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## **DOMINANTS OF INTERSTATE UKRAINIAN-SLOVAK ETHNO-POLITICAL COOPERATION IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 1990S.**

*The article is devoted to a comprehensive study of the beginning of bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak ethnopolitical cooperation in the first half of the 1990s. It is noted that the dismantling of the communist regime and multi-level democratization in the early 1990s indicated the implementation by Slovakia of the model of “catch-up modernization”, which was accompanied by national-political transformation. The contradictory and conflicting content of the socio-political model of Slovakia under the hybrid political regime of Prime Minister V. Mečiar was due to the country’s declarative search for its own national path between democracy and authoritarianism, between the consolidation of the Slovak nation and the intensification of interethnic tension, between the implementation of a pro-Western course and the intensification of cooperation with Russia, between the development of a market economy and the strengthening of state regulation.*

*This was preceded by the transformational processes of the late 1989 — early 1990s in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine, where the confrontation between the Ukrainian national-democratic and communist party nomenclature elites was observed. The ethnopolitical development of Transcarpathia (especially the first half of the 1990s) was marked by the problem of political Ruthenianism, which, under the conditions of an independent Ukrainian state, underwent a significant transformation and was discredited.*

*It is stated that to resolve issues related to the security situation within and around the Ukrainian state in a tolerant, balanced, diplomatic manner, the Interstate Ukrainian-Slovak Commission on Ensuring the Rights of National Minorities, Education and Culture was called upon to resolve them, the main task of which was to promote the creation of the necessary socio-economic and other conditions for the preservation and development of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of the Slovak national minority in Ukraine and the Ukrainian national minority in the Slovak Republic.*

*It is established that Ukraine and Slovakia, the second after Hungary among the Eastern European post-communist countries, initiated and continued interstate coop-*

*eration on the mutual protection of the rights of national minorities, which was an example of an effective joint solution to complex ethno-political relations, aimed at eliminating interethnic disputes, implementing the rights of national minorities, developing good-neighborly relations with all bordering states and preventing the threat of ethnic conflicts, which was one of the main prerequisites for the accession of Central and Eastern European states to the European Union and NATO.*

**Keywords:** *Ukraine, Slovakia, transformation processes, ethno-political development, protection of the rights of national minorities, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak Commission.*

Вказана стаття присвячена комплексному дослідженню започаткування двостороннього українсько-словацького етнополітичного співробітництва першої половини 1990-х рр. Відзначається, що демонтаж комуністичного режиму та багаторівнева демократизація на початку 90-х рр. XX-го ст. свідчили про реалізацію Словацькою моделі «навздогінної модернізації», яка супроводжувалася національно-політичною трансформацією.

З'ясовується, що суперечливий і конфліктний зміст суспільно-політичної моделі Словацьчини за гібридного політичного режиму прем'єрства В. Мечіара був обумовлений декларативним пошуком країною власного національного шляху між демократією та авторитаризмом, між консолідацією словацької нації та нагнітанням міжетнічної напруги, між реалізацією прозахідного курсу й активізацією співпраці з Росією, між розбудовою ринкової економіки та посиленням державного регулювання.

Згадується, що цьому передували трансформаційні процеси кінця 1989 — початку 1990-х рр. у Закарпатській області України, де спостерігалось протистояння української національно-демократичної та комуністичної партноменклатурної еліт. Етнополітичний розвиток Закарпаття (особливо першої половини 1990-х рр.) був відзначений проблемою політичного русинства, яке в умовах незалежної української держави зазнало значної трансформації та було дискредитоване.

Разом з тим, констатується, що з метою толерантного, виваженого, дипломатичного вирішення питань, пов'язаних з безпековою ситуацією в середині української держави і довкола неї, була покликана вирішувати Міждержавна українсько-словацька комісія з питань забезпечення прав національних меншин, освіти та культури, основним завданням якої було сприяти створенню необхідних соціально-економічних та інших умов для збереження й розвитку етнічної, культурної, мовної і релігійної самобутності словацької національної меншини в Україні та української національної меншини у Словацькій Республіці.

