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KÁRPÁTALJA: EUROPE'S NEXT CRIMEA?

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**"Hungarians and Rumanians, Germans and Poles,
Know the history of territory stolen."**

--Brigade M¹ *Europese Eenheid* ("European Unity")

Crimea's secession and subsequent annexation begs many questions. An overlooked but important one is: Will the next "Crimea" occur inside NATO and the European Union? If so, an interesting candidate is *Kárpátalja*, a region in which some 162,000 ethnic Hungarians² live along Ukraine's western frontier with Poland, Slovakia, Romania, and Hungary.

KINSMEN IN THE NEAR-ABROAD

On 18 March, Vladimir Putin affirmed that Russians:

"...expected Ukraine to remain our good neighbor. We hoped that Russian citizens and Russian speakers in Ukraine, especially its southeast and Crimea, would live in a friendly, democratic and civilized state that would protect their rights in line with the norms of international law. However, this is not how the situation developed. Time and time again, attempts were made to deprive Russians of their historical memory, even of their language and to subject them to forced assimilation."³

The Soviet Union's dissolution transformed 25 million ethnic Russians living outside the Russian Federation into the new Russian diaspora⁴ and posed a challenge to new states throughout Russia's near-abroad.⁵ Emerging in its

¹ Brigade M is a Dutch neo-fascist punk band whose discography includes the album *Dutch-Hungarian Brotherhood* recorded with the Hungarian RAC ("Rock Against Communism") band Fehér Törvény. The latter has been described admiringly as "Hungarian patriot nationalist skinhead". The album's feature song is "Maak kapot wat jou kapot maakt" ("Destroy what destroys you").

² Transcarpathian Hungarians account for 92% of ethnic Hungarians living in Ukraine. Mihály Tóth (2012). "Hungarian National Minority of Ukraine: Legal and Practical Aspects of Realisation of Minority Rights." *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae Legal Studies*. 1:1, p. 143.

³ http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-putin-says-russia-will-protect-the-rights-of-russians-abroad/2014/03/18/432a1e60-ae99-11e3-a49e-76adc9210f19_story.html Last accessed 30 March 2014.

⁴ Pål Kolstø (1995). "The New Russian Diaspora: Minority Protection in the Soviet Successor States." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 30:2, p. 82.

⁵ Steven Shulman (2007). "Competing versus complementary identities: Ukrainian-Russian relations and the loyalties of Russians in Ukraine."

aftermath, Russian nationalists like *Nash*⁶ (“Ours”) claimed the land “our people” live on should be “ours.” Other voices including *Den* (“The Day”) went so far as to advocate Russian military intervention to “defend” Russian speakers.

Conflicts between national loyalties on the one hand, and mutually exclusive identities on the other, are not new. Amidst the 18th century emergence of *Malorossiya* or “Little Russia” identity, some argued multiple loyalties and identities had to be replaced by mutually-exclusive ones: “[O]ne could not be a Russian from Little Russia...one had to be either a Russian or a Ukrainian.”⁷ As the sociologist Max Weber saw it, a “community of memories” often has “deeper impact than the ties of merely cultural, linguistic or ethnic community” and is “the ultimately decisive element of ‘national consciousness’.”⁸

In Hungary, a *community of memories*⁹ has thrived for decades. It “lost” more than three-fifths of its population and two-thirds of its territory under the Treaty of Trianon signed with the Entente in 1920. Efforts to revise Trianon—and with it, the map of Europe—“became the alpha and omega of interwar Hungarian politics.”¹⁰ Campaigns against Trianon opened a Pandora's box in the late 1930s and early 1940s, however, when “public opinion induced the government to take diplomatic and military steps which it would have preferred to avoid.”¹¹ The rest, as they say, is history.

