The Media Image of the Multinational Transcarpathia: The Problems of the Search for Ethnic and Civil Identities

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Abstract: The article is concerned with the media image of Transcarpathia in the light of the formation of ethnic and civil identities of the auditory of Ukraine's westernmost region. The peculiarity of this region as a part of the national information space, lies within the fact that the local mass media satisfy the information needs not only in Ukrainian, but also in Hungarian, Romanian, Russian, Romani, German, Slovak, and other languages. At the same time while residing in the borderland area and speaking several languages, the Transcarpathian audience has free access to any media product of the four neighboring EU countries. The broad palette of national and non-national media is called to facilitate the formation of the Transcarpathians' affiliation not only to their ethnic group, but also to the civil (national) identity. To the author's mind, however, an intentional separatist image of the region is emerging due to the destructive materials, the spreading of information myths both in Ukrainian and foreign mass media. The resolution of these problems is seen by the author in the creation of a distinct media system and development of a national information strategy in Ukraine and in the multi-ethnic borderland areas among others.

Keywords: Multinational information field, ethnic media, intercultural communication, post-communist heritage.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of our research is to discover the main reasons and problems of the formation of ethnic and civil identities among the representatives of different nationalities residing in Transcarpathia, to reveal, in what way the media and information policy of the state can facilitate the resolution of this question through, among others, subjective, tolerant and balanced information about this region by analyzing the information-communication situation of one of the most multicultural regions of Ukraine.

Ukraine aspires to become part of the civilized democratic world, but the young state has a hard-communist legacy. In building the democratic system of Ukraine, the Soviet bureaucratic rudder, which manifests itself in the search for enemies of the state among representatives of other nationalities, interferes. The Soviet bureaucratic wheel, which manifests itself in the search for enemies of the state among representatives of other nationalities, interferes with the construction of the democratic system of Ukraine. This situation is largely due to the beginning of Russia's war against Ukraine (2014), the efforts of Putin and the Moscow Kremlin to create the Novorossiya (New Russia) project (Kuzio 2019). However, other nationalities are not to blame for Russia's aggression against Ukraine. On the other hand, the Ukrainian media often forget about their primary function – to

inform, but take on, the Soviet media principles – to accuse someone of weak state patriotism. This approach is very dangerous, especially in multicultural regions with many nationalities, such as Transcarpathia (Kravchenko and Davymuka 2019). Two more universal phenomena are that many people of Transcarpathia are of mixed national origin (Tuzhanska 2019) and belong to different religious denominations (Halemba 2015), but this does not prevent them from living in peace and harmony. Recently, the Ukrainian media in search of sensations artificially create the image of separatists from the inhabitants of Transcarpathia. The lack of objective knowledge of Transcarpathia, studies of the region, its geographical remoteness from the capital, misinformation, and many other factors have led to the emergence of many myths in the area. Moreover, both at the household, expert and public levels (Shandra 2017; Lehoczky 2018; Astapov *et al.* 2019; Frolova *et al.* 2020; Pavenkov *et al.* 2016).

Today, information influence on every citizen and society is increasing; it is often destructive and pathogenic, leading to uncontrolled processes, inter alia, at the level of ethnic and civic identification (Adamovych 2009; Andriyash 2013; Pidberezhnyk 2018). Technological advances in the media in recent decades, which have led to major transformations in the public consciousness, have forced scientists to actively explore these processes. Although sceptics predict the near disappearance of traditional media through the advent of the Internet and social networks, the former still play an important role in generating

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public awareness (Cole 2018). This process is especially relevant for older and middle-aged audiences in the post-Soviet states. Moreover, the population, whose worldview was formed under so-called socialist conditions, is accustomed to believing everything that is published in newspapers broadcast by electronic media, without a doubt, and it is doubtful that this stereotype can be overcome in the near future (Bidzilya 2014). "Some ideas, judgments, concepts that are propaganda information are manifested in appropriate journalistic forms. This information is perceived by the audience and, as a result, we achieve a certain spiritual effect in the form of changing or introducing appropriate views, thoughts, moods and psychological views, in other words, a willingness to act in accordance with the preached idea" (Vinokurov 2019; Barashkin and Samarin 2005; Komilova *et al.* 2020a; Komilova *et al.* 2020b; Trusova *et al.* 2019; Bohach 2018).