Встановлюється, що Україна та Словацьчина, друга після Угорщини з-поміж Східноєвропейських посткомуністичних країн започаткували і продовжили міждержавну співпрацю щодо взаємного захисту прав національних меншин, яка була прикладом ефективного спільного вирішення складних етнополітичних взаємин, спрямовану на ліквідацію міжетнічних суперечок, реалізацію прав національних меншин, розвиток добросусідських відносин з усіма межуючими державами та недопущення загрози виникнення етнічних конфліктів, що було

однією з головних передумов вступу Центрально-Східноєвропейських держав до Європейського союзу і НАТО.

**Ключові слова:** Україна, Словаччина, трансформаційні процеси, етнополітичний розвиток, захист прав національних меншин, словаки, українці.

Studying a particular country, the systematization of various information about its territory, population, history, cultural achievements, socio-political life, position in the international arena, etc., is of great importance in today's context. First, it concerns the study of the closest neighbors, the experience of relations with them in the past, current problems of their socio-political, economic, and cultural development, etc.

**The purpose of the article** is a comprehensive study and coverage of the prerequisites, process of creation, and launching of the activities of the Interstate Bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak Commission on National Minorities, Education, and Culture in the first half of the 1990s.

**The primary tasks** are to study the key areas of joint activity of Slovakia and Ukraine in the field of guarantees and protection of the rights of national minorities and preservation and development of the national identity of the Ukrainian community in the Slovak Republic and the Slovak community in Ukraine.

**The object of the study** is the Intergovernmental Bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak Commission on National Minorities, Education and Culture. **The subject of the study** is a description of the activity mechanism of interstate mixed commissions on issues of ensuring the rights of national minorities as institutional state bodies in the field of preserving and protecting the rights of national minorities, in particular the Ukrainian-Slovak Bilateral Mixed Commission, the essence of whose activity was to adopt, with the consent of the parties, recommendations for the governments of both states regarding the improvement of the situation of the relevant national minorities.

**Scientific novelty.** The problems of guaranteeing the rights of the Ukrainian national minority in Slovakia at the transitional post-communist stage of the evolution of society as a whole, at the source level, are insufficiently developed in Ukrainian and Slovak historiography. The scientific novelty of this paper lies in the fact that information about the role of the activities of the Intergovernmental Bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak Commission on National Minorities, Education and Culture, and its contribution to ensuring guarantees of the rights of national minorities in Ukrainian-Slovak relations has been further developed.

In the context of studying the latest Ukrainian-Slovak relations in the field of protection and guarantee of the national minorities' rights, the study of the history and central aspects of the creation and activities of the Bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak Commission on National Minorities, Education and Culture at the turn of the second and third millennia is of considerable interest. Certain aspects of this Commission's operation were considered in the publications of Ukrainian scholars. T. Serhienko, in her dissertation research, pointed to the positive role of the work of this mixed Ukrainian-Slovak intergovernmental structure in the second half of the 1990s [1, p. 2,12]. On the contrary, V. Turian-

ytsia argued about the ineffectiveness of its activities, based on the implementation of the results of its first meetings [2, p. 95]. In 2012, the sixth edition of the "Studia Regionalistica" series published an article by T. Serhienko, dedicated to the process of formation and development of the system of Ukrainian-Slovak interstate cooperation in the 1990s and early 2000s, as well as the formation of the contractual and legal basis of interstate relations between the two countries, etc. [3]. For the first time, the activities of the Intergovernmental Bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak Commission on National Minorities, Education and Culture in the first half of the 1990s were thoroughly investigated by V. Almashii in his dissertation [4], which was defended in May 2021 at the Institute of World History of the NAS of Ukraine [5, p. 14]. In particular, it assesses the preparation and launch of the activities of the aforementioned Bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak Mixed Commission [4, p. 160-168].

In his speech titled "Activities of the Interstate Ukrainian-Hungarian and Ukrainian-Slovak Commissions on Ensuring the Rights of National Minorities, Education and Culture as a Factor in Guaranteeing Ethnopolitical Stability and Inviolability of State Borders" at the International Scientific and Practical Conference "Ukraine — European Union: a Format for Developing Relations in the Context of the Russian-Ukrainian War, Security Guarantees and Reintegration of Temporarily Occupied Territories", which took place on October 20, 2023 at the premises of Uzhhorod National University, V. Almashii noted that the factor of Ukraine's state independence, including the integrity and inviolability of state borders, combining the values of civil society and ensuring the rights and freedoms of ethno-national minorities and fellow tribesmen abroad, should be improved towards the formation of the Ukrainian national idea and identity in Transcarpathia, in Ukraine and in the civilized world in general [6, p. 240].