Ethnic conflicts in the form of secessionist or irredentist struggles tend to internationalize when fomented by restorationist¹² states, of which Russia and Hungary are paradigmatic examples. Ethnic communities that self-identify with multiple cultures—for example, Russian Ukrainians who do so with both Russian and Ukrainian culture, or Transcarpathian Hungarians with Hungarian and Ukrainian culture—sometimes avoid assimilation-versus-emigration or self-isolation dilemmas.¹³ Against this, however, Russia and Hungary¹⁴ exert a powerful nationalist counterforce in their respective near-abroad. Their political intent is to weaken the identification of ethnic Russians and Hungarians with (and presumably, their loyalty to) Ukraine. They exploit two instruments: first, the *ethnic pull* to self-identify with Russians in Russia, or Hungarians in Hungary; and second, the *national pull* to identify with the Russian or the Hungarian state as one's own political community. The perception of this identity-and-loyalty tradeoff by Ukrainian nationalists (not unreasonable, it might be argued, given recent events) is that the national pull from Russia and Hungary attenuates Ukrainian national pull, leading ineluctably to a cycle of secession and annexation à la Crimea.¹⁵ Thus the argument goes, the more a Russian Ukrainian in the Luhansk oblast comes to self-identify with Russians in Russia,¹⁶ or a Transcarpathian Hungarian in Beregszász does so with

Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity. 26:4, p. 615.

⁶ Boris Yeltsin was not above exploiting it at the time as a nationalist rallying cry, as in *Kurily nashi!* (“The Kurils are ours!”).

⁷ Robert Paul Magocsi (1989). “The Ukrainian National Revival: A New Analytical Framework.” *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*. 16:1-2, p. 51. Such chauvinism is not uniquely Russian by any means: the unnamed writer of a 1993 article in the Lviv nationalist newspaper *Za vilnu Ukrainu* (“For a Free Ukraine”) asserted many Ukrainians were “infected” with a Russian mentality by means of living in a “foreign-national” (*chuzhonatsionalne*) environment, and so identified themselves with Russia and Russians instead of Ukraine and Ukrainians. “Navishcho potribna derusifikatsiia Ukrainy.” *Za vilnu Ukrainu*. 65: 1993.

⁸ Max Weber (1978). *Economy and Society*. Edited by Guether Roth & Claus Wittich. Berkeley: University of California Press.

⁹ Or more pejoratively, “collective memory of motherland mutilation.” Eric Beckett Weaver (2006). *National Narcissism: The intersection of the nationalist cult and gender in Hungary*. Oxford: Peter Lang, p. 80.

¹⁰ Robert Nemes (2010). *The American Historical Review*. 115:2, pp. 637-638. This theme appears repeatedly in Hungarian discussions of Trianon: “The existence of Hungarian minorities is a result of the 1920 Trianon Treaty and the ‘mutilation’ of the nation’.” Gábor Egy (2010). “Why Identity Matters. Hungary’s New Law on Citizenship and the Reorganization of an Organic Nation.” <http://eudo-citizenship.eu/commentaries/citizenship-forum/citizenship-forum-cat/322-dual-citizenship-for-transborder-minorities-how-to-respond-to-the-hungarian-slovak-fit-for-tat?showall=&start=7> Last accessed 3 April 2014. The “artificial borderline created by the Peace Treaty of Trianon... was the most painful for the mutilated mother country.” P. 2. István Balcsók, László Dancs & Gábor Koncz (2002). “The Development of Hungarian-Romanian Cross- Border Connections After the Change of Regime.” <http://www.sre.wu-wien.ac.at/ersa/ersaconfs/ersa05/papers/301.pdf> Last accessed 4 April 2014. Hungary was a “revered body... torn asunder and ravaged by barbarians.” Eva Huseby-Darvas, “‘Feminism, the Murderer of Mothers’: Neo-Natalist Reconstruction of Gender in Hungary.” Paper presented at the 1991 annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Chicago, pp. 3-4.

¹¹ Miklós Zeidler (2007). *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary 1920-1945*. Translated by Thomas J. DeKornfeld, & Helen DeKornfeld. (CHSP Hungarian Studies Series, number 15.). Wayne, N.J.: Center for Hungarian Studies and Publications, p. 122.

¹² The term is from Veljko Vujčić (1996). “Historical legacies, nationalist mobilization, and political outcomes in Russia and Serbia: A Weberian view.” *Theory and Society*. 26:6, p. 764.

¹³ This observation is based on an argument in Iu G. Morozov (1994). “Russkie Ukraintsi—nositeli dvukh iazykovykh kul'tur—Russkoi i Ukrainskoi.” *Vidrodzhennia*. 1, p. 7.

¹⁴ Or for that matter, any nation: the rule generalizes easily.

¹⁵ The author credits the discussion of this subject by Shulman (2007), pp. 624-625.