This results in a corresponding "behavioral" effect, that is, a change in the behavior of a particular person or group of people. Therefore, the journalist influences the situation of specific cases, influencing the consciousness and beliefs of the audience" (Zdoroveha 2008). In this context, according to Volodymyr Rizun, it seems that "the individual behavior of people is determined by the positions of certain social groups, mass consciousness and culture. A pluralistic media system only changes this definition, but does not rule it out. This system only replaces one mass with several (mass movements and different parties, groups, organizations based on it), divides society into different social groups, thus creating the illusion of complete individual freedom and individual choice of person. Although the very existence of many masses is a relatively democratic basis for society and human life. However, in this process there is a certain critical limit: the greater the social fragmentation, the closer the degradation of society as a whole organism" (Rizun 2008).

POLITICIANS, MEDIA AND INDIGENOUS ETHNIC GROUPS OF TRANSCARPATHIA

Transcarpathia is the extreme western region of the Ukrainian state, nationally it is a very diverse territory with more than 100 different nationalities. Politicians are rarely interested in the life of the region, interest is gained during election campaigns, or when it is necessary to use the region for political manipulation of ethnic politics and the supposed protection of the rights of national minorities. Despite the large number of

nationalities in Transcarpathia, Ukrainians (80.5%), Hungarians (12.1%), Romanians (2.6%), Gypsies (1.1%), Slovaks (0.5%), Swabians (Germans/Austrians, 0.3%) are indigenous ethnic groups, all but Ukrainians are part of our country due to the proximity of the borders of their home countries and geopolitical circumstances after the Second World War. All national minorities of Transcarpathia live compactly in a certain territory, usually at the border with their historical homeland (About number… 2001). Russians (2.5%), unlike other nationalities, make up the dispersed Diaspora in Transcarpathia and do not live compactly in the region. They found themselves in Transcarpathia in the Soviet era, either in the direction of party work, military service, or in search of better living conditions (Komilova *et al.* 2019a; Komilova *et al.* 2019b; Pavenkov *et al.* 2018a).

According to the definition of ethnology researchers, "a nation is a socio-cultural, economic, political and communicative unity of people that provides them with a civilized life in a global society". A nation creates a viable society and state that guarantees its security and vital interests. In today's world, it is the nation that serves the purpose (national idea) of social development as a whole. While it is important that certain changes in shaping the purpose of existence and progress of a nation can lead to (and eventually lead to an exacerbation of international relations, international conflicts, or even wars that have led to bloodshed (National Socialism). Civil and political community, it is enough a large union of people who has generally attained the status of political life and has the will to sovereign existence and development (Stepyko 2011; Bobrova *et al.* 2020; Konurbayeva *et al.* 2018; Novozhenov *et al.* 2020a; Novozhenov *et al.* 2020b; Pavenkov *et al.* 2018b; Trusova *et al.* 2017).

However, if the influence of the media on political and economic processes in society is often the subject of scientific research, then the role of communication and the media themselves in shaping citizens' ethnic identity and their influence on it remains at the periphery of journalistic research. But again, the media image of the regions, and therefore the media image of the whole country, is generally shaped by publicly disseminated information. This topic is also relevant because of three important aspects: the ethnic problem is becoming more dominant in today's media; the media's interest in this problem is caused by less interest in the culture of the peoples living nearby, and more by the emergence or delay of local ethnic conflicts; the increasing influence of mass media on

society in the context of globalization, on the one hand, and national revival, on the other, sets the government with the task of responding promptly and restrainedly to the needs of the public in managing and adjusting the ethnic politics of the state. The mass media react to the problems of aggravation in interethnic relations quicker than the special government bodies responsible for the problems of interethnic relations and the rights of the ethnic minorities. What is worse, the officials do not manage to react in time to severe ethnopolitical situations, information on which has already been published in the Ukrainian-language (Russian-language) media, not to mention the communications in the ethnic media of Ukraine and abroad (Twenty million Ukrainians… 2012). Until recent times, the multi-ethnic Transcarpathia neighboring with four EU member states was almost a model of ethnic tolerance, however, the ignorance of local realis, the absence of an exact strategy in the field of national-information policy and education turn the region into a space of heated discussions, give a reason to the officials of the neighboring states to accuse Ukraine of discrimination of their citizens on ethnic basis (Korbozerova 2019; Novozhenov 2014; Novozhenov 2015; Polyakova and Balanyuk 2018; Trusova *et al.* 2018; Trusova 2016; Hryniak and Pleniuk 2018; Komarova 2018).

Under modern conditions, the process of maintenance and often even the formation of ethnic and civil identities through the mass media quite often directly or indirectly affect the political sympathy of the people and their behavior inducing them to certain activities. For instance, unusual activity from the Hungarian citizens was observed in supporting candidate V. Yushchenko in the presidential elections of 2004. Prior to that, the Hungarian people of the land were mostly apolitical and the majority of the heads of various spheres of activities, those of Hungarian origin, supported pro-government parties. Undoubtedly, such position was predestined by the historical memory of the Hungarian ethnos that was persecuted and repressed in the first years of the establishment of the Soviet government in Transcarpathia and by the fact that the "Kárpáti Igaz szó" ("Transcarpathian True Word", the Transcarpathian regional council body and regional administration), the "Határmenti szociáldemokrata" ("Social Democrat of the Borderlands", established by the Transcarpathian Bureau of the regional committee of the Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (united)) Hungarian-language newspapers gave information unilaterally.

