything even only loosely connected with our subject of interest so any contribution is certainly welcome. Please send it (as Word 2003 or 2007 document, graphical elements in JPEG, 300 dpi) to the editor's e-mail address ([kb@aatc.at](mailto:kb@aatc.at)). His postal address, if you would need it, is:

Dr. Helmut Kobelbauer, Untergrossau 81, A-8261 Sinabelkirchen, Austria / Europe

Helmut Kobelbauer  
**Auction News**

The 256<sup>th</sup> Darabanth auction (August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015) brought five lots with Kárpátalja cancellations on stamps of the 1<sup>st</sup> Austrian issue (1850 - 1858). Although we have seen an extreme evolution in prices for corresponding covers, none of the offered stamps' lots was sold.



Lot 1150: Pair of 3 kr, machine paper, type III.



Lot 1157: 2 x 3 kr, machine paper, type III.



Lot 1180: 3 kr, machine paper, type III.



Lot 1214: 6 kr, machine paper, type III.



Lot 1289: 9 kr, hand paper, type II, dark colour shades.

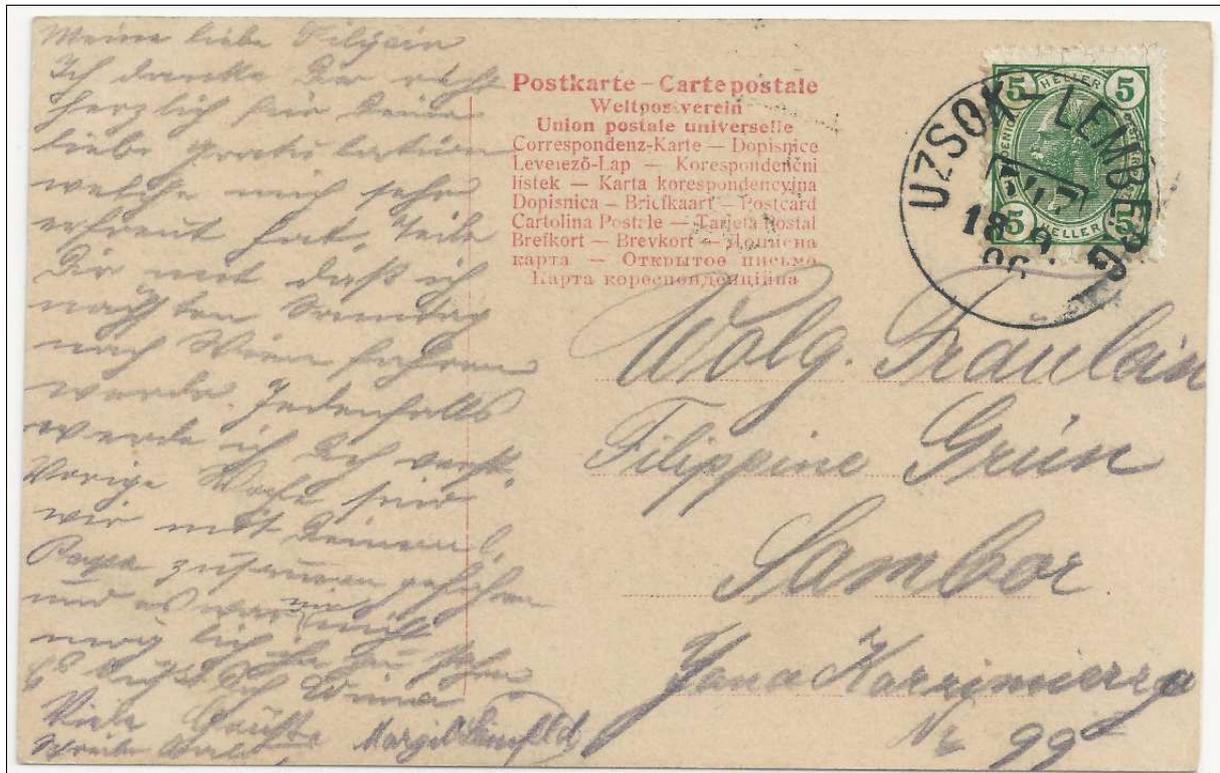
This stark difference in the collectors' interest between postal history and traditional philatelic items is following a tendency in certain countries in Europe that I have seen now for some twenty years and always have found rather disturbing. Certainly one need not discuss the merits of postal history, certainly accept a difference in prices between the two categories, but this development - when put to extremes - shall have us loose our footing both in knowledge and in the social composition of the "pyramid" of philatelic collectors.

Not every country is following this tendency and I think that e. g. our collector friends from Great Britain or from the United States of America have a much better balance between these two branches of philately.

What do you think ?

Helmut Kobelbauer  
**Another Ruthenian TPO**

In Ingert Kuzych's highly decorated exhibit "LEMBERG - Cosmopolitan Crownland Capital of the Austrian Empire" I found the following strike of the (rather scarce) T.P.O. "UZSOK - LEMBERG" and have asked Ingert for a good copy to be published in this Newsletter which he kindly provided:



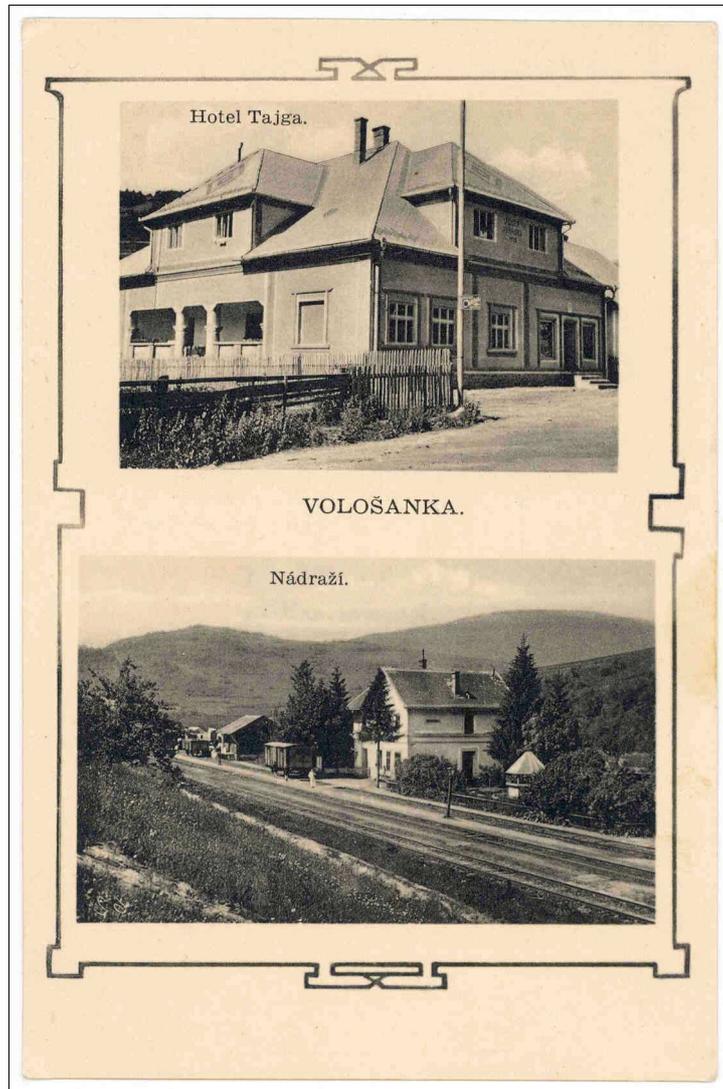
Motif card, T.P.O. "UZSOK - LEMBERG | 547" of September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1906, to Sambor.