¹⁶ A good illustration is “Ethnic Russians in Ukraine's Luhansk also want closer ties with Moscow.” *Kyiv Post* [online edition]. 17 March 2014. <https://www.kyivpost.com/content/ukraine/ethnic-russians-in-ukraines-luhansk-also-want-closer-ties-with-moscow-339683.html> Last accessed 2

Hungarians in Hungary, the more likely she is to see herself as a Russian in Ukraine or a Hungarian in Ukraine, attenuating loyalty to the Ukrainian state.

*DREAMS OF KÁRPÁTALJA*¹⁷

Noted historian Krisztián Ungváry claims Hungarians living in different countries judge questions of language in the same way and share historical memories.¹⁸ Transcarpathia's turbulent modern history begins with the territory's 1920 incorporation as *Subcarpathian Rus* into the newly established state of Czechoslovakia. Subcarpathian Rus achieved its long-promised regional autonomy in 1938 as *Carpatho-Ukraine* when Germany pressured Czechoslovakia to change to a federal system. Hungary promptly occupied predominantly ethnic Hungarian southwestern Carpatho-Ukraine, officially referring to it as *Subcarpathia* (Hungarian: *Kárpátalja*) or Northeastern Upper Hungary. When Carpatho-Ukraine declared independence in March 1939, Hungary occupied the balance of its territory until ousted by the Red Army in October 1944. For a period of about a year, *Transcarpathian Ukraine* functioned as a self-governing entity until it was formally relinquished by Czechoslovakia in June 1945 under pressure from the Soviet Union, which annexed it in January 1946 and declared it part of Soviet Ukraine.¹⁹

Today, Ukraine's *Transcarpathian Region* (Ukrainian transliteration: *Zakarpats'ka Oblast'*) is a multi-ethnic region on the western border with Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania. It is called variably Carpathian Rus (Ukrainian transl.: *Karpats'ka Rus'*), Transcarpathian Rus (Ukrainian transl.: *Zakarpats'ka Rus'*), and Subcarpathian Rus (Ukrainian transl.: *Pidkarpats'ka Rus'*). These variants reflect one's geographic perspective: for Hungarians (and Slovaks and Czechs), the region is below the Carpathian Mountains or *Sub-Carpathia*; for Ukrainians, it is on the other side of the Carpathians or *Trans-Carpathia*. The term *Rus* refers to Rusyns, an eastern Slav ethnic subgroup of Ruthenian speakers. While *Rusyns* sometimes refer to themselves and to their language as *Rusnak* or *Lemko*, the ethnonym *Ukrainian* was officially applied to all Transcarpathian Rusyns after the territory's 1946 annexation.²⁰

The 1989 Soviet census identified three-quarters of residents as East Slavs (Ukrainians and Rusyns), followed by ethnic Hungarians (12.5%) and smaller populations of ethnic Russians, Romanians, Roma, Slovaks, Germans, Jews, and Belarusians. Ethnic Hungarians reside in all 22 districts or *raion* although the 1989 census reported them in only 11 districts, mostly in the southwestern lowlands bordering Hungary and Slovakia. The largest concentration is in the Berehove Raion (Hungarian: *Beregszászi járás*), which accounts for some one-third of all Transcarpathian Hungarians. Other large concentrations are found in the Uzhhorod Raion (Hungarian: *Ungvári járás*), the Mukachivskiy Raion (Hungarian: *Munkácsi járás*), and the Vynohradiv Raion (Hungarian: *Nagyszőlősi Jaras*), all on Ukraine's western frontier with Hungary.

*A LANGUAGE WITH AN ARMY*²¹

Language is a potent animating force today across the European subcontinent. The distinguished linguist Einar Haugen observed:

April 2014.

¹⁷ "Imagining their lands as ours" is how Yoshioka characterizes renaming place names in another language. For example, in postwar Poland, the "de-Germanisation" and "re-Polonisation" of place names was used to give "proof for the Polishness of ex-German territories" [p. 274], a process that pressed "in-between ethnic groups of Polish-German borderland...to clarify their ambiguous national consciousness" [p. 286]. Yoshioka (2008). "Imagining Their Lands as Ours: Place Name Changes on Ex-German Territories in Poland after World War II." *Acta Slavica Iaponica*. 15, pp. 273-287. http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no15_ses/14_yoshioka.pdf Last accessed 4 April 2014.

¹⁸ Krisztián Ungváry (2010). "Trianon no comprehended." *Élet és Irodalom*. 44:49. English version at http://www.imre-kertes-z-kolleg.uni-jena.de/fileadmin/imre-kertes-z-kolleg/Portal/Laczo_Ferenc_Trianon_debate/Ungvary_Krisztian_Trianon_not_comprehended_Elet_es_Irodalom_10.12.2010.pdf Last accessed 1 April 2014.