As Lehoczky (2018) notes, a major role in the change of the attitude of the Transcarpathian

Hungarians to the political situation in the region and the government of that time, in general, was played by the Kárpátalja ("Transcarpathia", established by the eponymous society) Hungarian-language newspaper. It is noteworthy that the rest of the Hungarian-language newspapers: the "Beregi hírlap" ("Bereg Newspaper"), the "Nagyszőlős-vidéki hírek" ("News of Vynohradiv District"), the "Ungvár vidéki hírek" ("News of Uzhhorod District") gave information in pro-governmental light. The situation of the other national minorities of the land was similar, where a major part was played by such magazines as: the "Apşa" ("Apsa", establisher – Society "Dacia"), the first Romanian-language newspaper in Transcarpathia, the "Dôvera" ("Trust", establisher and publisher – Transcarpathian cultural-educational association of Slovak women "Dovira"), the journal of the Ukrainian Slovaks (Bidzilya 2015), the "Romani Yag" ("Romani Bonfire", established by the "Romani Yag" Romani cultural-educational association), "Gypsy" newspaper and others. Soon after, an even more significant impact on the Hungarian ethnos of the land was made by the native language, non-government press during the parliamentary and local elections of 2006. Owing to the periodicals and the activity of the national-cultural societies, "the Hungarian minority of Transcarpathia was granted an opportunity to be worthily represented in the local authorities in the areas of compact residence of the voters" (Ostapets' and Tokar 2009; Bogaevskaya *et al.* 2020; Korbozerova 2020).

Subsequently (from 2014 to 2019) Transcarpathian national minorities showed even greater political activity and interest not only in local elections, but also in the elections of the President and the Parliament of Ukraine. In 2019, two Transcarpathian Hungarian parties have united into one Party of Hungarians of Ukraine to participate in early elections to the Verkhovna Rada (Kohutych 2019). This is a unique phenomenon of recent times for small ethnic communities, who have long been concerned only with preserving their own national culture and language, but have been far removed from politics. To a large extent, the Hungarian national minority in Transcarpathia is being harmed by the negative reputation of the far-right nationalist party of Hungary, Jóbik, who in his program proclaims the idea of joining Transcarpathia to Greater Hungary and promotes anti-Semitism (Liphshiz 2020). However, it is a mistake to think that all Transcarpathian Hungarians support the far-right views of the Yobik Party, which is banned in Ukraine. A significant number of members of the Hungarian

national minority could go to Hungary, but they do not. Instead, there are examples of Transcarpathian Hungarians fighting on the eastern borders of our country against Russia for Ukraine's independence. A significant number of Ukrainian Hungarians died in the Donbas, defending Ukraine, a state they consider their homeland (Sokhiniak 2018; Degtyarev *et al.* 2019; Kostruba and Lukianov 2019; Molchanova *et al.* 2020; Omelchuk *et al.* 2020; Pudikova *et al.* 2019).

FROM COMMUNIST INTERNATIONALISM TO ETHNIC TOLERANCE IN THE FACE OF GLOBALIZATION

Due to historical circumstances, Transcarpathian ethnic groups have always been distinguished by their strong regional patriotism and political moderation. The principles of communist internationalism were poorly understood by the local population because they had lived for centuries alongside representatives of different ethnic groups. The communist idea of the world revolution of the proletariat in Transcarpathia was alien. Back in the days of the totalitarian Soviet Union, the local population preferred not to the Kremlin newspaper "Pravda", but to the regional print media. The tradition of loving, above all, the land where you were born in the region has survived to this day.

By surveying 100 individuals among the representatives of different nationalities of Transcarpathia aged between 18 and 70 (Ukrainians – 50, Hungarians – 15, Romanians – 10, Russians – 10, Slovaks – 5, Gypsy people – 5, Jews – 5), we received curious results about the interests towards the regional newspapers and sympathy towards political forces eligible for the election to the parliament in 2012, seen through the prism of nationality. 88 respondents believed that the material devoted to ethnonational, cultural and historical problems is more thoroughly examined by the printed mass media, than the radio, television or the Internet. This is despite the fact that the Transcarpathian Regional Television and Radio Company ("Tysa" channel) has a satellite signal and 24-hours broadcast. Moreover, according to the data of the Press and Information Services of the Regional State Administration, 77 local television companies were registered in Transcarpathia as soon as December 2016: 6 companies of terrestrial television, 5 companies of terrestrial radio, 3 companies of wired radio broadcasting, 3 television and radio companies of terrestrial and wired broadcasting (1 –MITRIS, 2 – "Teleselo" ("Televillage"), 60 companies of cable television. However, the broadcasting of the

Transcarpathian Regional Television and Radio Company ("Tysa" channel) covered about 30% of the region's population (Kostruba *et al.* 2020; Kostygova *et al.* 2019; Molchanova *et al.* 2019a).

