

June 8, 1968

**Report on and Translation of the Appeal of Action
Committee for a Democratic and Socialist
Czechoslovakia**

Citation:

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Summary:

P. Shelest provides a translation of a subversive document from Czechoslovakia.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE In the population centers of the Czech lands and Slovakia, an appeal to the population signed by the "Action Committee for a democratic and socialist Czechoslovakia, the borders of which were established 50 years ago" has been posted on the sides of houses and other buildings. The appeal raises the question of revising the existing border between Czechoslovakia and the USSR. We succeeded in obtaining a photograph of the appeal that has been circulated. We are sending you a copy of the photograph of the appeal. In this same report, we are sending you a translation of the appeal from Czech to Russian. 252 P. SHELEST 8 June 1968 No. 1/50

Prague, 14.V.1968 Esteemed friends! In connection with the 50th anniversary of the Czechoslovak Republic and the process of renewal that is currently under way in our state, our duty—and the duty of every honorable citizen of this state—is to tell the historical truth to our peoples and to struggle for the freedom and independence of our state. Thousands of the best people from our nations have given their lives for the creation and freedom of our state. The great thinkers and humanists T. G. Masaryk, M. P. Štefánik, and E. Beneš fought their whole lives for the freedom and vigor of our state. Our greatest duty is to explain to you, the members of our intelligentsia, and through you to our whole society, the historical truth about the difficulty with which our freedom was achieved in the First and Second World Wars and about the ease with which we lost it, thanks to certain individuals. The blame for this lay with some of our own countrymen, but most of all the blame lay with Stalin's cult of personality and his policies. Even though we fought against fascism on all fronts during the First and Second World Wars and proved victorious, we nonetheless were confronted by a problem affecting a beautiful part of our country, Subcarpathian Ruthenia. This part of our land had never, in our whole history, belonged to Russia. 253 Its people had unanimously and voluntarily chosen 50 years ago to enter the unified family of Czechs and Slovaks, forming the republic of Czechoslovakia. In 1945 the people of Subcarpathia, having been reduced during the war to starvation, were deceived and betrayed by Stalin's policy. 254 Immediately after the occupation of the Czechoslovak Republic, thousands of the best sons of Subcarpathia fled in 1939-1940 across the border so that they could take up arms to help drive out the fascists and completely liberate our republic from occupation. 255 Despite the countless tragic victims who were deported to Siberian prison camps (only because the people came as they would to their friends in order to liberate our homeland), those who remained alive joined the First Czechoslovak Corps in Buzuluk and voluntarily went to die on the front to liberate their homeland. That is how strong and irrepressible the desire of these people was to defeat fascism and liberate our country. When the First Czechoslovak Corps was being organized in Buzuluk, 95 percent of the residents of Subcarpathian Ruthenia joined it. The First Czechoslovak Brigade included more than 85 percent of them, and they took part in every battle all the way to Prague. 256 In 1944, during the most arduous battles to cross Dukla Pass, two officers (lieutenants) from the First Czechoslovak Army, Turjanica and Vas, 257 deserted and came as agents to Subcarpathian Ruthenia without the consent or knowledge of the Czechoslovak command. 258 With the help of collaborators and Hungarian stooges, they engaged in illegal agitation among the people for the unification of Subcarpathian Ruthenia with Soviet Russia, not stopping at anything. Immediately after the liberation of Subcarpathia, military commissariats were set up in all its regions. 259 They conducted a mobilization and call-up of people and equipment for the First Czechoslovak Army, which at that time was fighting on the territory of Slovakia. All the young men living on the territory of Subcarpathia who were suitable for military service joined the First Czechoslovak Army and went to the front voluntarily. They were placed in barracks from which they were supposed to be sent to Slovakia to serve in the First Czechoslovak Army. But despite this, after they were placed in barracks where Soviet units also were deployed, the abovementioned soldiers were secretly transported in vehicles at night and taken from there not to the First Czechoslovak Army in Slovakia, but to Soviet units in Poland; and from there they were sent still further, to the Far East against Japan. They did not return from there until 1948 or later, by which time Subcarpathia had been severed from the Czechoslovak Republic. 260 Along the way, many of them who understood that they had been betrayed jumped off the freight trains and did their best to return, after