Helmut Kobelbauer

## Another Picture Postcard from Hajasd / Volosianka

In the 244<sup>th</sup> Darabanth auction I found and bought another picture postcard showing Hajasd / Volosianka (see SCM #022, pp. 5 - 9). This card is from the Czechoslovak period, although without year of publication. It is a further proof of the tourism evolved and evolving during this period around Uzsok and its famous "Hotel Sport".



Please note that in this period the village's name was written Vološanka. The card shows the hotel Tajga and the railway station.

According to Márfa-Szép (1995) there was a post office with stamp "HAJASD" from 1908 to 1914 and then a postal office "HAJASD P. U." (at the railway station) from 1914 on until inclusion into the Czechoslovak state. The »*Monografie Československých Známek*«, vol. 17, part II (1988) says on page 377 that all postal institutions in Hajasd were closed in 1920 and then a post office "VOLOSJANKA" re-opened in 1924 which was renamed to "VOLOSIANKA" in 1929.

Examples of strikes of the seven cancellers (two in Hungarian times, one plus four in Czechoslovak times) would be welcome.

Mervyn Benford

## Munkács VISSZATÉRT and more!

[I have asked Mervyn to share with us his extensive knowledge on the VISSZATÉRT marks, partially already published in his book »The VISSZATÉRT Period in Hungarian Philately« (1989, Magyar Philatelic Society of Great Britain). For greater clarity I have extracted detailed copies of the respective marks and have added some material from my own collection.

The editor.]

In SCM #033 the editor says he is unaware of other information on the Visszatért period of Ruthenian philately but I suspect he has read my book on the broader subject of that period and its impact on all Hungarian philately. [Yes, he has, and more than just once.]

In my collection I indeed found both black and lilac inks used and cancellers of different diameters. Though not exclusively used on the first day, November 10<sup>th</sup>, three of my lilac examples, all 34 mm diameter, have no new cds but the temporary cancellers number 242, which my book records came into use on 10<sup>th</sup> November. It is curious that both black and lilac 'V' postmarks show new cds cancellers also available on the first day. Both black and lilac versions come with cds counters A and B but where all black examples are the stated 34 mm, and one of the lilac, I have two lilac with 36 mm versions - one with counter A and the other counter B.



Philatelic card, Munkács / A, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1938, to Budapest. Two marks in black with 34 mm and 37 mm diameter.

I suspect it was a busy day! Counter A seems to have used a black and lilac 34 mm as well as a lilac 36 mm on the first day while counter B has used a black 34 mm and lilac 36 mm. The clerk with the temporary 242 stamps was also active. The absence of a number in the cds argues no further post office existed. It was a town office of course.

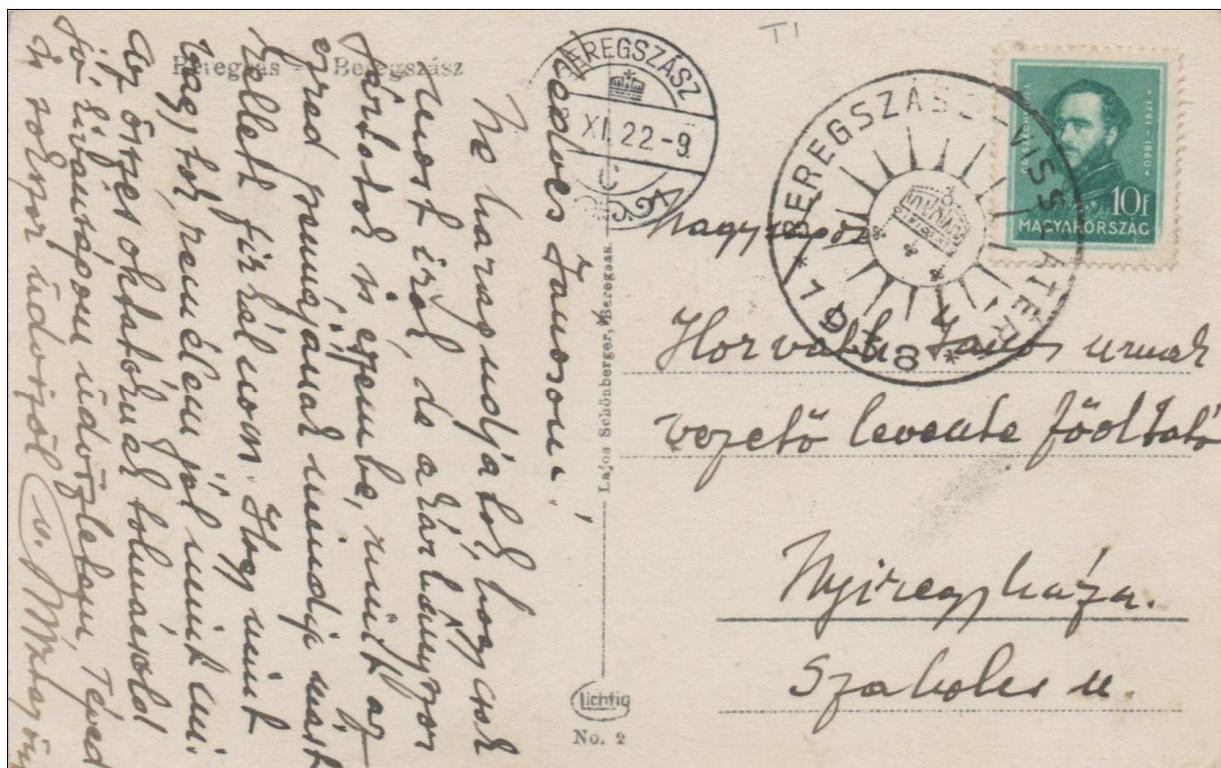


I should state that all ten of my black versions seem clearly of the longer 3.5 mm letter height. However I need to state that two of the black versions are very measurably a different diameter again, namely 37 mm, both counter A and later in the period of use. Counter A using the 34 mm black version was still active on 30 November and 2 December - my latest date of use for black but one of my 38 mm lilac was used on 3 December. Counter D was the only other example I have and only later in the period of use and only black. Almost all my datable lilac marks are otherwise first day.

## BEREGSZÁSZ

It is interesting that immediately post-Trianon this was a town so strongly Magyar the new Czech name was a straight trans-literation, BEREGSAS, changing only later to BEREHOVO. It was also ancestral home to the great Gary Ryan FRPSL! The 1938 Visszátért restoration commemorative marks involved a range of designs shared, presumably arbitrarily or by choice, between particular towns. The BEREGSZÁSZ mark was similar to that used in ÉRSEKÚJVÁR in the western part of the returned territory. It is in the town name capital letters of both examples that I have detected different typefaces arguing at least two separate cancellers involved in each case.