It was found that among the 60 recommended local newspapers that are published more or less regularly, about 20 enlighten the problems of the national minorities of the land regularly and objectively according to the recipients: the "Novyny Zakarpattya" ("News of Transcarpathia") – 71, the "Kárpáti Igaz Szó" – 69, the "Stariy zamok-Palanok" ("Old Palanok-Castle") – 65, the "Zakarpatska Pravda" ("Transcarpathian Truth") – 60, the "Tribuna" ("Tribune") – 42, the "Visti Uzhhorodshchyny" (("News of Uzhhorod District")) – 35, the "RIO" – 30, the "Sribna Zemlya" ("Silverland") – 22, the "Kárpátaljai Szemle" ("Transcarpathian View") – 21, the "Fest" – 18, the "Novyny Vynohradivshchyny" ("Nagyszőlős-vidéki Hírek") – 18, the "Druzhba" ("Friendship") – 11, the "Romani Yag" – 17, the "Beregi hírlap" – 15, the "Nyomkereső" ("Tracker") – 15, the "Maramureşenii" ("Maramureş People") –10, the "Hrystyyanska Rodyna" ("Christian Family") – 5, the "Vidomosti Militsii" ("Police Data") – 5, the "Podkarpatský Slovák" ("Slovak of Podkarpatta") – 4.

However, none of the responding representatives of national minorities wanted that the party All-Ukrainian union Svoboda received the majority in the Verkhovna Rada. Some of the reasons for this are as follows: the radical slogans made by the representatives of this political force, concerns about their national policy after coming to power. Svoboda was supported by two of the Ukrainian recipients (4%). At the same time, only 30% of the surveyed representatives of the Russian ethnos believed that Russian needs to be recognized as a second official language; only 10% of the surveyed Transcarpathian Russians supported the Law "On the principles of the state language policy". In contrast, 66% of the recipients of Hungarian origin considered that the law should be implemented in the places of compact residence (Ermilova 2019; Kostruba 2017a; Ezdina 2017; Krasilshchikov *et al.* 2014; Molchanova *et al.* 2019b; Pylypenko 2020a; Pylypenko 2020b; Ushakov and Ermilova 2020).

By agreeing with the opinion that the media "can conceal or play down political facts, distract peoples' attention from certain events by applying different sanctions, scandals, shows, etc., by concealing or excluding certain topics, events, facts from the field of social discussions and political decisions" (Silenko

2007), we note that ever since its independence, Ukraine has not managed to develop an information strategy either in regards to support its own media products, or to secure the national space from the impact of the foreign information strategy.

While under the conditions of the processes of globalization in the information space, after the failure of the idea of building an international society, a peculiar renaissance of the media of the national minorities in Ukraine, among others, gets increasing popularity, the topic of our research does not only get relevance, but also has a preventative character against potential problems in the Ukrainian society. Especially, due to the fact that the problems of ethnonational character have been becoming increasingly severe recently and not only as a result of the claims made by the national-cultural societies and their mass media, but also because such questions are becoming the source of information for various media-editorials, among others, those not examining or, for some reason, not wanting to examine the modern essence and causes of the ethnic problem in question profoundly, and continue to exploit the socially established stereotype. The opinion of the American social scientist, James Lull that every state spreads media-ideology directly or indirectly creating so a unique hegemony, seems to us relevant in this context. "Messages supportive of the status quo emanating from schools, businesses, political organizations, trade unions, religious groups, the military and the mass media all dovetail together ideologically. This inter-articulating, mutually reinforcing process of ideological influence is the essence of hegemony... the most potent effect of mass media is how they subtly influence their audiences to perceive social roles and routine personal activities. "Its effectiveness depends on subordinated peoples accepting the dominant ideology as "normal reality or common sense ... in active forms of experience and consciousness"" (Lull 2002).