The establishment of new independent states in Central and Eastern Europe, not only on the civic, but also partly on the national principle, gave rise, in response to the growth of integrated nationalism of the state-forming nation, to the acceleration of the process of ethnic self-identification and unity of national minorities and a defensive nationalist reaction on their part towards the titular nation. The specificity of the ethnic situation and interethnic relations in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe was that the most significant national minorities on their territory had the state of the mother nation nearby and could count on its support in preserving national identity and protecting the rights of national minorities, which raised ethno-political issues to the level of the system of interstate relations [7, p. 12]. The state ethno-national policy of the new democracies of the Central European region, starting from the 1980s-1990s, was determined by the interests of the titular nation, whose political representatives were often ruling forces inclined to national exclusivity — right-wing conservative coalitions and governments in Hungary, Poland, Romania, and national populist ones in Slovakia.

Slovakia, Hungary, and other Central European countries neighboring Ukraine did not encourage the emigration of national minority representatives to the states of the mother nation. Still, it tried, on the contrary, to consolidate them in places of compact residence on Ukrainian territory through political,

financial, and other support. In particular, the laws of Slovakia and Hungary on Slovaks and Hungarians abroad were aimed at this, which indicated the desire of neighboring countries to preserve their ethnic presence in Ukraine (and countries of compact residence of the relevant national minorities) and to influence internal Ukrainian processes (including the internal political processes of neighboring countries, for example, Slovakia, Romania) and interstate relations through ethnically related minorities [7, p. 13].

As far back as the early 1990s, it became apparent that a united Europe would categorically not allow the continuation of the old or the emergence of new nodes of interethnic tension in the states of Central Europe, with the prospect of establishing relative interethnic harmony. The epicenters of potential conflicts could gradually move further to the East, including to the territory of Ukraine. Pan-European institutions were much less concerned with the situation of national minorities in integrated Central Europe, focusing on monitoring and controlling the situation in the sphere of interethnic relations and guarantees of minority rights in Ukraine. Thus, Ukraine, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Poland were mutually interested in bilateral intergovernmental commissions' successful, practical activities to protect national minority rights.

The initiation of the Ukrainian-Slovak interstate dialogue in the system of the national minorities rights protection was preceded by internal political processes in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine in the early 1990s, when, during the transformation processes, opposition and struggle between national-democratic forces and the powerful command-and-administrative system unfolded around the idea of uniting the population of the region for the sake of gaining Ukraine's independence. The Soviet command-administrative system hindered this in the Transcarpathian region and the newly created Ruthenian organizations, the Democratic League of Nationalities and the Association of Non-Radical Democrats, which promoted the ideology of political Ruthenianism, the separateness of Transcarpathians, the prospect of self-government, etc. [8, p. 12; 9, p. 216]. However, political Ruthenianism in Transcarpathia, while remaining active until the mid-1990s, collapsed and was condemned by international congresses of Ruthenians. The activities of Ruthenian organizations in the region were directed towards the ethno-cultural sphere. The ethno-political development of the area under conditions of independence was marked by a particular aggravation of relations between Ukrainian and Hungarian public organizations, between the regional authorities and the district state administration of Berehivshchyna [8, p. 13].

Thus, the events on the verge and at the beginning of the 1990s in Transcarpathian society prompted the Ukrainian state to seek ways to resolve them in the international arena, while simultaneously enlisting the support of neighboring states that bordered Ukraine in this region (Hungary, Slovakia, and later Romania and Poland). It was, to a certain extent, an experiment (as it will show itself in practice) of creating a bilateral intergovernmental body (in our case, the Commission), which, bypassing the decisions of local authorities at the interstate level, would resolve problematic issues in the relations between representatives of the titular ethnic group and the national minority of the op-



posing state. The basis was the preservation, through diplomatic negotiations, of the territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders in the Carpathian region [6, pp. 237-238].

