

## Historical essay

According to historical sources, the inhabitants of Transcarpathia were engaged in active trade with other peoples since ancient times. In the 6th–7th centuries, the first Slavic settlers arrived here, and in the late 9th century, the ancient Hungarians. The tribes that inhabited this region were engaged in cattle breeding, hunting, weaving, and conducted trade with neighboring tribes. The first mentions of the ancient city of Uzhhorod are described in the work of the Arab geographer Al-Idrisi's "Book of Roger" (1154).

In the work, the city is mentioned under its historical name, which was used until the end of World War I - Ungvar ("fortress on the river"). The name "Uzhhorod" became established when Transcarpathia was part of Czechoslovakia, and the city along the Uzh River became the capital of an autonomous region - Subcarpathian Rus.

At the beginning of the 4th century, Hungarian King Charles Robert of the Anjou dynasty gifted Uzhhorod and many surrounding settlements to the Drugeth family. Thanks to these Italian aristocrats, horticulture, gardening, viticulture, and consequently customs relations in the form of trade and fair duties began to flourish in the region. Although the Hungarian ethnic element played a significant role in Uzhhorod throughout its history, it was in the 17th century that a substantial increase in the population of other nationalities, such as Ukrainians, Jews, Greeks, Germans, and Slovaks, was observed. Consequently, trade and customs relations experienced a new development. Trade initially centered around Greek merchants. However, by the early 19th century, this sector of the economy shifted into the hands of representatives of the Jewish community. Employees in various state institutions, including the customs system, were primarily Germans, Czechs, and Slovaks alongside Hungarians.

In 1838, for the first time in its history, Uzhhorod gained self-governance and became a modernized administrative center. After the conclusion of World War I and the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, the modern territory of Transcarpathia, under the name Subcarpathian Rus, was incorporated into Czechoslovakia, and the multicultural and multiethnic city of Uzhhorod with a population of around 20,000 became its capital. However, in November 1938, according to the First Vienna Award, the city was cynically divided in half: one part

became part of Hungary, and the other remained in Czechoslovakia. At that time, at least five customs posts and checkpoints were established in various parts of the city, on main roads and streets.



This era is characterized by repeated changes in state ownership and political system. Naturally, this could not fail to affect the fates of people. Thousands of Czech and Slovak officials had to leave their institutions, houses, property, friends, and acquaintances within a week. However, peace did not come to the city after that, as a new border between Czechoslovakia and Hungary ran through the northern part of Uzhhorod. Curious and complex situations arose, for example, when the Jewish population of the city lived in one state but buried their deceased in another.

On July 1, 1878, a toll was introduced in the city on cobblestone, which was later used for paving all roads of national significance. The toll was also collected from

all means of transport, small and large horned cattle, pigs, goods transported from the railway station, etc. No toll was required for the arrival of members of the ruling dynasty and their courtiers, members of the royal court, ambassadors and representatives of foreign states, gendarmes, and government officials. One of the pieces of evidence of Uzhhorod's division in half is the name of one of the streets - "Customs Street," where the customs post was located, marking the border between Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

In the area of the current Zagorska Street, Bulgarians lived who traditionally cultivated vegetables, including their famous Bulgarian pepper, as well as tomatoes and cabbage, thus providing the whole city with vegetables. The vegetable gardens were located outside the borders of Uzhhorod. When the Bulgarians brought their harvest for sale to the city market, they were stopped by the customs office, which was located where the Customs Street now joins Sobranetska Street. This was the boundary of the city until the beginning of the 20th century. Across the road, there was a barrier, and beyond it, where the current blocks along Dobroliubov Street are located, stretched extensive gardens that extended for almost a kilometer. To prevent bypassing the customs office, its vicinity was fenced with a wooden palisade called "Nod Ortaş" ("Great Barrier"). Customs fees were collected from everyone who brought something for sale, and a customs officer was stationed near the barrier. Similar setups existed on other roads leading to the city. Later (on the present-day Customs Street), in 1926, a large building for the city customs was constructed - the Customs House.

Subsequently, Hungarians gained control over the territory of Zakarpattia, and Uzhhorod again became a unified entity. However, the beginning of the Second World War suspended the economic development of the region, bringing hardship to the city and suffering to its inhabitants. On October 27, 1944, Soviet forces liberated Zakarpattia, and the region was annexed to Ukraine, marking the start of a new era of establishment and development for the Zakarpattia Oblast.

## **Formation of Customs Offices in Transcarpathia**

From the very beginning of its existence, the Chop Customs Office holds a special place in the customs system of the then USSR, as it was established at the crossroads of the borders of five countries: the USSR, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Poland.