walking many days, to the First Czechoslovak Army in Slovakia. That is what actually happened. With the help of collaborators, the agents of Turjanica and Vas exerted crude political pressure on the women and elderly men who remained at home. Lists were compiled, and the agents traveled from house to house and forced people to sign a call for the unification of our territory with Soviet Russia. "If you sign this for Soviet Russia, you will receive flour and bread, but if you sign for the Czechoslovak Republic, you and your whole family will be sent to Siberia." Old people who did not know how to write signed with X's, but they wept and lamented that they were being forced to sign for Russia at the same time that their sons and husbands were fighting in our Czechoslovak Army for our Czechoslovak Republic, which they never stopped dreaming about during these many years. In large cities such as Uzhhorod, so-called "elections" were held, but the results were predetermined by the fact that agitators visited the electoral officials and sternly warned them that any votes against unification with Soviet Russia would mean that their entire families would be deported to Siberia. 261 Official papers with the inscription "Election Results" were sent to Moscow as a "Manifesto of the Will of the People" in Subcarpathia. We all now know very well what sort of "popular will" this was from the experience of the next 20 years. In accordance with Stalin's plan, territory had to be carved off from the Czechoslovak Republic, including Košice and the Lower Tatras in the Poprad region. 262 Doctor Beneš and the Slovak National Council protested against these actions in regard to the Czechoslovak Republic and also demanded that Košice, Chop, Uzhhorod, Mukachevo, and Berehovo be left in Czechoslovakia. Stalin had to retreat somewhat from his plan and to leave Poprad, but the cities of Chop, Uzhhorod, Mukachevo, and Berehovo and the whole eastern part of Subcarpathia were still included in the territory taken from the Czechoslovak Republic. These facts clearly show that what happened was not the wish of the Czechoslovak people. Instead, it resulted from the illegal diktat of Stalin and a policy that contradicted international law and all the treaties pertaining to the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic concluded 50 years ago, which precisely indicate that the Czechoslovak Republic consists of the territory of Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, and Subcarpathian Ruthenia. 263 The people of Subcarpathia were never Ukrainian (or greater Ukrainian) at any point in their history. 264 They have their own written tradition, language, and history. Olbracht and others have brilliantly shown the national features and rich culture of Subcarpathia, whose people even after 23 years of having been shorn from the Czechoslovak Republic are still speaking and writing in their own language. 265 It has long been known that in educational institutions in the non-Russian republics, instruction is carried out in Russian, irrespective of nationality. In Subcarpathia to this day they are still living and working in accordance with our time zone, even though during those 23 years Moscow time was officially introduced there. 266 Our traditions are also being preserved with regard to all the holidays. The Czechoslovak Republic lost part of its territory that is very well endowed with minerals and raw materials, which we now have to purchase for hard currency. The area could be a wonderful, simply miraculous hub of tourism for all of Europe. It is worth also speaking about the presence there of a large number of diligent, hard-working people who must now go looking for seasonal work all around Russia. Thousands of sons of Subcarpathia, Slovakia, Moravia, and Bohemia gave their lives on all fronts of the First and Second World Wars for the freedom and independence of our country and for its territorial integrity and unity. Those who remain alive must uphold the legacy of their dead countrymen. We are a heroic and unsubduable country. The time has come for the next generation to learn the historical truth about the struggle by our nations to achieve what thousands of the fallen were unable to accomplish. If we do not do this, the new generation will never learn the truth. Now, in connection with the 50th anniversary of the Czechoslovak Republic and the restoration of legality in the state and the establishment of a federation, each of us must make every effort to create a federation that includes the territory of Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, and Subcarpathian Ruthenia. The example of Yugoslavia attests that this is possible in our circumstances, in the framework of a single state. Action Committee for a democratic and socialist Czechoslovakia, the borders and territory of which were established 50 years ago 196 signatories Esteemed friends, You know from your own experience that for now it is still impossible to publish these signatures. Recent events have shown that the majority of our leaders are inclined only to replace