Recognizing James Lull's deep analytical reflection on the effect on the audience made by the media, we shall not fail to notice that the people's seeing the world through the prism of ethnonationalism is formed exactly by the mass media, the ethnic media, in our case. Therefore, one shall not forget Marshall McLuhan's major conclusions made in his "The Gutenberg Galaxy", according to which "Print created national uniformity and government centralism, but also individualism and opposition to government as such...", on the one hand, and "the original meaning of print in transforming the vernaculars into mass media of nationalist significance", on the other (McLuhan 2008). Scholars agree that most of the ethne have undergone (we would say that they are undergoing) a substantial transformation of their existence under the conditions of information society. "Information society is mainly viewed by almost every Western concept as an antithesis of the labor society, as its denial and a completely new stage of the social-economic development of society" (Stepyko 1998).

In the future, the fate of each society is going to depend on the ability to control information and the mass media, while this concerns not only global information, but also that produced inside the very countries. This statement gets more weight in multinational states. Ill-conceived actions of politicians, among others, can lead to unforeseen processes. Such a situation in Ukraine arose as a result of implementing the Law "On the principles of the state language policy", also known as the Law "On regional languages" in Ukraine. The idea of creating safe multicultural societies was seriously shaken by modern global ethnopolitical conditions. This is well reflected by the actions of the "new" French citizens, the unstable ethnopolitical situation of Germany, the activation of the neo-fascist movement in Russia, Breivik's motives for killing the youth in Norway. Perhaps, the most tragic events of modern times were caused by the reckless ethnonational policy and intercultural communication in Yugoslavia and the propaganda of the Russian information-political machine called "Russkiy Mir" ("Russian world") in Eastern Ukraine.

WHY IS THE MEDIA MARKET GROWING BUT THE IMAGE OF THE REGION TURNING NEGATIVE?

The change of the social-political situation in Ukraine in the last 29 years has significantly affected the information policy of the mass media of our country. The failure of the monopole printing system and the distribution of information that were precisely integrated into the State-Communist management structure resulted in that the Ukrainian media market of the printed mass media, among others, split into several independent editorials, the establishers of which alongside with the state became political parties, national-cultural societies, religious organizations, commercial structures, and individuals. The increased number of printed editions, especially in the regions, did not enhance the quality of the information product, but on the contrary – the overall circulation of the newspaper and journals decreased. For instance, if for

the mid 80's of the last century there were 3 regional newspapers in Transcarpathia (the "Transcarpathian Truth" – in Ukrainian and secondary publication in Russian; the "Kárpáti Igaz Szó" – in Hungarian) and 13 district periodicals (the overall circulation of which was 500.000 copies), then there were 227 registered and re-registered periodicals according to the Press and Information Services of the Transcarpathian Regional State Administration for November 2001. The "Apşa", the first Romanian-language newspaper of Transcarpathia and the "Demokratichniy Soyuz" ("Democratic Union"), the "Studen" ("River Studen") and the "Nova Svoboda" ("New Freedom"), Ukrainian-language newspapers were the newest editorials at that time. At that time, about 127 editions were published with different periodicity and pauses in the region; while 65 were published regularly (overall circulation is around 308.000 copies). Among them: Ukrainian-language ones – 56 (overall circulation – around 278.700 copies), Hungarian-language ones, including secondary publications, – 9 (overall circulation – about 26.500 copies), Russian-language ones – 1 (circulation – 2000 copies), Slovak-language ones – 2 editorials (circulation – 1500 copies), Romani-Ukrainian-Hungarian-language ones – 1 (circulation – 2500 copies), Romanian-language ones – 1 (circulation – 1000 copies).

At this time, almost 300 periodicals were registered in Transcarpathia. The analysis proves that the information space has been significantly broadened in the last years for the purpose of enlightenment of the national minorities of the land: there have been registered 20 periodicals in Hungarian language (with secondary publications), 5 – in Russian, 4 – in Gypsy, 4 – in Rusyn, 3 – in Romanian, 3 – in Slovak, 1 – in German, 49 – in two or more languages. The "Kárpáti Igaz Szó", Hungarian-language and the "Maramureşenii", Romanian-language regional periodicals are published with the support of the local state budget. The majority of the national-cultural societies of Transcarpathia has its own periodicals. Both the regional and district newspapers regularly publish thematic pages under the rubrics: In the national-cultural societies, "Silverland" – homeland, Transcarpathia is multinational, etc. As Sokhiniak (2018) notes, in contrast, the nationwide newspapers regularly publish information on Transcarpathia that is close to breaking news: "The murder of a criminal authority called Gesha", "Devastating floods", "The murder of a video operator of a local television company", "The arrest of Uzhhorod city mayor S.