¹⁹ The author relied in part on Károly Kocsis & Eszter Kocsis-Hodosi (1995). *Ethnic Geography of the Hungarian Minorities in the Carpathian Basin*. Toronto: Matthias Corvinus Publishing, pp. 7-10.

²⁰ On 7 March 2007, the Zakarpats'ka Oblast regional council or *rada* voted to recognize Rusyn nationality. The Ukraine government considers Rusyn a dialect of Ukrainian, and does not officially recognize *Rusyns* as a separate ethno-linguistic group nor tabulate them separately for census purposes. Source: <http://www.geocurrents.info/cultural-geography/linguistic-geography/rusyn-issue-zakarpattia-transcarpathia#ixzz2xSzr6vBI> Last accessed 30 March 2014.

²¹ Yiddish linguist Max Weinreich (1945) famously quipped that "a language is a dialect with an army and a navy" ("*a shprakh iz a dialekt mit an armey un flot*"). Quoted in "*Der yivo un di problemen fun undzer tsayt*" ("Yivo' and the problems of our time"). *Yivo-bleter*. 25:1, p. 13.

“Nation and language have become inextricably intertwined... In a society that is essentially familial or tribal or regional, [language] stimulates a loyalty beyond the primary group but discourages conflicting loyalty to other nations... Nationalism has tended to encourage external distinction... In language, this has meant the urge not only to have one language, but to have one’s own language. This automatically secludes the population from other populations, who might otherwise undermine its loyalty. Here, the urge for separatism has come into sharp conflict with the urge for international contact.”²²

Kárpátalja epitomizes Haugen’s observation about seclusion: Transcarpathian Hungarians are Ukraine’s “least integrated (assimilated) minority.”²³ Three-quarters live within 20km of the Hungarian frontier, concentrated (>92%) in 124 of the region’s 609 towns and villages. Nearly all (95.4%) “think that their mother tongue is the language of their nationality.”²⁴

Hungary’s *Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom* (“Movement for a Better Hungary”) is a far-right nationalist party. Jobbik leaders see Hungarian, in a manner of speaking, as “a language with an army.” Consider the following statement posted 4 February on the official Jobbik website:

“A Jobbik most különösen fontosnak tartja, hogy a leghatározottabb nemzeti érdekérvényesítésre szorítsa rá a Fideszt, mivel az ukrán válság könnyen teremthet olyan történelmi lehetőséget, amely megnyugtatóan és akár véglegesen is rendezheti a kárpátaljai magyarság helyzetét.”²⁵

Which reads in English:

“Jobbik attaches particular importance to unifying behind a robust assertion of Hungarian national interests given that the crisis in Ukraine has created an historic opportunity to resolve finally the situation of Transcarpathian Hungarians.” [author’s translation]

It proceeds to lambaste the *Fideszt*-led Hungarian government’s signing of the association agreement between the European Union and Ukraine, calling it “an overt act of treason.”

Jobbik’s political currency is not necessarily the grammatical corruption of *language*—about which, Orwell wrote, “The great enemy of clear language is insincerity...[w]hen there is a gap between one’s real and one’s declared aims...”²⁶ Rather, it is *Language*, as in Tucholsky’s aphorism, “Language is a weapon. Keep it honed.”²⁷ Say what one might, Jobbik-speak about *Kárpátalja* is sincere and most carefully honed. It does invite suspicion that underlying the Transcarpathia (and elsewhere) gravamen is thinly veiled *ethnos* identity-politics, not *demos* politics based on universal territorial citizenship.²⁸ And taking care to use diplomatic, Europhilic words, the governing *Fideszt* reveals its own “Jobbik-lite” sentiment:

“A stabil, demokratikus és egységes Ukrainában, valamint a kárpátaljai magyarság jogbiztonságában közvetlenül is érdekelt szomszédos országként fontosnak tartjuk, hogy az Európai Unió aktívan működjön közre az ország politikai és gazdasági válságának hosszú távú

²² Einar Haugen (1986). “Dialect, Language, Nation.” *American Anthropologist*. 68:4, pp. 922-935.

²³ Tóth (2012), p. 143.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-145.

²⁵ “Történelmi lehetőséget teremthet az ukrán válság” [“The crisis in Ukraine may create an historic opportunity.”]. 4 February 2014.