An essential component of the above processes was the conditions for the accession of Central European countries to the EU and NATO, which involved solving problems related to exercising (protecting) the rights of national minorities, eliminating interethnic disputes, and preventing the threat of ethnic conflicts, as well as developing good-neighborly relations with all neighboring states. Therefore, Hungary, one of the first post-socialist countries, since the early 1990s initiated the political settlement of these complex issues by coordinating cooperation with Ukraine in the field of guaranteeing the rights of national minorities, an effective instrument of which was the special Mixed Ukrainian-Hungarian (interstate) bilateral commission on protecting the rights of national minorities, the (previous) desire to create which was recorded in Art. 16 of the Declaration on the Principles of Cooperation between the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Republic of Hungary on the Protection of the Rights of National Minorities and the Protocol thereto, signed on May 31, 1991 by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and Hungary in Budapest [6, p. 238].

It should be noted that the ethno-national factor has been decisive in Hungary's foreign policy concept since the beginning of democratic changes in the country in 1989–1990. Such foreign policy priorities of the Republic of Hungary as pan-European and Euro-Atlantic integration, good-neighborly relations, and care for the Hungarian national minority abroad were enshrined in the "Strategy of Foreign Relations of Hungary" for the long-term period until 2020. The nature of Hungary's bilateral relations with Ukraine was devoid of critical problematic components and was characterized by positive stability, intensification of political dialogue, increased attention from Hungary to cooperation with Ukraine in the field of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, and dynamic growth in the volume of bilateral trade and economic cooperation [7, p. 7]. Hungary (according to the plans of the EU governing bodies) gradually became the primary coordinator of the distribution of financial flows of the European Union for the development of interregional and cross-border cooperation of the EU with its new neighbors in the East and the Balkans. Since gaining full membership in the European Union, the Republic of Hungary has tried to play a key intermediary role in the development of economic relations of post-Soviet states with the European Union [7, p. 8].

The interest of the Slovak side in the activities of the mixed Ukrainian-Hungarian Commission on the Rights of National Minorities (four meetings were held since the Commission was established in 1991 until the beginning of February 1995) is evidenced by a telegram sent from the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Kyiv to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic in Bratislava under the title "Činnosť ukrajinsko-maďarskej mesačnej komisie pre otázky národnostných menšín".

At the same time, the autonomy claims in the autumn-winter of 1991-1992 in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine and, in particular, the decisions of both the regional and Berehovo district councils served as an impetus, prompt-

ed action and accelerated the adoption of the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 238 of May 14, 1992, according to which the Ukrainian part of the Mixed Ukrainian-Hungarian Commission on Ensuring the Rights of National Minorities was established, the first meeting of which was held in Budapest on July 27-28, 1992 [10, p. 1]. The Ukrainian side created a corresponding state body — the Ministry of Ukraine for Nationalities, Migration and Cults, which, in addition to internal state functions, was tasked with coordinating the activities of the Commission mentioned above [6, p. 238].

An important direction of constant Ukrainian-Slovak interaction and good-neighborly relations was fruitful cooperation between Ukraine and Slovakia in guaranteeing the national minorities' rights. Therefore, on June 29, 1993, during the official visit to Ukraine of the President of the Slovak Republic, M. Kováč, the Agreement on Good-Neighborliness, Friendly Relations, and Cooperation between the Slovak Republic and Ukraine was signed in Kyiv, in which the parties confirmed that respect for human rights and freedoms is an indispensable condition for ensuring peace and security. In this regard, Article 18 of this Agreement provided the necessary conditions for the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious freedoms of the Slovak minority in Ukraine and the Ukrainian minority in the Slovak Republic [11, 12]. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the newly independent Ukrainian and Slovak states paid special attention to the preservation and development of the national identity of the Ukrainian ethnic community in the SR and the Slovak one in Ukraine. The central coordinating body of interstate cooperation in this area in the late 20th and early 21st centuries was the Bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak Commission on National Minorities, Education, and Culture [4, p. 161]. The specified Commission, along with the Intergovernmental Ukrainian-Slovak Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation, since the mid-1990s, has played an essential role in the formation of the system and coordination of interstate cooperation between Ukraine and the Slovak Republic [13, p. 5].