Ratushniak", "Scandalous elections of the mayor of Mukachevo", "The mysterious death of the rector of Uzhhorod National University V. Slivka", "An illegal underground narrow-gauge railway between the Ukrainian Uzhhorod and the Slovak Vyšné Nemecké", "The catastrophe of a Ukrainian helicopter that appeared on the territory of Slovakia illegally", "Criminal showdown in Drahobrat", "Smuggling on the Ukrainian-Hungarian and Ukrainian-Slovak borders", "Shootings by the members of the Praviy Sektor in Mukachevo", etc. For instance, between 2003 and 2006, the "Dzerkalo Tyzhnia" ("Mirror of the Week") that, according to our calculations, refers to Transcarpathia as a topic the most often, among nationwide printed media, published 28 articles where regional problems were presented in the light of conflicts, crime and scandals. Self-explanatory are the very titles of the articles: "Conditional Sentence in Return for a Police Officer's Murder" (October 31, 2003), "Clean-up of Mukachevo" (March 19, 2004), Highlights of the Region: "A Journalist's Arrest and the Rector's Suicide..." (May 28, 2004), "Revision of a Revision or Where are the Signs of the Transcarpathian Separatism's Slogan?" (June 18, 2004), "The death of the Rector of the UzhNU – unanswered questions" (July 2, 2004), "Fifteen Years for Organised Crime" (April 1, 2005), "Premix that Smells... like Crime" (April 15, 2005), "Freedom for the Bandits" (October 14, 2005), "Vassal of My Vassal" (October 21, 2005), "Venetian Wages for Transcarpathian Eastern Workers" (June 23, 2006), "Uzhhorod Beslan" that Did not Happen. Two Years Later" (December 15, 2006).

Somewhat later, all-Ukrainian editions and state broadcastings presented the media image of Transcarpathia as a unique touristic, but criminally dangerous region, where the majority of the population earns money by smuggling goods and wishes to be separated from Ukraine. It is strongly suggested by the headlines of the articles published in the "Dzerkalo Tyzhnia": "Transcarpathia – the Area of Absurdity and Tragedy" (June 25, 2010), "The History of Antagonism" (June 25, 2010), "Vengeance à la Transcarpathia" (April 6, 2012), "Passive Uzhhorod" (November 29, 2013), "The Sector of Revolutionary Lawlessness" (March 28, 2014), "Street Riots in Transcarpathian Manner" (August 8, 2014), "Smuggled Cigarettes Seized Worth of € 1.5 M in Transcarpathia" (July 18, 2015), "In Transcarpathia, a smuggler knocked down a border guard" (November 16, 2018), "In Transcarpathia, locals fired at the head of the border service" (August 8, 2018), "A police officer's car was

fired in Uzhhorod and a local resident was injured" (July 11, 2019), "In Transcarpathia, smugglers were detained with shooting and persecution" (July 31, 2019), "The organizers of the "private border" in Transcarpathia were sent to court" (November 20, 2019), "Special troops and the National Guard were sent to the mountainous regions of Transcarpathia" (December 2, 2019); in the "Den" ("Day") newspaper: "Another Moonshine Flood Sweeps Through Transcarpathia" (March 12, 2002), "Hungary has allocated \$5 million to support education in Transcarpathia" (October 18, 2018), "Budapest announces double aid to the Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia" (October 20, 2018), "Friends, enemies or neighbors? Ukrainian-Hungarian relations" (December 19, 2019), etc.; in the "Vysokyi Zamok": "Mine and Grenade-launcher Shelters Found by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) in Donetsk Region" (November 16, 2015), "Mayor Hangs Himself after the Elections" (November 26, 2015), ""Father" of Cigarette-smuggling Arrested in Transcarpathia" (January 24, 2016), "Transcarpathia is one of the weakest links in Ukraine, so the enemies are beating on it" (July 5, 2018), "The smuggling of cigarettes in Transcarpathia was facilitated by border guards" (February 5, 2019), etc. (Adamovych 2009; Kostruba 2017b; Fedotova *et al.* 2019a; Kruzhkova *et al.* 2018; Mykhyda *et al.* 2019; Pylypenko 2020c; Shandruk *et al.* 2019; Vikhrova 2019; Pysarenko 2018).

According to our estimates, from 2004 to the present, the information in the newspaper "Dzerkalo Tyzhnia" ("Mirror of the Week") about Transcarpathia is mostly negative (more than 80%), there are very few positive journalistic materials about the region and they are not about culture, economy, politics, but only climate and nature of this tourist region. In the last 5 years, the national newspaper "Den" ("Day") has started to publish more positive material about Transcarpathia than negative ones, although for a long-time journalistic publication about this region have also been characterized by a clear negative trend. Negative information about Transcarpathia shapes the image of a sinister, criminal region in the imagination of the Ukrainian reader. Our country as a whole suffers from such distorted information about individual regions and loses its image in the international arena.