<http://www.jobbik.hu/hireink/tortenelmi-lehetoseget-teremthet-az-ukran-valsag> Last accessed 29 March 2014. This statements appeared under the byline, “Szavay István országgyűlési képviselő, a Jobbik Nemzetpolitikai Kabinet elnöke” (“Stephen Szavay MP, Chair of the Jobbik national policy committee”). *Fideszt* is Hungary’s governing political party, the full name of which is *Fideszt–Magyar Polgári Szövetség*, or “Fidesz–Hungarian Civic Alliance.”

²⁶ George Orwell (1946). “Politics and the English Language.” http://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/politics/english/e_polit Last accessed 1 April 2014.

²⁷ Kurt Tucholsky was an important German journalist and author of the Weimar period. His words read in the original German, “*Sprache ist eine Waffe– haltet sie scharf.*” The translation is the author’s.

²⁸ The author’s use of *ethnos* and *demos* references John Nagle (1997). “Ethnos, Demos and Democratization: A Comparison of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland.” *Democratization*. 4:2, pp. 28-56. Nagle further distinguishes what he argues the West considers ‘bad ethnos-politics’ in which “not just ethnic nationalism but anti-Western ethnic nationalism seems to be the key variable.” Nagle, p. 53.

megoldásának előmozdítása érdekében.”²⁹

“What is important is a stable, democratic and unified Ukraine, and the legal status of Transcarpathian Hungarians. Hungary and the European Union have a direct interest in actively cooperating to promote a long-term solution to Ukraine’s political and economic crisis, given our shared border.” [author’s translation]

Speaking after a 27 March NATO meeting, Hungarian Defense Minister Csaba Hende said, “The life of the Hungarian community in Transcarpathia is the most important measuring device for Hungarian-Ukraine relations,” referring to the Ukrainian parliament’s repeal³⁰ (vetoed by Interim President Oleksandr Turchynov) of a 2012 language law allowing the use in courts and certain government functions of so-called “regional languages”—including Russian, Hungarian, Romanian and Tatar—in districts where such speakers constituted at least 10 percent of the population.³¹

Hende echoed comments by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban a day earlier calling the safety of ethnic Hungarians in the Transcarpathian region Hungary’s most important priority in connection with the Ukrainian crisis. Orban earlier met László Brenzovics, deputy president of the Hungarian Cultural Federation in Transcarpathia (Hungarian: *Kárpátaljai Magyar Kulturális Szövetség* or “KMKSZ”). Brenzovics is also deputy leader of the Transcarpathian local council, which earlier signed a “memorandum of national unity” promoted by the Donetsk oblast calling for decentralization of power in Ukraine. A few days earlier, Orban demanded a “flawless” minority policy in Ukraine, condemning as “not only mistaken, but illegitimate and unlawful”³² efforts to repeal the 2012 language law.

Jobbik has capitalized on events in Ukraine with alacrity. Jobbik MP Tamás Gaudi-Nagy organized a 29 March demonstration for Transcarpathian autonomy and separation from Ukraine, held in front of the Hungarian foreign ministry in Budapest. Demanding the “freedom of Transcarpathia, annexed illegally by Ukraine,” its goals according to Gaudi-Nagy were:

“[T]o support the sovereignty demands of our Hungarian and Rusyn brothers and sisters in Transcarpathia and also the other ethnic groups of Ukraine including the Polish, the Russian and the Romanian minorities. And secondly to urge the Hungarian government to stand up for minority rights in Ukraine. We condemn the government’s cowardly and submissive policy in these critical times.”³³

Jobbik found common cause with other European nationalists: on 2 February, Jobbik MPs Szávay István, chairman of its national policy cabinet, and Gyöngyösi Márton, chairman of its foreign policy cabinet, issued a joint statement with leaders of Poland’s *Partii Ruch Narodowy* (“National Democratic Party”) demanding “self-governance for the indigenous Polish and Hungarian people living in the Ukraine.”

²⁹ “A Külügyminisztérium az ukránjai válság békés megoldását sürgeti.[”Hungarian State Department urges a peaceful solution to the crisis in Ukraine”]. 19 February 2014. [<http://www.kormany.hu/hu/kulugyminiszterium/hirek/a-kulugyminiszterium-az-ukrajnai-valsag-bekes-megoldasat-surgeti>] Last accessed 1 April 2014.