In BEREGSZÁSZ the most noticeable differences are in the first 'R' and then the 'G.' They are clearly not the same letters and so represent the two types I mention in my book. I have counters A, B and C with one type, and B, C and E with the other type. The first type includes my three first day examples. Counter B seems to have had access to both types and maintained the main output, my latest dated B example being 3 December. My solitary E has 5 December. Both types have use by counter C but mid-period.



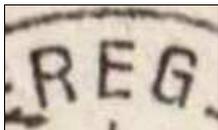
Type I mark on picture postcard, Beregszász / C, November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1938, to Nyíregyháza.



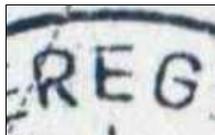
Type II mark on picture postcard, Beregszász / C, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1938, to Miskolc.



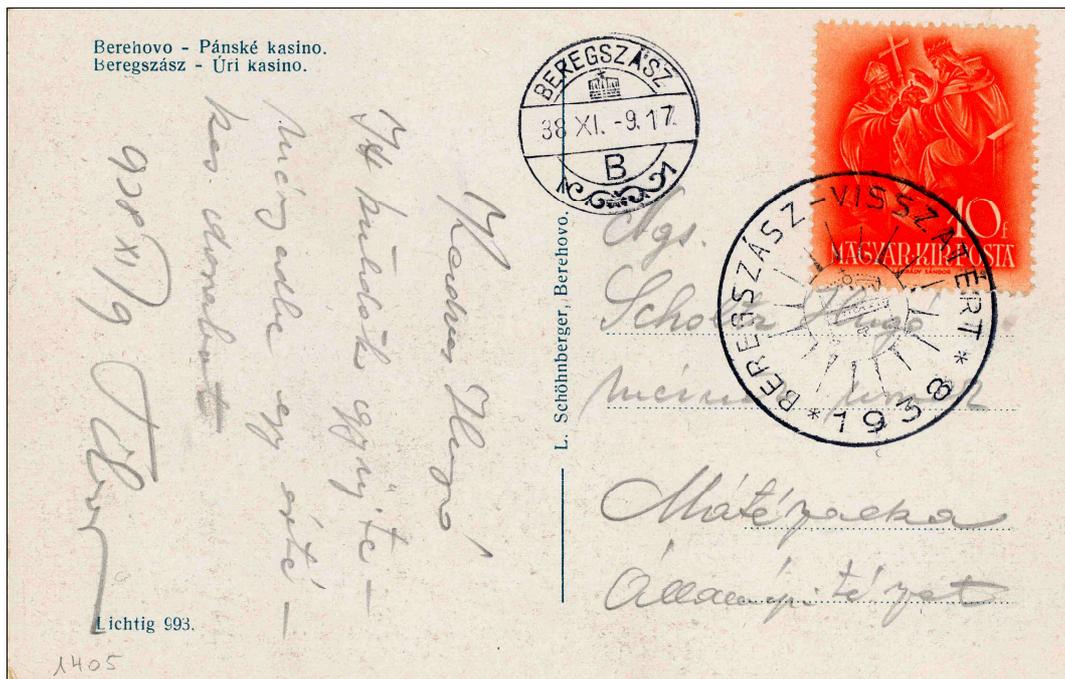
Type I



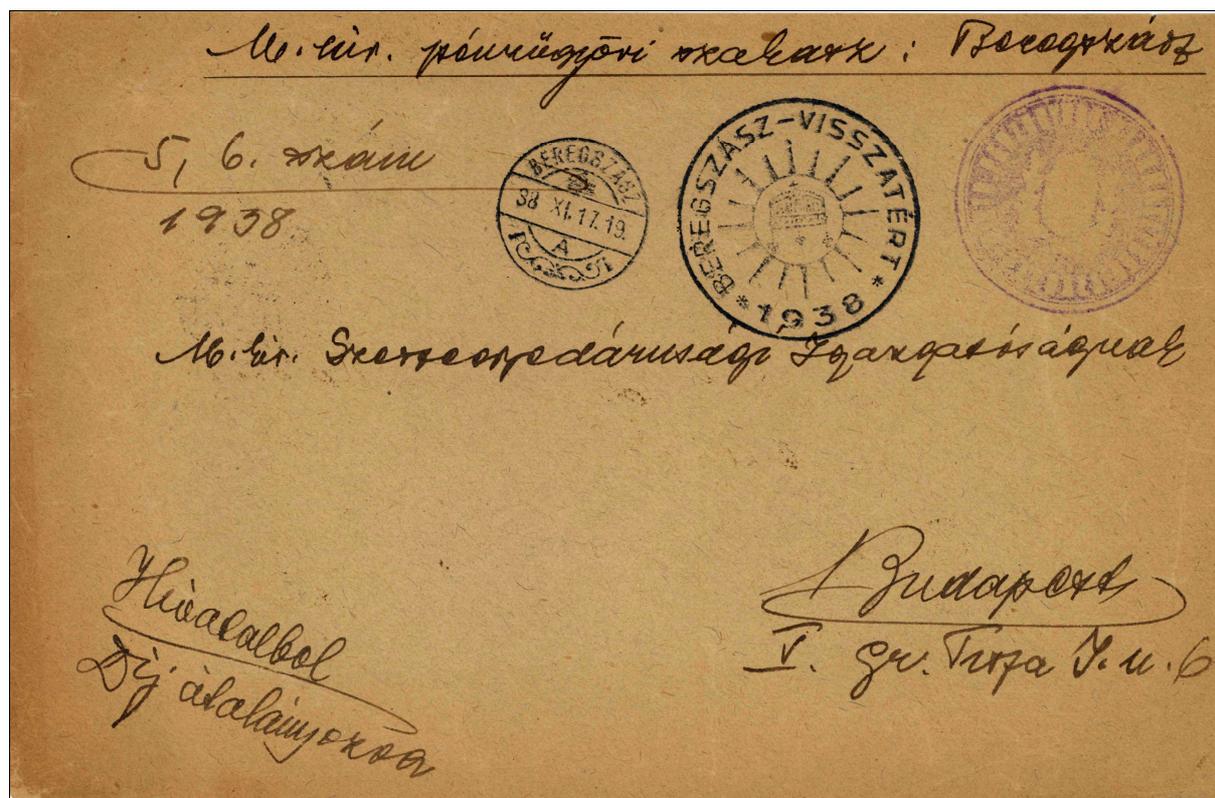
Type II



[In addition to this obvious difference in characters “R” and “G” I have also found the distance between characters “S” and “Z” in “BEREGSZÁSZ” to be larger in type I than in type II. Both types have a diameter of 36 mm. The editor]



Picture post card, Beregszász / B, November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1938. First day use, type I mark.  
From the collection of Hans-Dieter Hanus.



Official letter, Beregszász / A, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1938, to Budapest. Type II mark.  
From the collection of Simády Béla.



Type I



Type II



Registered letter, Beregszász / A, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1938, to Dražovo.  
Very late use of type II mark. Arrival mark of December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1938.