MULTIETHNIC MEDIA SPACE: BETWEEN OBJEC-TIVITY AND THE TEMPTATION OF SCANDAL

For the sake of objectivity, we would like to note that, unlike the majority of all-Ukrainian civil-political

editions, the "Dzerkalo Tyzhnia" referred to the more serious problems of national identity in Transcarpathia too: "Education for the Minorities: Identity Plus Integration" (August 22, 2008), "Steps Towards the Romani People" (November 15, 2013), "Transcarpathia from land to Land" (October 17, 2014). In particular, Olena Rozvadovska, the author of the last article, objectively noted that "on the background of the Russian invasion and the Anti-Terrorist Operation Zone (ATO), the representatives of "Transcarpathian Rusyns" and "Transcarpathian Hungarians" had become more active, even though the majority of them does not reside in Transcarpathia; they claim that they represent 90% of the region. Their main claim towards the Ukrainian government is the "genocide" of the national minorities of Transcarpathia and the non-recognition of the results of the referendum of 1991 in the region about the independency of the territory. The Transcarpathian separatists count for the support of the Russian Federation and the Hungarian far-right party Jobbik that is actively propagating the idea of the "Transcarpathian Hungarian Autonomy" (Shandra 2017). At the same time, the journalist spotted a bright example of Ukrainian civil identity in Berehovo, where the streets I. Zrini and M. Vereshmarti cross the street of B. Khmelnitsky, when three boys speaking Hungarian were "painting the banisters of a small bridge into blue-yellow colours while talking in Madiar [Hungarian language] how to do it as neatly as possible" ("Dzerkalo Tyzhnia". October 17, 2014). However, nationwide periodicals rarely include materials that would enlighten the peculiarity and problems of national and civil identity in Transcarpathia deeply and thoughtfully, and without seeking sensational news (Shmelev and Petrovsky 2020; Zykova *et al.* 2021; Usmanov 2018).

Without embellishing the information situation of the land and understanding its imperfection, we would still like to note that the local mass media, especially the ones owned by national-cultural societies, are more oriented at the problems of cultivating ethnic consciousness and international communication. According to our observations, regional state-owned editions (published prevailingly thrice a week) have been including at least one material devoted to the ethnic minorities of the land or to cross-border cooperation since the independence of the state. In most cases, periodicals owned by private companies do not regularly publish materials of such topic, but include them sporadically. On the other hand, the ethnic media of Transcarpathia, the bodies of national-

cultural societies, devote from one third to half of the newspaper space to problems concerning culture, the preservation and rebirth of traditions of their own nations. A vivid example of this is the "Romani Yag", Romani edition, the "German Wiedergeburt" ("Rebirth") and the "Jewish Echo". Despite the last one is published in Russian language, thematically it is devoted to the cultivation of ethnic consciousness. Evident examples of this are the headlinese of the articles: In "Our Library" (about the library of the Jewish society "Hesed Shpira"), A Long-awaited "Novelty! A Unique Book – "Book of Songs"", Published in Jerusalem in only 550 Copies – has Finally Arrived to the Hesseda Library ("Echo" 2004. No. 1). By honoring the heroes of Krasne Pole who fell while defending Karpatska Ukraine, and the "Romani Yag", "Gypsy" edition published a material "Romani Storyteller about the Heroes of Krasne Pole" ("Romani Yag", March 24, 2004) presenting even such a historical fact in the light of ethnonational background (Bidzilya 2017; Fedotova *et al.* 2019b; Kostruba 2020; Laptev and Ermilova 2020; Shmelev 2020; Khrystova 2018).

Unfortunately, we must state that, in general, there have been only declarations of a need to create a precise media system of the country that would perfectly satisfy the needs of the society, so providing it with the necessary information safety in Ukraine for the last decades. In the recent years, however, the Ukrainian consumer of information has appeared under the conditions set by the mass media by spreading the cult of violence, cruelty, computer crime and terrorism, distributing information concerning state secretes, as well as spreading almost confidential information belonging to the state. In contrast, the mass media of the neighboring states were imposing the idea that Ukraine is surrounded by powerful states with a precise system of social rules, stable economies and universal human values. All this led to the deformation of the information imagination about state values, national dignity, regional merits and own significance. This problem appeared to be the most serious in those regions, which are located next to the borders and that have the possibility to receive information not only from Ukrainian sources. The procedure of demolishing the Soviet system of mass media in Ukraine did not foresee the creation of national media on a new, high-quality modern level at all. Instead, the Ukrainian media got an entertaining niche, whereas the mass media of Ukraine's neighbor-countries obtained the information-analytical sector. Thus, began the decay of the traditional, but imperfect system of mass media in Ukraine All this resulted in that the consumers received

the most important information, at least in the borderland areas, in the light of the information policy of the neighboring states from their media sources. Perhaps, the worst consequence of this situation was the weakening of the social identity among the ethno national groups of Ukraine. In addition, the domestic media often facilitates this by cultivating the opinion about the separatist mood and tendencies in the multi-ethnic borderland areas (Fedotova *et al.* 2020; Mekratanakulpat *et al.* 2018; Sidorova *et al.* 2019; Sorokin and Novikov 2019).