certain officials, not to replace the whole system of control of the political, administrative, and economic affairs of our country. Our best opportunity is now at hand, after 20 years of lost time, to establish a genuinely democratic socialist order, the very thing for which our writers, artists, and scholars have been struggling over these past 20 years by pointing out the correct path to our nations. Only our intelligentsia, who managed to survive during this period, can show our nations the proper path of our statehood and true history, the path for our democracy and socialism, and the path to renewed pride for our people, who have been so heroic in the past.²⁵² TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The translation here is directly from the Czech text rather than the Russian version, which is incomplete and idiosyncratic.²⁵³ TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This statement is accurate. The Subcarpathian Ruthenian region had never been part of the Tsarist Russian empire.²⁵⁴ TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The area known as Subcarpathian Ruthenia (Podkarpats'ka Rus'), a poor, mountainous region adjoined by western Ukraine, eastern Slovakia, northeastern Hungary, and southeastern Poland, was under Hungarian rule from the 11th to the early 20th centuries. During that time, the population consisted predominantly of Ruthenians (Rusyny), a small East Slavic group whose national identity was tenuous (indeed almost non-existent) until well into the 19th century. In 1918-1919 the Ruthenians, like the Slovaks, willingly joined the new Czechoslovak Republic so that they could be free of Hungarian domination. Over the next twenty years, Subcarpathian Ruthenia became a separate, partly autonomous province of Czechoslovakia. In October 1938, when German troops were directed to begin occupying Bohemia and Moravia, Subcarpathian Ruthenia was granted full self-governing status. Under the pro-Ukrainian leadership of Avhustyn Voloshyn (who displaced the initial leader, Andrii Brodii), the region changed its name to Carpatho-Ukraine. In early 1939, the Axis powers shifted course and approved Hungary's bid to re-annex Carpatho-Ukraine. In desperation, the Carpatho-Ukrainian government proclaimed "independence" on 15 March 1939, just hours before the region was occupied by Hungarian troops, who remained there for the next five-and-a-half years. In October 1944, Soviet units from the 4th Ukrainian Front drove the Hungarians out of Subcarpathian Ruthenia and set up a 20-member Czechoslovak delegation at Khust to create a new government for the region. (In the meantime the USSR's 2nd Ukrainian Front, which included the First Czechoslovak Corps headed by General Ludvík Svoboda, moved into eastern Slovakia via the Dukla Pass, where they encountered heavy fighting.) The Khust delegation, despite its mandate, was increasingly outflanked by the Subcarpathian Communist Party, which relied on the backing of the Red Army to subvert and take over local national councils. On 19 November 1944, the Subcarpathian Communists met at Mukachevo and issued a "demand for Transcarpathian Ukraine to be reunited with Soviet Ukraine." A week later, the Communists established a 17-member National Council at Mukachevo, which "unanimously" reaffirmed the call for "reunification" with Ukraine. From that point on, the Communist-dominated Council held all power in Subcarpathian Ruthenia (which the Council invariably referred to as "Transcarpathian Ukraine") and laid the groundwork for a merger with Soviet Ukraine. The process reached its culmination on 29 June 1945, when the newly restored Czechoslovak government agreed under pressure to sign a treaty ceding the region to Ukraine. This treaty reversed a large number of earlier public and private statements by Soviet officials and exiled Czechoslovak leaders, who had pledged that Subcarpathian Ruthenia would be an integral part of postwar Czechoslovakia. In March 1946 the region was formally renamed Transcarpathian Oblast, and the Ukrainization campaign accelerated. For a superb overview of the history of Subcarpathian Ruthenia, as well as extensive notes and a comprehensive bibliography (through the mid-1970s), see Paul Robert Magocsi, *The Shaping of a National Identity: Subcarpathian Rus', 1848-1948* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).²⁵⁵ TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: More than 20,000 inhabitants of Subcarpathian Ruthenia fled to eastern Galicia in 1939-1940 after Hungarian troops moved into Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Almost all of the refugees were arrested by Soviet troops on charges of having illegally entered Soviet territory. (Eastern Galicia, like the rest of eastern Poland, was occupied by Soviet troops in September 1939.) They were brought before military tribunals, where they were convicted of espionage and sentenced to lengthy terms in hard labor camps. Roughly three-fifths of them died in the camps. The rest might