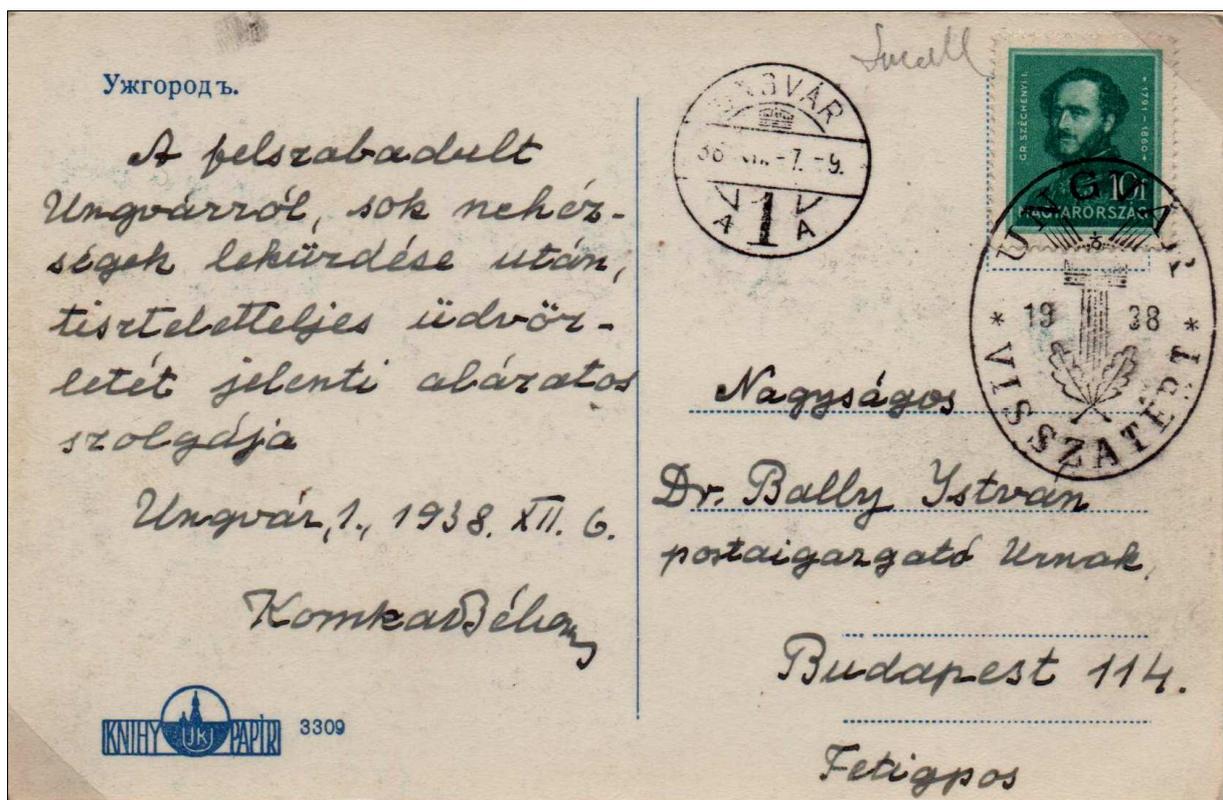
[The above item is from the editor's collection and represents one of the rather few letters that went from Zone 1 into the later Zone 2, at the moment of sending still belonging to the autonomous region Podkarpatská Rus within the Czechoslovak Republic. The letter also carries the latest strike of the "BEREGSZÁSZ - VISSZATÉRT \* 1938 \*" commemorative canceller that I am aware of.]

## UNGVÁR

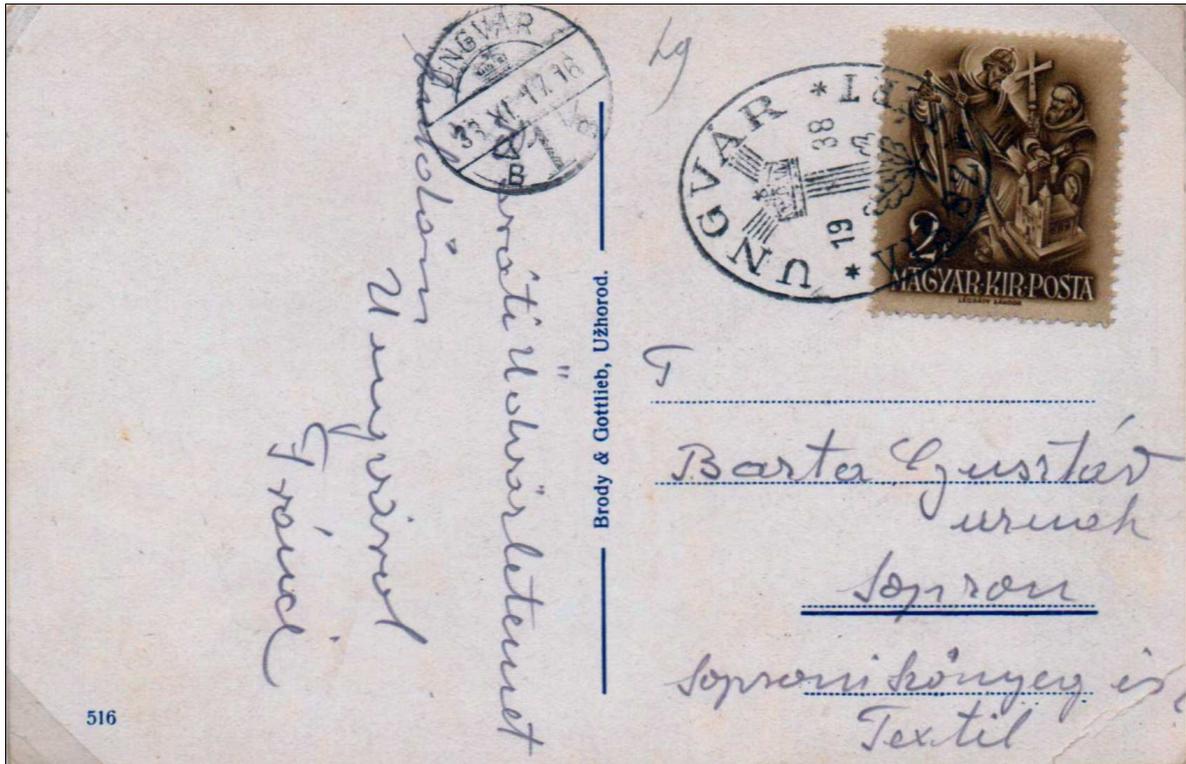
The third Ruthenian Visszatért town in 1938 was Ungvár and my study of the special commemorative marks used for the celebrations again shows two different versions of the 'V' marks. I am less certain, however, so again will welcome other views and evidence.

Again it shares the design, a vertical oval with central symbol, in this case with Duna-szerdahely, Komárom, Léva, Losonc, Rimaszombat and Rozsnyó - clearly popular if choice had been a factor. There is the symbolic Crown with flags on top of a column with ground level laurel leaves and the date 1938 with two asterisks.

The factor that drew my eye to the differences was the positioning of the 'U' and 'R' of the town name. They seem to sit in one case almost level with the base of the Crown - I call this the 'large' type and in the other case higher than that, my 'small' type. Further investigation measuring just below the asterisks, about mid-point, maximum width, I get largely 28 mm with my 'large' type, and curiously 29 mm with my 'small' type. This should also have an effect on the distance letters are clear of the oval itself. I am not 100 % convinced nevertheless because study of the 'VISSZATÉRT' letters at the foot seems inconclusive. It may be that the setting of the central symbol relates differently somehow. Nevertheless the eye tells that story though only three of my fourteen examples seem this 'small' type.