The thoughtlessness and the unpreparedness of the ethnonational groups in the process of the enactment of the new Ukrainian Law "On education", among others, its seventh article (The Law of Ukraine… 2017) led to the emergence of dissatisfaction of the neighbor countries, though, many understand that a much broader layer of geopolitical problems lies behind the defence of the ethnic interests (Roman 2017; Mykhalchyshyn 2017; Mikhailenko and Almukhamedov 2020). At the same time, the importance and role of the ethnic media in the global community increases very quickly. To our mind, such situation awaits Ukraine too in the future. Opinions on the tendencies about the strengthening of the ethnic mass media are outlined in the published research of the American news and communication agency, "New America Media" in the material under the title "Ethnic Media in America: The Giant Hidden in Plain Sight" (Ethnic Media in America… 2005; Matsaganis and Katz 2013). Thus, when once successful newspapers, journals, television channels, and radio stations are stymied by the crisis around the world, one group of mass media is flourishing and feels comfortable like never before – the mass media for ethnic minorities. This does not mean that they are not affected by the crisis, but that the powerful support from their audience gives them an incredible chance to success. A conference devoted to ethnic media was held in Atlanta in June 2009: "National Ethnic Media Expo & Awards" that was organized by the already mentioned "New America Media". A survey conducted and published at the conference by this association revealed that the audience of the ethnic media in the USA has increased by 16% (the previous survey was held in 2005) and has reached 57 M people in the last four years. In general, 69 M people live in the USA who can be categorized to national minorities.

CONCLUSIONS

The problem of the development of peoples' cultures in an environment of different ethnicity does

not only have an important theoretical and practical meaning, but also is a complex process of acquiring besides ethnic, civil identity as well. There is an increasing need to precisely distinguish the reliability/unreliability or not incomplete reliability of the distributed material under the conditions of the free distribution of foreign information and growth of its influence on the media-consumers of the land in the information field of Transcarpathia that is neighbors with four countries. The conscious or unconscious production of negative content threatens the positive intercultural communication not only in this region, but also in the whole country. Considering this, there is a serious problem of increasing media literacy of both the consumers of the information product and the very journalists in Ukraine. A more serious issue lies in the creation of a distinct media system and development of a national information strategy in Ukraine and in the multi-ethnic borderland areas, among others. The mass media's creating a negative image of non-Ukrainian ethnos that, as if, are in completely destructive moods and have separatist aspirations, does not facilitate the development of state civil identity at all.

Modern information-globalizing realities change so quickly that journalism studies often cannot catch up with them. However, the role of the media as one of the most important channels of information-transfer in every field of social life traditionally remains incredibly significant. It was the periodical press that helped the Ukrainian emigrants that moved to the USA, Canada, France and other countries in the beginning of the previous century to unite into cultural-educational societies (often even to create them). Owing to the press, the Ukrainian life was sustainable among the integrated Ukrainians on the territory of the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, and Egypt. Modern social-economic realies in Ukraine induced a large number of working people to move abroad in search of work, among others, to Italy, Spain, Portugal, etc. In this very case the press was the unifying element among the Ukrainian migrant workers. Today's Ukrainian emigrant press serves as a peculiar environment that bears the ideas of grouping the Ukrainians around Christian and national-cultural values. By means of media, the Ukrainian emigrants wish to declare themselves to Western-Europe and Ukrainian officials as well. Thus, the Ukrainian-language press in the Western and Central-Eastern European countries performs not only informational function, but foremost, serves as a factor of Ukrainians' uniting; it supports the national-cultural movement, cultivates and promotes our traditions;

helps the emigrants adapt to the life in the social-political and economic conditions of the alien countries. The same functions are performed in the Ukrainian information space by the press of the national minorities appealing to cultivate their own national traditions and customs and to preserve the ethnic consciousness. On the other hand, the Ukrainian state must develop such an information-communication strategy that would not repel non-Ukrainian ethnos, but on the contrary, would facilitate to their development of civil identity, the feeling of social responsibility for everything that happens in the country as that of full-fledged citizens'.

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