have perished as well had it not been for the intervention of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile, which pleaded with the Soviet authorities to release the imprisoned Ruthenians, if only to provide manpower for the First Czechoslovak Corps that General Ludvík Svoboda began organizing in July 1941. Not until early 1943, however, were some 2,700 prisoners finally freed and permitted to join Svoboda's units. The delay evidently arose because Soviet officials wanted to ensure that those who were released would not be inclined to turn against the USSR. See Illya Voloshchuk, "Politychni vidnosyny u chekhoslovats'komu viis'ku v SPSR," in *Shlyakh do voli: Zbirnyk spohadiv i dokumentiv pro natsional'no-vyzvol'nu borot'bu ukraiins'koho naselennya Chekhoslovachchyny proty fashyzmu v 1939-1945 rr.* (Bratislava-Prešov: SPVVUL, 1966), Vol. 2, pp. 214-215.256 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The percentages here are exaggerated, but it is true that a large majority of Subcarpathian Ruthenian males joined the First Czechoslovak Army, and that after Ruthenian prisoners were freed from Siberian labor camps in 1943, Ruthenians accounted for a highly disproportionate share (two-thirds) of the troops under Svoboda's command. Of the 3,348 soldiers in the Corps by late 1943, 2,210 were Ruthenians. Czech soldiers numbered only 563, and Slovaks only 543, with other nationalities accounting for the remaining 231. See Ivan Vanat, "Zakarpats'kyi ukrainci v chekhoslovats'komu viis'ku v SRSR," in *Shlyakh do voli*, Vol. 2, pp. 183-201.257 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Ivan Turjanica and Ivan Vas were long-time members of the Subcarpathian Communist Party, which had gained a sizable following among Ruthenians during the pre-war period. Turjanica played an especially important role in determining the fate of the Subcarpathian region. He had been a member of the Subcarpathian Communist Party since 1925, and in 1932 became editor of the party newspaper, *Karpats'kii Proletar*. He escaped to the Soviet Union after Hungarian units occupied Carpatho-Ukraine, and he then joined Svoboda's First Czechoslovak Corps. At the same time, Turjanica was given the rank of a political officer in the Red Army. In late October 1944 he was appointed a member of the delegation set up by Soviet troops to form a governing body for Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Shortly after the delegation arrived, Turjanica publicly declared that Subcarpathian Ruthenia would be restored as an autonomous province of Czechoslovakia. But by mid-November 1944, he had reversed his position in line with the goals promoted by Moscow. At the conference of the Subcarpathian Communist Party at Mukachevo, he argued that it was time to fulfill the "age-old desire" of the Ruthenians to be "reunited" (*vozz'ednannya*) with Soviet Ukraine. When the Mukachevo Council was established a week later, Turjanica was appointed chairman and Vas was placed in charge of internal security. From that vantage point, they were able to eliminate any further obstacles to the transfer of Subcarpathian Ruthenia to Ukraine. Subsequently, from 1946 to 1948, Turjanica served as General Secretary of the renamed Transcarpathian Oblast Communist Party. For more on Turjanica's exploits, see František Nemeč and Vladimír Moudry, *The Soviet Seizure of Subcarpathian Ruthenia* (Toronto: William B. Anderson, 1955); Vasyl Markus, *L'incorporation de l'Ukraine subcarpathique a l'Ukraine sovietique, 1944-1945* (Louvain: Centre Ukrainien d'Etudes en Belgique, 1956); and Borys Spivak, *Narysy istorii revolyuciinoi borot'by trudyashchykh Zakarpattya v 1930-1945 rokakh* (Uzhhorod: Vydavnyctvo L'vivs'koho universytetu, 1963). Nemeč was the head of the Czechoslovak delegation that was established at Khust in October 1944. Markus was an ethnic Ukrainian who took part in the Mukachevo Council, but who went along with the resolutions only under heavy pressure.258 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The account here is partly correct, but also partly garbled. By this point (late 1944), Turjanica and Vas had already left the First Czechoslovak Corps. Turjanica, as noted above, had been appointed in October 1944 as a member and political adviser of the Czechoslovak delegation at Khust. It was from there that Turjanica went off on his mission with Vas in early November 1944, having explained to the head of the delegation, František Nemeč, that he was going to visit his mother in Mukachevo. See the first-hand account and documentation in Nemeč and Moudry, *The Soviet Seizure of Subcarpathian Ruthenia*, pp. 108-109, 232-233.259 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The Czechoslovak delegation at Khust included two generals who were supposed to oversee the drafting of young men from Subcarpathian Ruthenia for Svoboda's units, which were still encountering fierce resistance near Dukla Pass.260 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This account is broadly accurate. See Nemeč and Moudry, *The Soviet Seizure of Subcarpathian Ruthenia*, pp.