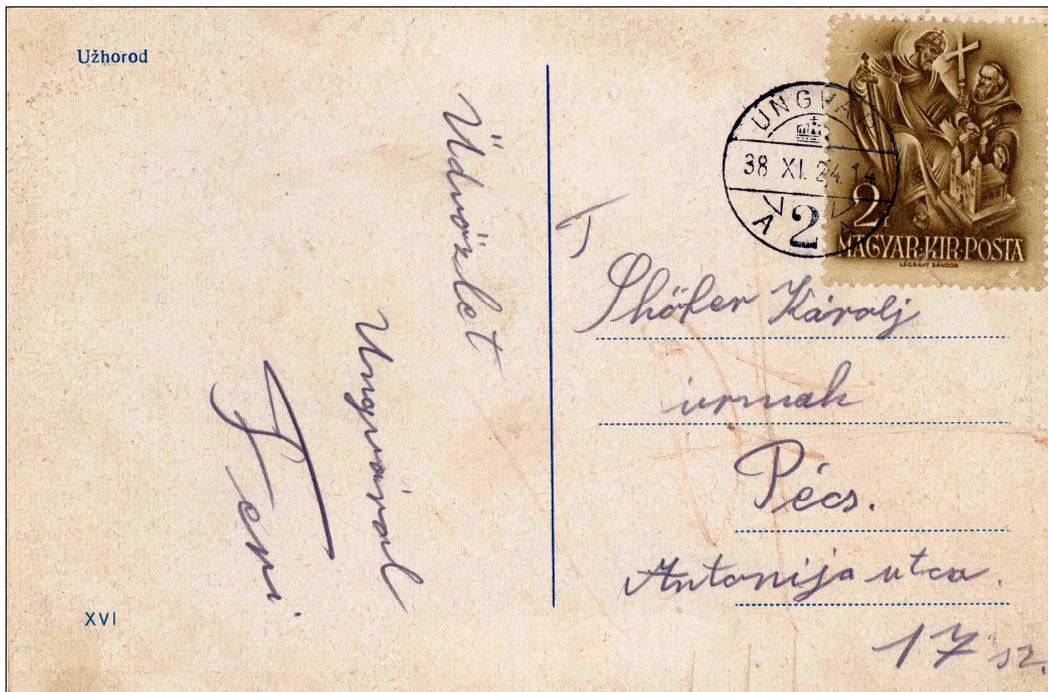
Picture post card, Ungvár 1 / A, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1938, to Budapest. "Small" type.



Picture post card, Ungvár 1 / B, November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1938, to Sopron. “Large” type.

Only two of the fourteen have first day cds marks, both counter 1D, this canceller still in use in December and as late as December 9<sup>th</sup>. It seems the dominant one, half of the total 3 from ‘B’ and one of ‘A’ and ‘E’ form the others, with one paper sample without date marking.

[The editor: On the other hand, the post office Ungvár 2 obviously had NO canceller with a VISSZATÉRT commemorative mark, as can be seen from the next picture:]



Picture post card, Ungvár 2 / A, November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1938, to Pécs.

I have not (yet anyway) found variants in the other six marks of town using this design. In fact only KASSA remains known to me with significantly different cancellers, both rubber and steel and different sizes but that is outside the remit of this article.

Celebratory examples are not strictly part of the story in the 1939 story of all of Ruthenia returning. By the nature of the events no preparedness applied and apart from some local arrangements in the principal town, Huszt, philately of this part of the territory is limited strictly to straight evidence of the re-opening of Post Offices in Hungarian colours, with the additional speciality of new cancellers in bi-lingual form then changed to mono-lingual to suit a later decision by Hungary that at least some of these places were more dominantly Magyar than Ruthene. It is a good collecting challenge to find the temporary emergency postmarks on mailed items or piece - far more by the nature of events the Post Office probably knew little about in advance - then the bi-lingual and, where relevant, finally the mono-lingual versions of the same towns. I can do this for Aknaszlatina and Nagyszöllös.

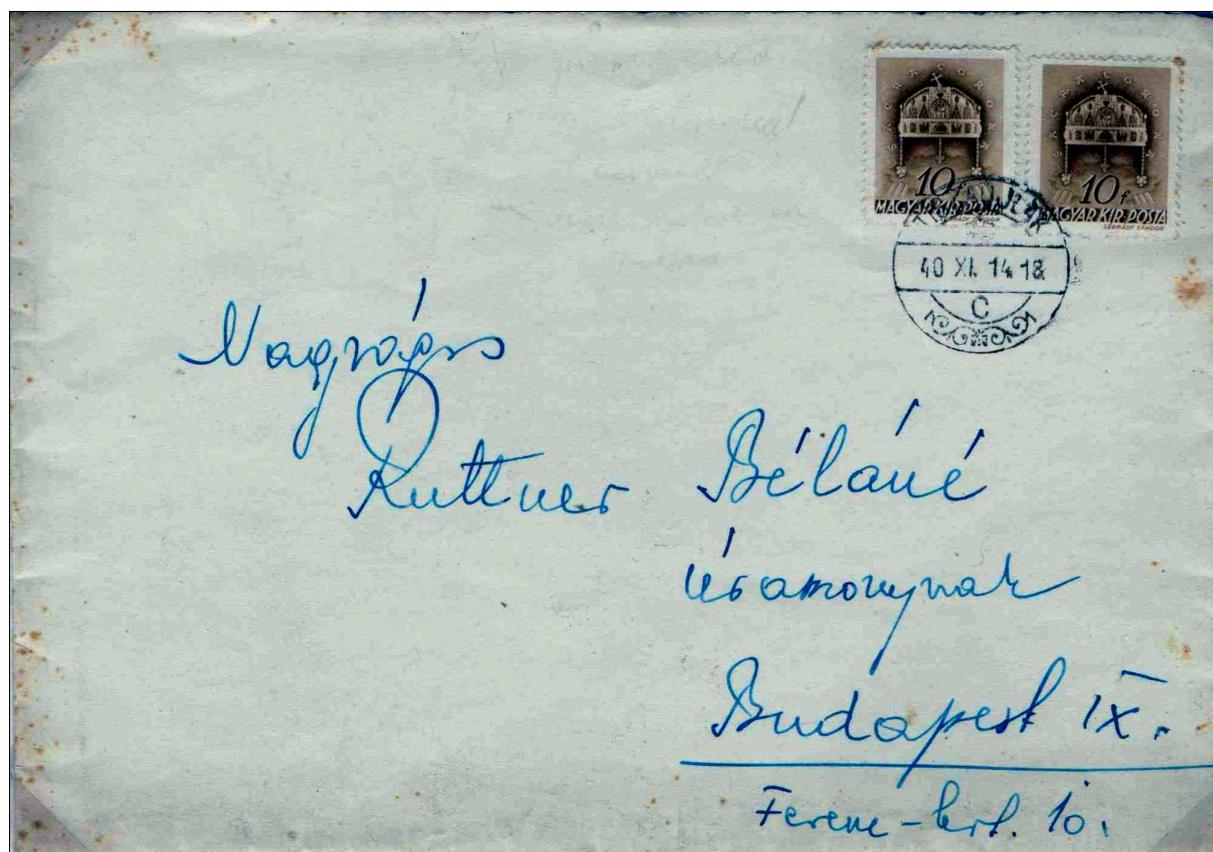
A second challenge is to find examples of temporary numbered cancellers with the Post Office name identified as regulation required. I have a good number of such examples that seem correct more because they reflect philatelic magazine or dealer efforts to obtain samples for onward sale than examples where one may assume the local postmasters did their duty. The latter are the more desirable but the others are important because though philatelic in character they are probably the only evidence we shall ever find from Post Offices that were rural, remote, serving few literate individuals. They should not be seen as anywhere near the same value as the very common over-the-counter, cancelled-to-order pieces at token cost from places far more prepared and aware of these celebratory days.