Thanks to its advantageous location and the presence of a well-developed transportation network, border infrastructure, powerful railway and road junctions, the Chop Customs Office is rightfully considered the "western gateway" of Ukraine.

The Chop Customs Office was established by the order of the People's Commissariat of External Trade of the Soviet Union No. 241 on September 8, 1945. According to Order No. 2 dated November 22, 1945, on the same day, seven employees of the customs office started performing customs functions at the railway station in the city of Chop.

In the post-war years, the work of the customs office was subordinated to the recovery of the national economy. The preservation of goods, their strict accounting, and the legality of importation were extremely important issues. In just the first month of operation, seven customs controllers processed 80 trainloads, transporting over 22,000 tons of cargo across the state border.

With the aim of reducing the workload on the units of the Chop Customs and considering the considerable distance of the railway junction "Rakhiv-Korolevo," the Rakhiv Customs was established in February 1946. This included the customs posts of "Berlybash," "Chornyi Ardov," "Teresva," and "Solotvyno."

As the volume of work grew, the staff of customs establishments increased. By the end of 1946, the team at Chop Customs numbered 48 employees. During that year, the customs officers processed documentation for 500,000 tons of cargo and 160,000 passengers. On a daily basis, Chop Customs carried out customs control and processing for up to seven freight trains and the passenger train "Chop - Vienna." Starting from March 1948, passenger trains to Vienna, Budapest, and Prague operated four times a week through the Chop railway station.

From the beginning of the 1950s, graduates of educational institutions who were proficient in foreign languages began to be assigned to work at Chop Customs.

Connections with foreign countries were actively developing. In the 1960s, the flows of cargo and passengers exceeded the figures of the early years of operation almost tenfold. As a result, there was a need to expand the customs structure at other sections of the border. In July 1960, a customs crossing "Uzhhorod" was opened at the Ukrainian-Slovak border. Six years later, based on this crossing, the customs post "Uzhhorod" was established.

Taking into account the high intellectual potential of the employees of the Chop Customs, the Main Customs Administration of the USSR decided to create a group for scientific labor organization based on it. Starting from 1972, the expertise of Transcarpathian specialists was adopted by all customs offices of the USSR.

In 1968, the "Tisa" customs post of the Chop Customs started its operations. For a long time, it operated only during daylight hours, and only in 1980, in preparation for the Moscow Olympics, it gained international status as an automobile customs post with a 24-hour work regime. During that time, X-ray devices were introduced for customs inspection at the "Tisa" customs post. In that year, a significant number of citizens, around 1.3 million, crossed the state border at the checkpoints of the Chop Customs.

The passage of time dictated its requirements: the flow of vehicles, cargoes, and passengers crossing the state border consistently grew, and economic ties with other countries expanded. Thus, on April 2, 1984, the Uzhhorod Customs was established on the basis of the Uzhhorod customs post, becoming an independent structural unit of the Main Customs Administration of the Ministry of Foreign Trade of the USSR.

In the same year, the Dyakivska Customs was established as an independent entity based on the Dyakiv customs post on the Ukrainian-Romanian border.

The staff structure of the Uzhhorod Customs included two operational and one cargo departments, totaling 24 customs officers. These units provided customs control and clearance for road transport, railway trains, cargoes, and passengers crossing the Ukrainian-Slovak border.

With the expansion of foreign economic ties, the need arose to improve the organization of customs control and ensure its reliability. The conditions for joint cooperation between Soviet and Czechoslovak customs offices emerged. Initiated by the Czechoslovak side with the participation of the leadership of the

Main Customs Administration of the Federal Ministry of Foreign Trade of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Main Directorate of State Customs Control of the USSR, discussions were held in August 1987 on organizing joint work between the Uzhhorod Customs and the customs office in Čierna nad Tisou (Czechoslovakia) regarding the inspection of cargo and passenger vehicles at the "Uzhhorod" border crossing.

The experience gained from the joint work of neighboring state customs offices since then allowed for the efficient clearance of citizens, cargo, and passenger vehicles, the volumes of which increased annually and significantly exceeded the available passage capacities of the approach roads, as well as the office premises and structures located at the "Uzhhorod" border crossing.

The process of democratization in the late 1980s required liberalization of customs legislation in the USSR. The country's leadership set the task of implementing new approaches to customs clearance for citizens. In the spring of 1989, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted a resolution on simplified border crossing for citizens. In connection with this, customs posts "Luzhanka," "Kosino," and "Dzvinkove" were established, subordinated to the Chop Customs, providing the opportunity for residents of bordering settlements to travel abroad.