³⁰ Ukraine Party of Regions first deputy Mykhailo Chechetov asserted, “In our country, 46 million understand two languages— Russian and Ukrainian. Not Bulgarian, not Hungarian, not Romanian, not Jewish— Yiddish or Hebrew or whatever you say. Only a handful of people understand those languages. We’re talking about two languages here that the whole nation understands.” See: Oles Oleksiyenko (2012). “The Only Regional Language.” *The Ukrainian Week*. 14:37, p. 4. <http://img.tyzhden.ua/Content/Digest/week/august/digest14/Book14.pdf> Last accessed 1 April 2014. The article’s subtitle is “Recent developments signal that the Kolesnichenko-Kivalov language law is aimed at the renewed Russification of all Ukrainians regardless of their ethnic backgrounds.

³¹ The 2012 law was controversial in part because 13 of 27 regional councils, located mostly in the eastern Ukraine, quickly adopted Russian as a second official language. The action to repeal the law was condemned by, among others, Konstantin Dolgov, Russian Foreign Ministry Representative for Human Rights, as an “attack on the Russian language in Ukraine” and a “brutal violation of ethnic minority rights.”

³² “Orbán: ‘Flawless’ minority policy a must for Ukraine.” 21 March 2014. <http://www.politics.hu/20140321/orban-flawless-minority-policy-a-must-for-ukraine/> Last accessed 2 April 2014.

³³ Gaudi-Nagy’s statement is posted on his website, <http://gaudinagyvtamas.hu> Last accessed 2 April 2014.

“TALPRA MAGYAR, HÍ A HAZA!”³⁴ AND TRIANON-NEUROSIS³⁵

Historian Jeremy Black writes that grievances

“[A]re a characteristic of post-Cold War history, as various ‘liberated’ peoples have adopted historical claims in the service of their political goals... The common theme in the search for an exemplary historical identity is that of past adversity: an existential threat rising to a peak in a crisis that demonstrates the mettle of national character and thus acts as a rallying point for the present and the future. This approach flattens the rest of the historical landscape or treats it with reference solely to the crisis.”³⁶

Jobbik grievance history is the complex problem for which the label *Trianon*—“A Hungarian Tragedy,”³⁷ “the dismemberment of Hungary”³⁸— serves as shorthand and provides in Black’s phrase, “a language of unity against outsiders.” Consider the words of Jobbik’s Gábor Vona:

“What happened in the Trianon Palace in Versailles after the First World War was that the enemies of Hungary dictated the fate of our country on the basis of lies, manipulated figures, and false reports.”³⁹

Claiming hostility toward Hungarian minorities “is all too common in Slovakia, Romania, Serbia or the Ukraine,” he continued:

“One thing is common in all of these countries: the will of the national government to assimilate forcefully the Hungarian ethnic minorities living there. It is just the means and the intensity that varies.”⁴⁰

Asked about reunifying territories in neighboring states populated by ethnic Hungarians, Vona replied:

“For this to occur, Hungary would first need leadership that serves the national interests. That is a *condicio sine qua non* for Hungary’s spiritual resurrection.”⁴¹

This and the common Jobbik refrain *we are of one blood*⁴² ring, rather chillingly, of *Volksgenosse*.⁴³

Many apply the overused *Sudetenland* trope to Crimea, but in manner too careless to be informative in any meaningful way. Memel, the German name for the Lithuanian Baltic port city of Klaipėda, is perhaps more illuminating.⁴⁴ Hitler said in his *Theaterplatz* address on 22 March 1939, one day after Lithuania relinquished the city it had annexed in 1923:

³⁴ From Sándor Petőfi’s famous poem, “Talpra magyar, hí a haza!” (Rise Hungarian, the Fatherland calls!).

³⁵ Éva Kovács coined the term “Trianon-neurosis” in her 2011 essay, “Causality is a stubborn thing,” published in the Hungarian left-liberal weekly *Élet és Irodalom*.

³⁶ Jeremy Black (2011). “The rise of grievance history.” *History Today*. 61:12. <http://www.historytoday.com/jeremy-black/rise-grievance-history> Last accessed 2 April 2014.

³⁷ A search for the term “Trianon” on the website of The American Hungarian Federation returns “The Treaty of Trianon: A Hungarian Tragedy - June 4, 1920.” http://www.americanhungarianfederation.org/news_trianon.htm Last accessed 2 April 2014.