Philatelic letter, Feketeardó, November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1938, to Budapest. Cancellation in violet.



Postcard, MKP 246 from Macsola (near Beregszász), undated, to Budapest.



Letter, Tiszaujlak / C, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 1940, to Budapest. Definitive form of cds.

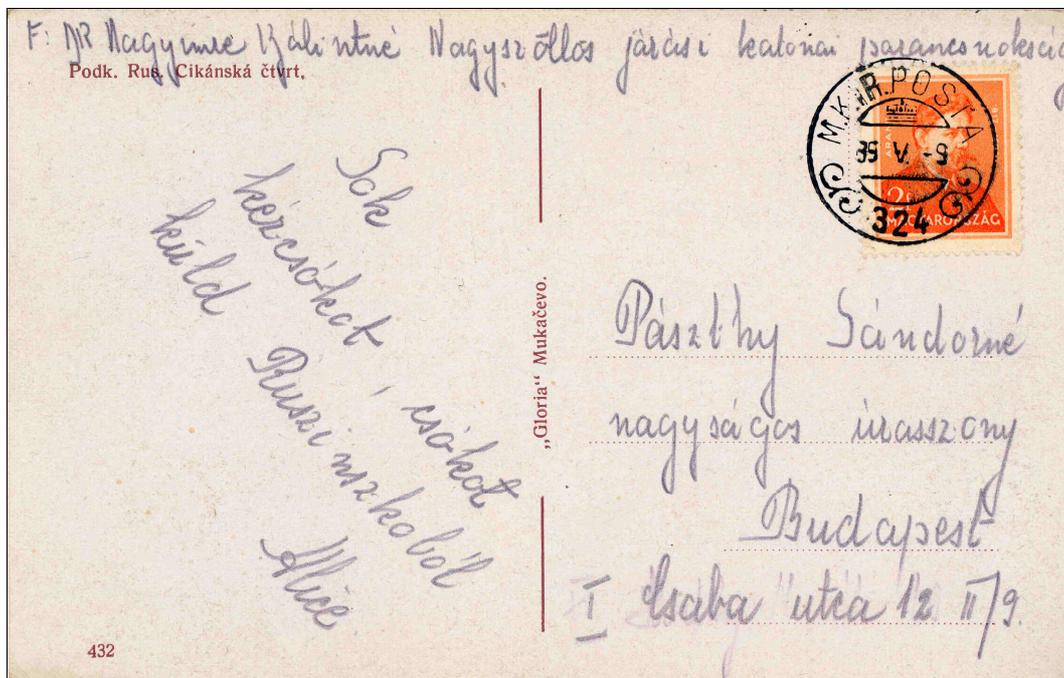
Helmut Kobelbauer

## Another Picture of Gypsy Quarters in Ruthenia

To repeat myself: Picture postcards with „Gypsy“ motifs are rare and much sought after on the international market. We have shown some already, and this time I have found such a card sent from Nagyszöllös (Sevluš) in the early Hungarian “VISSZATÉRT” period.



Picture postcard, M. KIR. POSTA 324, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1939, to Budapest.

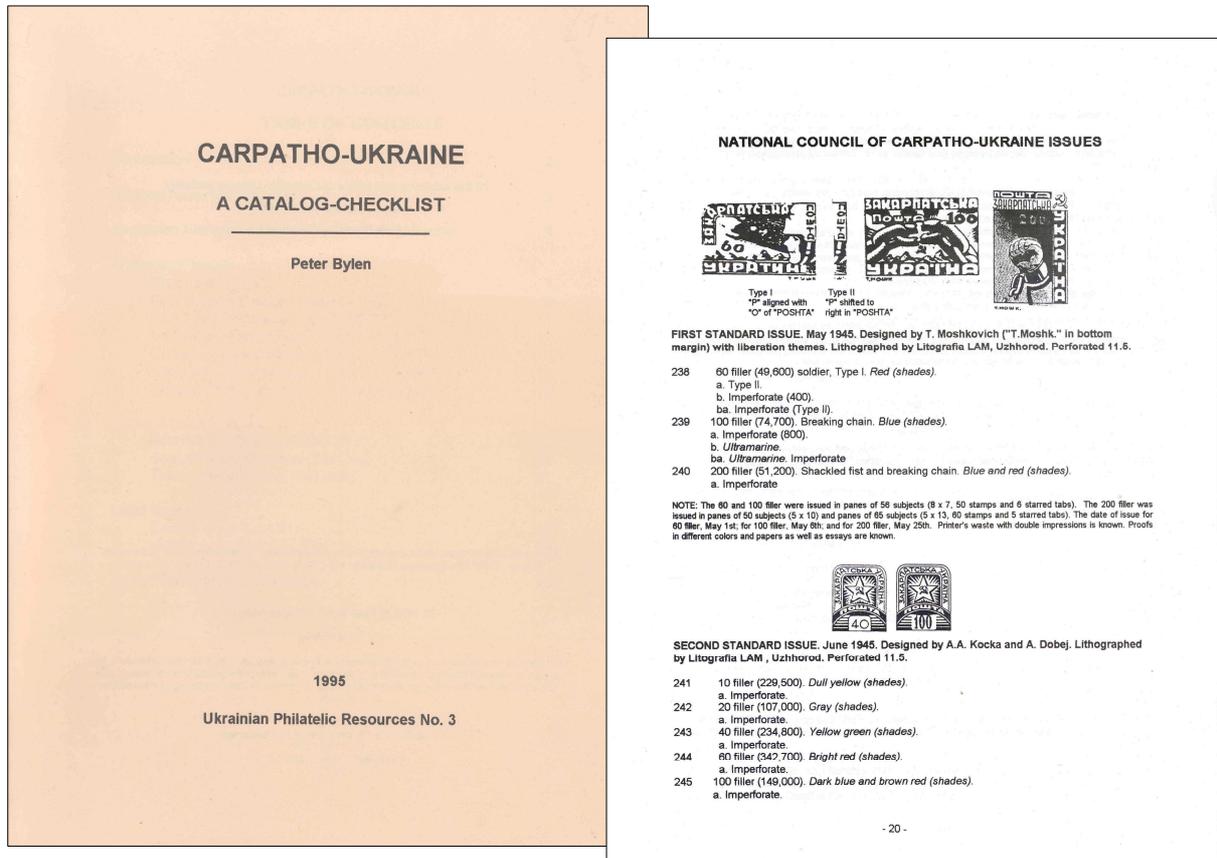


According to Jan Verleg the metal canceller with number 324 was used in Nagyszöllös from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939, till August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1939. This perfectly fits with the cds date on our card.