The Commission, as a special mixed intergovernmental structure, was called upon to consider preliminarily the most critical problems of bilateral cooperation in the area it was responsible for, and to provide the relevant state authorities of both countries, as well as other subjects-participants in collaboration, with agreed recommendations for their resolution. The bilateral commission developed and planned specific programs and interstate cooperation projects on its activities, facilitated their implementation, and monitored the implementation of agreements and agreed-upon agreements. At each of the meetings of the Commission, which usually took place once a year, a summary of the work performed was made, reports of the parties on the implementation of the tasks approved at the previous meeting were heard, and the reality of the projects proposed for cooperation was assessed. The provisions recorded in the Commission meeting minutes and agreed-upon decisions were submitted for consideration to the governments of both countries. As a rule, on this basis, the ministers' cabinets approved several measures to implement the agreed bilateral agreements and joint projects. Mixed commissions were a disciplining and dynamizing element of the system of cooperation between states [6, p. 238].

Based on the new documents we discovered in the archives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and Slovakia, the idea of creating a Bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak Commission on National Minorities, Education, and Culture was recorded in the Basic Treaty on Good-Neighborliness, Friendly Relations, and Cooperation between Ukraine and the Slovak Republic of June 26, 1993. Ukraine established this mixed intergovernmental structure at the end of 1993. Thus, the Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic (Bratislava) contained information from the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Ukraine dated December 9, 1993, about a note from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, in which the Ukrainian side proposed creating a mixed Ukrainian-Slovak Commission on National Minorities [14; 4, p. 163]. The Ukrainian side expressed confidence that making such a Commission would contribute to the practical implementation of the aforementioned intergovernmental Treaty and strengthen bilateral cooperation on the principles stipulated by this Treaty [14, sheets 2, 3].

At the same time, the specific date of sending this note by the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry to the Slovak Embassy in Kyiv cannot be specified since, at the end of the document, the specific date of the month is written by hand, and the round seal of the Ukrainian ministry is stamped on it. However, the date "November 1, 1993" is most likely visible [14, sheet 3]. From the accompanying note of the Slovak Embassy in Ukraine, it becomes clear that the specified information was additionally transmitted to the Slovak Foreign Ministry, in addition to the material previously sent by the Slovak Embassy in Bratislava on December 6, 1993 [14, sheet 1].

Negotiations on the establishment of the Ukrainian-Slovak Commission and the subject of its activities lasted for more than a year. The parties agreed to include educational and cultural cooperation in the Commission's coordination. The first meeting of the Commission was held in Kyiv on February 8–9, 1995, which considered the issues of legal protection of the national minorities' rights in both countries, education, culture, bilateral cooperation at the interstate level, etc. [15, pp. 1–5]. The Ukrainian delegation was headed by the Deputy Minister of Ukraine for Nationalities, Migration and Cults R. Chilachava (Head of the Ukrainian part of the Commission), the Slovak delegation was headed by E. Ponomarenkova — Head of the Department of Human Rights, National Minorities and Compatriots of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic (Head of the Slovak part of the Commission). However, the "Regulations on the Ukrainian Part of the Bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak Commission on National Minorities, Education and Culture" were approved by the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine only on March 23, 1995 [2, p. 94; 15, sheet 1].

At the Commission's first meeting, it was stated that in Ukraine and the Slovak Republic, in general, the necessary conditions were provided for meeting the cultural and educational needs of individuals belonging to the Slovak national minority on Ukrainian territory and the Ukrainian national minority in Slovakia. The Ukrainian party informed that in places of compact residence of Slovaks in the Transcarpathian region, primary school education is conduct-



ed in the Slovak language, and the optional study of this language and the history of Slovakia has been introduced in several secondary schools. A department of Slovak language and literature was established at Uzhhorod State University. The editorial office of Slovak publications functioned at the "Karpats" book publishing house. The "Visti Uzhhorodshchyny" newspaper regularly published a special page called "Slovak Courier." Slovak cultural and national societies were operating, the most active of which was the regional organization "Matica Slovenska" [15, pp. 2–3].

During the Commission's first meeting, the Slovak participants indicated that in the Slovak Republic, an appropriate cultural and educational infrastructure has been created and operates in places of compact residence of Ukrainians. The Museum of Ukrainian Culture in Svydnyk, the Department of Ukrainian Studies at the P.-J. Šafáryk University, and the Ukrainian Theater in Prešov operate, and cultural and national festivals and holidays are held. The Slovak Republic expressed its wishes to introduce radio broadcasts and the publication of a newspaper in the Slovak language for Slovaks in Ukraine, and to assist Slovak cultural and national societies in solving practical problems [4, p. 165].