136 and 142-143, as well as document no. 57 in the invaluable documentary appendix of the Nemeč/Moudry book.²⁶¹ TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: This account, too, is broadly accurate. Another point worth mentioning here is that shortly after Turjanica arrived in Mukachevo, he founded a newspaper, *Zakarpats'ka Pravda*, which vehemently promoted the cause of "reunification" with Soviet Ukraine, implying that anyone who opposed the idea must be a "Hungarian traitor and spy."²⁶² TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: These are portions of eastern Slovakia, where the inhabitants included a substantial number of Ruthenians.²⁶³ TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The post-armistice "treaties pertaining to the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic" include the Treaty of Versailles (signed on 7 May 1919), the Treaty of Saint-Germain (signed on 10 September 1919), and the Treaty of Trianon (signed on 4 June 1920). Other crucial documents preceding these treaties were the Cleveland Agreement (signed on 25 October 1915), the Pittsburgh Agreement (signed on 30 May 1918), the Declaration of Independence (adopted by the Czechoslovak National Council on 28 October 1918), and the Declaration of Turčiansky Svätý Martin (issued on 30 October 1918).²⁶⁴ TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: To a large extent this is accurate, but in 1944-1945 Soviet Ukrainian officials argued that Subcarpathia Ruthenia had briefly been part of Kyivan Rus' in the 13th century, and that Ukraine was therefore reclaiming one of its territories rather than seizing new land. ²⁶⁵ TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The reference here is to Ivan Olbracht (1882-1952), a well-known Czech writer in interwar Czechoslovakia, who wrote frequently about Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Of particular note is his collection of essays *Hory a staletí* (Prague: Melantrich, 1935), which deals with the economic hardships in Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Two years later he published a short-story triptych *Golet v údolení* (Prague: Melantrich, 1937), which depicts Hassidic Jewish life in Subcarpathian Ruthenia, a subject that comes through particularly vividly in the story "O smutných očích Hany Karadžicové." Olbracht's writings were republished in 1972 along with two of his novels (also written in the 1930s) by the same publisher in a volume entitled *Zakarpatská trilogie*.²⁶⁶ TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Moscow time (which during the Soviet era was also used in Ukraine) was introduced in Subcarpathian Ruthenia on 5 November 1944. Until then, the area had been on East-Central European time, two hours behind Moscow time.