The card was published by “Gloria” in Mukačevo (Munkács) and carries the text “Podk. Rus. Cikánská čtvrt.” [Podkarpatská Rus. Gypsy quarters]. The sender was a woman named Alice in some connection with the military troops having occupied (liberated) Zone 2.

## Helmut Kobelbauer More Literature

It is one of my objectives as the editor of this tiny Newsletter to present as many pieces of relevant literature as possible, however trivial or remote, and keep you up-to-date.



I bought this brochure about three years ago on eBay for about 17 Euro. It has been produced by Peter Bylen in 1995 and on 26 pages covers the "independent" issues of Carpatho-Ukraine, first the National Assembly issue of 1939 and then the Transitional (overprints on Hungarian stamps) and National Council issues of 1944.

Everything is in black & white; layout is similar to a catalogue but without prices. The address of the publisher "Ukrainian Philatelic Resources" is "P.O. Box 7193, Westchester, Illinois 60154-7193, U. S. A.". It may be possible to still get a copy from this address - I would not know.

On the National Assembly issue there is an interesting

"NOTE: Minor differences between Plate I and IA have been noted; these may be attributed to larger recess lines in Plate IA resulting in a slightly darker color. Layout consisted of 100 stamps (7 x 16, with first and last row consisting of one stamp and six blank tabs). One million stamps was printed, with 700,000 held in Prague for philatelic distribution. The unsold balance in Khust was confiscated by Hungarian authorities. Philatelic usage in Prague and Moravian towns is also known, as are bogus cancellations. A bogus typographed souvenir sheet commemorating the Opening of the First National Assembly, measuring 97 x 80 mm, is known to exist." (*loc. cit.*, page 3)

My guess would be that the much larger amount in Prague, confiscated by German troops when they occupied this city on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1939, is the major source of mint pieces that still are available in quantities at reasonable prices. Although the obvious demand would have been much larger in the Czech capital, they did not have the time to sell off their share in this much debated and much delayed issue. The printing layout, by the way, combined 16 rows with seven columns (see SCM #002, page 5).

As already pre-announced in SCM #034, our friends Peter Cybaniak and Roman Dubyniak from Leeds have finalized their Book 2 of »The Czechoslovak Army in Ukraine 1914 - 1920«:



This volume of 140 pages lists the Czechoslovak Field Post Offices 22, 35, 38, 44, and 46 in detailed descriptions and holds many pictures of field post cards in full colour. Of course it is recommended for all our readers.

**NOW AVAILABLE**

**THE POSTAL HISTORY OF UKRAINE**

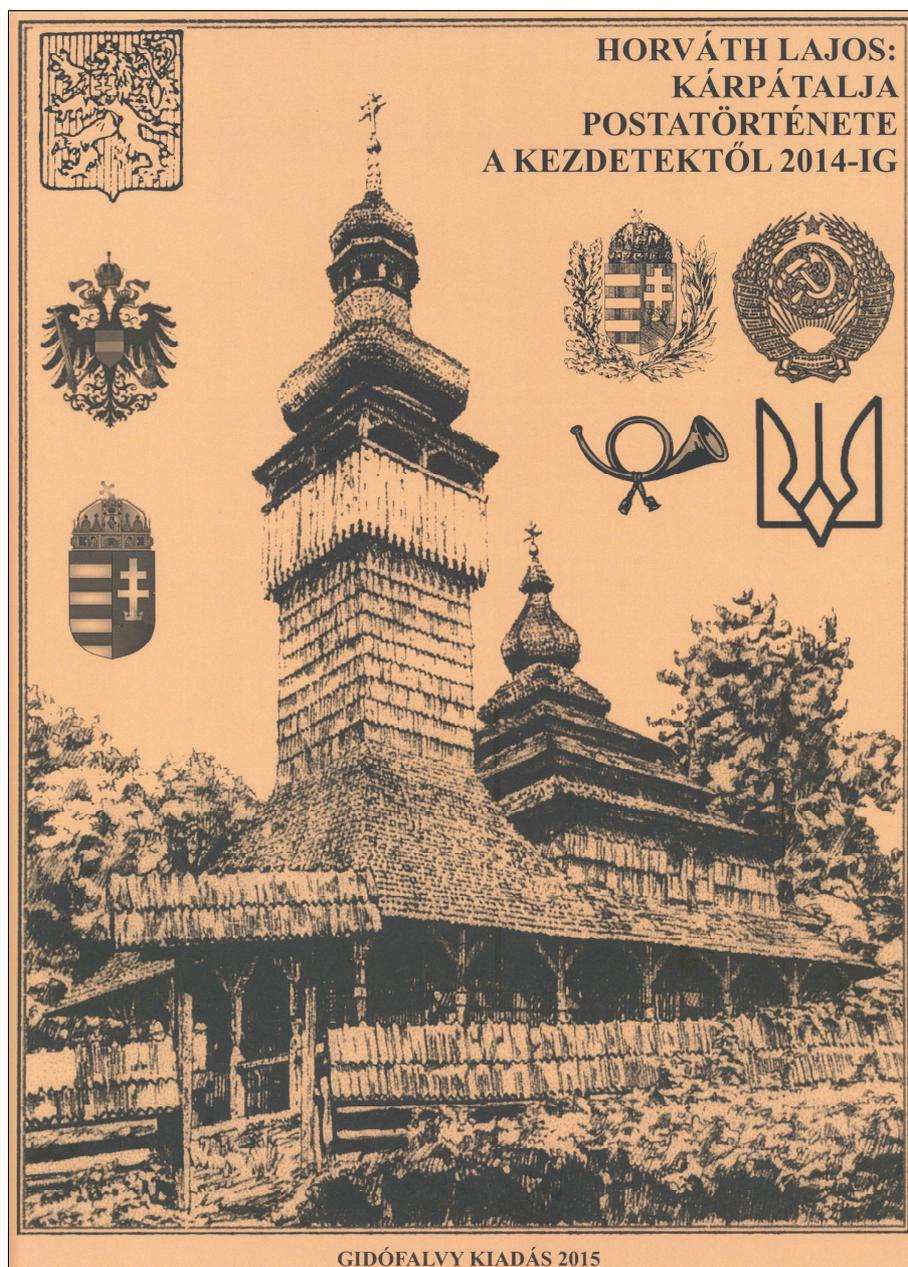
**THE CZECHOSLOVAK ARMY IN UKRAINE 1914 - 1920**

**BOOK 2 (PP22, PP35, PP38, PP44, PP46)**

Available from THE ROMAN DUBYNIAK UKRAINIAN MUSEUM FOUNDATION.  
16, BEXLEY AVENUE, LEEDS, WEST YORKSHIRE, LS8 5LU ENGLAND.

(A banknote contribution to help cover the production cost of around £15 per book would be appreciated)

Another long announced book has also come to me: The Hungarian historian Horváth Lajos has finally published his *Opus Magnum*:



Its Hungarian title »*Kárpátalja Postatörténete a Kezdetektől 2014-ig*« may be translated as “The Postal History of the Kárpátalja from its Beginnings till 2014”. The book has more than 400 pages with many illustrations (some borrowed from »*The Sub-Carpathian Messenger*«). It is in Hungarian (only) and all pictures are in black & white (only). A number of maps, meticulously drawn by Gidovalfy Péter, are very valuable to understand the history of administrative and political changes so typical for our area of interest.