However, at the Commission's first meeting, the Ukrainian party expressed concern about the growing tendency among Slovak Ukrainians to artificially divide them into Ukrainians and Ruthenians as representatives of a separate Slavic people. On the territory of Slovakia, there were gatherings of supporters of political Ruthenianism, including citizens of Ukraine, during which separatist calls were made aimed at violating the territorial integrity of not only Ukraine, but also of Slovakia and some other European states [15, sheet 3].

The Slovak party took note of the Ukrainian party's concern. At the same time, the official position of the Slovak Republic on this issue was stated, which was that the ethnocultural aspects of the life of the Ukrainian community in Slovakia should be resolved based on current legislation, relying on democratic principles. Simultaneously, the political demands of supporters of "political Ruthenianism", which could lead to an aggravation of civil confrontation in the Ukrainian community of Slovakia and negatively affect Slovak-Ukrainian relations, were not accepted by the highest state officials of the Slovak Republic. It was agreed that on these issues the parties would improve mutual information and, if necessary, hold consultations to prevent undesirable complications and develop common views and positions. The parties agreed to have the Second Meeting of the Commission in Bratislava in September 1995 [15, p. 4].

However, a mutual understanding of this issue in Ukrainian-Slovak interstate relations in the mid-1990s was not achieved, negatively affecting the general state and the dynamics of bilateral foreign policy cooperation. Despite the official statements of the leading state and political figures of Ukraine and the SR that there are no controversial issues in the relations of both countries, tension arose several times in Ukrainian-Slovak relations in the 1990s precisely because of the "Ruthenian issue". A. Duleba explains Ukraine's claims regarding the positive attitude of the state bodies of the SR to the development of the Ruthenian movement in Slovakia by several factors, in particular, Kyiv's

concern with the emergence in the early 1990s of autonomist slogans of “political Ruthenianism” in Transcarpathia bordering the SR and Russia’s favorable attitude towards Ruthenianism [16, pp. 265–266].

Despite the purposeful, complex, but positive dynamics of the development of bilateral ethno-political management of Slovakia and Ukraine in the issues of monitoring the ethnic situation among the Ukrainian and, accordingly, Slovak national minorities and measures aimed at their protection, as well as development, contradictory internal political processes in Slovakia seemed to look as follows. The dismantling of the communist regime and multi-level democratization in the early 1990s indicated Slovakia’s implementation of the “catch-up modernization” model, which was accompanied by national-political transformation. The hybridization of the political regime during 1993–1998 in the conditions of the development of Slovak statehood exacerbated the conflicting elements of the model of socio-political development, which were driven at the political, power-institutional, and socio-cultural levels. The power-institutional system in Slovakia played a contradictory role. In particular, formal democratic mechanisms served as an obstacle to authoritarian tendencies; however, the imperfect institutional structure and the inconsistent functioning of individual elements of the parliamentary model created risks of abuse of power [17, p. 5]. The contradictory and conflicting content of the socio-political model of Slovakia under the hybrid political regime of Prime Minister V. Mečiar (1993–1998) was due to the country’s declarative search [17, p. 6] for its own national path and situational fluctuations in the system of polar coordinates of future development; between democracy and authoritarianism, between the consolidation of the Slovak nation and the intensification of interethnic tension, between the implementation of a pro-Western course and the intensification of cooperation with Russia, between the development of a market economy and the strengthening of state regulation [17, p. 7].

At the same time, an analysis of the provisions in the minutes of subsequent meetings of the Commission in the second half of the 1990s showed that both sides tried to avoid and not exacerbate the discussion of artificial ethno-political problems, “autonomism”, “separatism”. On the contrary, the Commission’s second meeting (Bratislava, October 24, 1996) stated that adequate protection of national minorities can be ensured only by consistently recognizing territorial integrity and inviolability of state borders. The Commission emphasized the inadmissibility of any demands for territorial, administrative, or any other form of autonomy based on the ethnic principle and rejected any manifestations of ethnic separatism that could destabilize the situation in the Central and Eastern European region [18, p. 2]. However, the approaches of the parties, especially in the ethno-political sphere, did not always coincide, and already at the first meetings of this mixed intergovernmental structure, such controversial issues, problems, and difficulties appeared, which not only slowed down the work of the Commission but even called into question the expediency of its further existence. However, through negotiations and clarification of positions, the parties reached a compromise and kept this essential and practical element of the interstate Ukrainian-Slovak relations functional.