³⁸ From the website hunsor.se, the self-described intent of which is to “increase the public knowledge about Hungarians and Hungarian minorities in the Carpathian Basin.” <http://www.hunsor.se/trianon/treatyoftrianon1920.htm> Last accessed 2 April 2014.

³⁹ The quotes reflect the author’s translation from the original German in which the interview was published. *Zur Zeit*. „Tragödie für Europa als Ganzes.“ Nr. 24/2010 (18.–24. Juni 2010). <http://zurzeit.at/index.php?id=1011> Last accessed 31 March 2014. *Zur Zeit* is an Austrian weekly associated with the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (“Freedom Party of Austria”), a right-wing populist political party once led by the late Jörg Haider.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² The literal translation is “of the blood” (*vérből*).

⁴³ “German kindred blood,” a commonly-used Nazi conceptualization. [author’s translation]

⁴⁴ The author credits Andrei Zubov (2014), who wrote, “И совсем иное говорил Адольф Гитлер 23 марта 1939 г. с балкона на Театральной площади только что присоединенного Мемеля.” [author’s translation: “It was quite another Adolf Hitler who spoke on 23 March 1939 from a balcony overlooking Memel’s Theater Square.”]

. See: <http://www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/news/23467291/andrei-zubov-eto-uzhe-bylo> Last accessed 2 April 2014.

“You had been left in the lurch at one time by a Germany that surrendered to disgrace and ignominy. Now, however, you have returned into a might new Germany that again knows the unshakable conceptions of honor, that does not want to and will not entrust its fate to strangers, but that is ready and determined to master its own fate and to give it form even if another world does not like it...Just as you were the sufferers from German impotence and disunion, so also were other Germans...Twenty years of suffering and misery should be a warning to us and a lesson for all future times....”⁴⁵

Consider, then, how history rhymed almost 75 years later to the day:

“Now, many years later, I heard residents of Crimea say that back in 1991 they were handed over like a sack of potatoes. This is hard to disagree with. And what about the Russian state? What about Russia? It humbly accepted the situation. This country was going through such hard times then that realistically it was incapable of protecting its interests. However, the people could not reconcile themselves to this outrageous historical injustice. All these years, citizens and many public figures came back to this issue, saying that Crimea is historically Russian land and Sevastopol is a Russian city.”⁴⁶

“CRIMEA MEANS A CHANCE FOR HUNGARIANS AS WELL”⁴⁷

Hungarians “should welcome Russia's gaining ground” against the West, according to Jobbik deputy leader Márton Gyöngyösi, and “look upon Russia as an example of enforcing one's own interests.” Hungary “should make alliances with all the countries that have ethnic minorities in Ukraine,” adding that in the current circumstances, “Russia could be our ally.”

Gyöngyösi continued, “Crimea gives a better chance for the Lower Carpathians to gain regional autonomy as well. This is what the Hungarian foreign ministry should be fighting for, but we are quite aware that they do not set such goals.” Budapest should “learn from Moscow, he continued, adding that when:

“[T]he forces that had overthrown Viktor Yanukovich with Western assistance came into power, they immediately began voicing chauvinistic, anti-Russian, anti-minority and anti-Hungarian opinions. No wonder Russia intervened in order to protect the Russian-speaking community.”⁴⁸

Mitchell Ornstein writes insightfully of Putin's ties with right-wing parties across Europe including notably, Jobbik.⁴⁹ Ornstein notes Vona's May 2013 trip to Moscow, which Jobbik characterized as “a major breakthrough as it became clear that Russian leaders consider Jobbik as a partner.”⁵⁰ Jobbik's report goes on to quote approvingly Vona's reference to “America as the deformed offspring of Europe, and the EU as the traitor of our continent.”

Commenting on the Hungarian parliament's recent approval of a plan to construct two new Russian-financed reactors at the country's only nuclear plant in Paks—which, if completed, would supply some 40 percent of Hungary's energy needs, Russian oil and gas accounting for nearly all of the remainder—Walter Russell Mead writes:

“There are notable parallels between the situation now arising in Hungary and the drama that unfolded in Ukraine. In both cases, Putin displayed his ability to use economic diplomacy to extend his sway across former Soviet republics. In both cases, Western diplomats failed to detect—or

⁴⁵ “Hitler's Speech at Memel.” The New York Times. 23 March 1939.

<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=F0081FFB3858127A93C6AB1788D85F4D8385F9> Last accessed 1 April 2014.