The sources used are, of course, the previously published twelve booklets from the »*Kárpátalja postatörténeti füzetek*« series, the original »*Kárpátalja Postatörténete*« volume by Dr. Simády Béla (Budapest, 1991) and a few additions taken from the monograph of Jan Verleg and then our Newsletter, but mostly original research by Horváth Lajos himself.

The book can be ordered for 30 Euro from our member Gidovalfy Péter (his postal address: József Attila út 41, H-4461 Nyírtelek, Hungary; e-mail address: [gidofalvy@t-online.hu](mailto:gidofalvy@t-online.hu)).

Tom Cossaboom:

From the „International New York Times“, Tuesday, 11 August 2015, page 8

## Ukraine border town becomes a shopper's paradise

MALI SELMENTS, UKRAINE

BY RICK LYMAN

The main street is a lovely ribbon of asphalt these days, a far cry from the rutted moonscape that once prevented even buses from bouncing into the tiny, decrepit village.

Lining the narrow road are an equally improbable series of sparkling shops, selling sports clothes, Gucci tank tops, dress shoes, Chanel perfume, flip-flops. There is even a sprawling wedding dress emporium where clusters of excited women contemplate a platoon of mannequins adorned with sequined chiffon and lace.

“It was a small village at the end of the world,” said Monika Mondok, standing outside a two-story emporium selling brand-name sportswear. “But then, when the gate opened, it blossomed.”

The “gate” is a small cluster of glass-and-metal buildings cut seven years ago through the tall fences that mark the border between Ukraine and Slovakia. One pedestrian path leads from this village to its Slovakian counterpart, Velke Slemence; another leads out. Uniformed border guards calmly peruse the travel documents of the bag-wielding shoppers, and the decaying remains of a Soviet watchtower pokes above the corrugated tree line.

The saga of this small Ukrainian village (population 200) and its Slovakian twin (population 400), reads like a “Twilight Zone” episode joining the cruelty and absurdity of the 20th century with a most unlikely 21st-century denouement.

Part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until its collapse at the end of World War I, the two medieval villages had long ago intertwined, sharing a church, community center and schools. In 1919, the combined area was given to Czechoslovakia. In 1938, it became part of the Kingdom of Hungary.

And then, after World War II, with Ukraine absorbed into a surging Soviet empire eager to claim as much territory as possible, a new international boundary was drawn smack through the center of town.

Overnight, families and friends a few blocks apart found themselves living in different countries, separated by surly border guards and, for 61 years, rarely allowed to visit one another. Even talking through the fence was forbidden.

During funerals, caskets were taken near the border so those on the other



Slovaks after shopping in Mali Selmentsi, an area once unified but then divided by boundaries drawn at the end of World War II.

side could view the body. Residents outwitted the Russian guards by passing information in songs they sang in the fields. In one oft-repeated incident, a young girl who had been visiting her grandmother was separated from her parents and had to stand near the border fence several years later so her mother could see her in her wedding dress.

Finally, in 2005, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and under pressure from residents and international attention, the Ukrainian and Slovakian governments allowed a pedestrian-only crossing to be cut through the fence.

And then came, perhaps, the strangest twist of all.

Since Slovakia is a member of the

European Union, its citizens can travel into Ukraine — which is eager to get closer to Europe — simply by presenting a passport. But citizens of Ukraine must still get a visa, which takes weeks and is, at \$38, beyond the means of many.

At the same time, prices for most consumer goods are considerably cheaper in inflation-choked Ukraine. So shoppers from Velke Slemence and other nearby Slovakian towns poured through the new border gate in search of bargains, transforming the little town into something of an outlet center, while Ukrainians faced much greater hurdles to get into Slovakia.

The result is that shops in Slovakia, where the national economy is consid-

erably more robust, have withered, and almost the entire commercial life of the area has shifted to the crumbling Ukrainian side.

“Today, there are only three shops in all of Velke Slemence,” said the village’s mayor, Ludovit Toth. “In Mali Selmentsi, there are 30!”

In the first years after the gate opened, more than 1,000 people a day passed through, some to visit long-lost

relatives but most to shop. The number of stores rose to more than 70.

Cigarettes were the main commodity, selling for a small fraction of what they cost in Slovakia. But then, in 2008, after Slovakia changed its regulations to limit visitors to two packs per week, the number of shoppers fell sharply.

Ibolya Palfi Szurte, the clerk in a crowded boutique near the border gate on the Ukrainian side, said business had fallen since the cigarette rules changed, and many shops had to close. But there were still enough bargains to power the village.

“In summer, we get people coming from as far away as the Czech Republic,” she said. “Look at this bottle of Versace perfume. We sell it for 5 euros and 50 cents. People can take it to Slovakia and sell it there for 30 euros, easily. In mall stores it sells for much, much more!”

She is surrounded by luxury brand names on tank tops and running shorts. “For Slovakian shoppers, it is all about the brand name,” she said.

Outside, groups of shoppers carrying plastic bags and licking ice cream cones moved up and down the narrow road.

“Things have gotten better since the gate opened, no question,” she said. “The economy is better. People can fix up their homes. And the road, it has gotten so much better.”

The mayor of Mali Selmentsi, Jozef Hilar, said that while some families with homes near the border had seen a small windfall, he measured the spread of prosperity in a different way.

“Before the crossing opened, there were 100 cows in the village,” he said. “Now, there are 30. From this we can see that people no longer feel they must keep animals to survive.”

Judging the opening of the border in terms of profit is the wrong way to look at it, said Tibor Bodnar, the former mayor of the nearby Slovakian town of Velke Kapusany.

“It is really more a matter of setting right a historical wrong committed long ago,” he said.

Josef Ivan, 74, a retired bus driver whose pension is just \$58 a month, stood in the middle of the road on the Ukrainian side about 200 yards from the border gate, at about the point where the shops peter out and crumbling homes stretch toward the drab eastern horizon.

“The day the gate opened, people were crying when they met,” he said.

Visits with relatives were possible

during the Soviet years, he said. But they were limited to once a year, required a letter of invitation, weeks of wrestling with the bureaucracy and a 100-mile round-trip through the nearest border crossing.

He still has a cousin living on the Slovakian side. “For a long time we were not acquainted and, truth is, we rarely visit anymore,” he said.

Too many years had passed. Family ties stretched then snapped. And many who remember those years are elderly, or already gone.

When the Soviets built the wall, Priska Tomoriova was with relatives on the Slovakian side, and was separated from her mother. In the following 44 years, until her mother died, they visited each other only four times.

“But what could we do?” asked Ms. Tomoriova, 81, seated beside her 85-year-old husband in their small, perfectly square living room, plaster reliefs of Jesus and Mary gazing down at them. “We couldn’t do anything about it.”

She thought back to some of the ways people coped with the situation.

“Our best trick was hiding notes under the wings of a chicken and sending it across the border,” she said. “The Russians never discovered that one.”

Now, she said, her husband has difficulty walking. So even though the border is open, they rarely cross. She goes once a year to buy candles and flowers to decorate the family graves for All Saints’ Day.

“It all happened a long time ago,” she said. “But this is history and what can you do about history? It is what it was.”

History goes on ...

Alex Popovych  
Pictures from Zakarpattya (2012 to 2014)