**Conclusions.** The dismantling of the communist regime and multi-level democratization in the early 1990s indicated Slovakia's implementation of the "catch-up modernization" model, which was accompanied by national-political transformation. However, the contradictory and conflicting content of the socio-political model of Slovakia under the hybrid political regime of Prime Minister V. Mečiar (1993–1998) was due to the country's declarative search for its own national path and situational oscillations in the system of polar coordinates of future development; between democracy and authoritarianism, between the consolidation of the Slovak nation and the intensification of interethnic tension, between the implementation of a pro-Western course and the intensification of cooperation with Russia, between the development of a market economy and the strengthening of state regulation.

To resolve issues related to the security situation within and around the Ukrainian state in a tolerant, balanced, and diplomatic manner, the Interstate Ukrainian-Slovak Commission on Ensuring the Rights of National Minorities, Education, and Culture was established. Its main tasks were to promote the creation of the necessary socio-economic and other conditions for the preservation and development of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious identity of the Slovak national minority in Ukraine and the Ukrainian national minority in the Slovak Republic, being an integral, disciplining, and dynamizing element of the system of cooperation between states.

This was preceded by the transformation processes of the late 1989-early 1990s in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine, where there was a confrontation between the Ukrainian national-democratic and communist party nomenclature elites. The ethno-political development of Transcarpathia (especially in the first half of the 1990s) was marked by the confrontation between Ukrainian and Hungarian public organizations and the problem of political Ruthenianism, which, under the conditions of an independent Ukrainian state, underwent a significant transformation and was discredited.

Given the difficult ethno-political situation in the early 1990s in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine, which borders on four European post-socialist states, and to resolve it, in May (31) 1991, active bilateral cooperation in the ethno-political sphere was initiated between the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Republic of Hungary, which began to play an essential role in Ukrainian-Hungarian cooperation on guarantees and protection of the national minorities' rights and was assessed as a valuable example of effective joint solutions to complex ethno-political problems. The nature of further bilateral relations between Hungary and Ukraine was marked by positive stability, intensification of political dialogue, and increased attention from Hungary to cooperation with Ukraine in European and Euro-Atlantic integration. Hungary has gradually become the primary coordinator of the distribution of European Union financial flows for developing interregional and cross-border cooperation of the EU with its new neighbors in the East and the Balkans.

Following the example of Hungary and Ukraine in fruitful interaction regarding the ethno-political issues, the similar cooperation between Slovakia

and Ukraine was initiated and continued to play an important role in bilateral interstate relations, starting in the mid-1990s through the mediation of the activities of the Bilateral Ukrainian-Slovak Commission on the Protection of the Rights of National Minorities, Education and Culture and was an example of an effective joint solution to complex ethno-political relations, aimed at eliminating interethnic disputes, implementing the rights of national minorities and developing good-neighborly relations with all bordering states and preventing the threat of ethnic conflicts, which was one of the main prerequisites for the accession of Central and Eastern European states to the European Union and NATO. Ukrainian-Slovak cooperation in border areas in the form of cross-border activities has become of paramount importance. Ukraine and Slovakia were participants in creating the Carpathian Euroregion, as well as developers and implementers of several concepts and strategies for the joint development of adjacent border regions, which developed historically. The example of Slovakia shows consistent, substantive support for compatriots abroad, similar to Hungary, including activities based on the provisions of the law on Slovaks abroad, which is noteworthy.

Thus, Slovak-Ukrainian cooperation in the ethno-political sphere had a diverse, yet holistic and complex character, being carried out at all levels of interstate relations — from central to regional and local, covering various areas — from the protection of the national minorities' rights to economic cooperation and coordination of the socio-economic development of border regions. Interregional collaboration and the formation of multicultural and multiethnic Euro-regional communities were deepened.

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