⁴⁶ Vladimir Putin (2014). “Address by the President of the Russian Federation” [in English]. 18 March 2014. <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889> Last accessed 1 April 2014.

⁴⁷ Attributed on the official Jobbik website to its deputy parliamentary leader Márton Gyöngyösi, who also is deputy chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Hungarian Parliament. http://www.jobbik.com/index_gyongyosi_crimea_means_chance_hungarians_well Last accessed 2 April 2014.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ornstein (2014). “Putin's Western Allies: Why Europe's Far Right Is on the Kremlin's Side.” *Foreign Affairs*.

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/news/3138720/posts> Last accessed 2 April 2014.

⁵⁰ http://www.jobbik.com/gabor_vona_had_lecture_lomonosov_university_russia Last accessed 2 April 2014.

appear to be failing to detect—the gathering storm...”⁵¹

While Mead writes, “There is nothing in the Hungarian case that should necessarily cause a crisis as bitter and as bloody as the one currently raging in Ukraine,” others note “[t]here is little doubt that Hungary does not have any interest served by nationalistically loaded, provocative policies. Still, the Fidesz government is pursuing precisely such policies.”⁵² Case in point, on 1 March in the western Ukraine border city of Uzhorod (for Hungarians, *Ungvár*), Hungarian Foreign Minister János Martonyi warned, “Transcarpathia’s troubled ethnic Hungarian minority has to face new dangers but Hungary will not leave any insult at them unanswered.”⁵³ [sic]

While Russia no doubt fuels atavistic visions in Hungary of reuniting “the Mutilated Motherland,”⁵⁴ and reclaiming *Kárpátalja* territories lost long ago, Russian interests end at sowing political chaos in Ukraine. For Hungarians to succumb to “historic moment” blandishments would be to play “a game of Russian roulette where the player is offered a revolver with all chambers loaded.”⁵⁵ At the same time, the position of ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine might well become more precarious if Hungary’s longstanding claims are newly reinterpreted by Ukrainians as a preparatory stage to secession.

Some Western leaders have suggested muscular responses to *Russia redivivus* including enhanced forward missile defenses.⁵⁶ Political exigencies notwithstanding, these fulminations betray a fundamental misapprehension of the nature of the regional contest now afoot. The *non sequitur* seems as obvious and it is inescapable: the illogic of ordnance to counter an asymmetric, intangible force—*Language*.

To paraphrase Andrei Zubov on Vladimir Putin, we always make prognoses based on the assumption that politicians, even if selfish and cruel, are intelligent and rational.⁵⁷ *Kárpátalja* may be ample cause for Western policymakers to take care to reconsider that assumption.

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⁵¹ Walter Russell Mead (2014). “Hungary, Ukraine & Putin’s Invisible Curtain.” *The American Interest* [online edition]. <http://www.the-american-interest.com/blog/2014/02/11/hungary-ukraine-putins-invisible-curtain/> Last accessed 2 April 2014.

⁵² Attila Ara-Kovács & Bálint Magyar (2014). “Can we learn from history?” *Hungarian spectrum* [online edition]. <http://hungarianspectrum.wordpress.com/2014/04/>

⁵³ “Hungary to react to all insults.” *The Budapest Times* [online edition]. 9 March 2014. <http://budapesttimes.hu/2014/03/09/hungary-to-react-to-all-insults/> Last accessed 4 April 2014.

⁵⁴ Richard S. Esbenshade (2004). *Hungary*. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, p. 10. See also fn(9).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ See for example, “GOP senators back Bush-era missile defense system to punish Putin.” *Washington Times*. 30 March 2014. http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/mar/30/gop-senators-back-restoration-of-bush-era-missile-/?utm_source=RSS_Feed&utm_medium=RSS Last accessed 1 April 2014. Similarly, former US ambassador to the UN (2007-2009) Zalmay Khalilzad wrote, “[T]he United States should...increase support to regional allies (including the restoration of American missile defense commitments and the movement of NATO forces into Eastern Europe), provide military assistance to the Ukrainian government, and arm forces willing to resist a Russian occupation of Eastern Ukraine.” In “Stand Up to Russia Now.” *New York Times*. 25 March 2014. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/26/opinion/stand-up-to-russia-now.html?hp&rref=opinion&r=0> Last accessed 1 April 2014.

⁵⁷ Zubov (2014) op cit.