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**The Development of Educational, Youth, and Cultural Life in Berehove
(1938–1944)**

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Abstract. *The study examines the educational, youth, and cultural life of Berehove between 1938 and 1944, focusing on the institutional framework of education, the activities of youth organizations, and the functioning of cultural institutions during a period marked by political transformation and wartime conditions. Through the example of Berehove, the administrative center of Bereg County, the paper highlights how local society adapted to the challenges arising from the reintegration of Transcarpathia into Hungary and the circumstances of the Second World War.*

Purpose. *The purpose of the study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the educational, youth, and cultural life of Berehove between 1938 and 1944. Particular attention is devoted to the operation of educational institutions, the role of youth organizations in shaping social and patriotic values, and the characteristics of the city's cultural life. The research seeks to identify the principal challenges affecting these sectors and to assess the responses of local authorities and institutions to changing political and social conditions.*

Methods. *The research is based primarily on archival sources preserved in the Berehove Branch of the State Archives of Transcarpathian Region, supplemented by contemporary press materials, statistical data, official reports, and relevant secondary literature. The study applies historical and comparative methods, enabling the reconstruction of institutional practices and the examination of educational, youth, and cultural activities within their broader social and political context.*

Results. *The findings demonstrate that despite significant infrastructural shortcomings, financial constraints, and social difficulties, Berehove maintained a relatively diverse educational and cultural network during the examined period. Local authorities attempted to address problems related to school overcrowding and low attendance, while state-supported social programs contributed to improving access to education. Youth organizations, particularly the Scout and Levente movements, played an important role in the patriotic, physical, and moral education of young people, while also participating in social and charitable activities. Cultural life remained vibrant despite wartime restrictions. Institutions such as the Bereg County Casino, the Transcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association, and the Northeastern Hungarian Cultural Association organized numerous events, while cinema and theatre continued to attract local audiences. At the same time, wartime*

conditions increasingly influenced both educational and cultural activities, especially during the final years of the conflict.

Conclusions. *The study concludes that the educational, youth, and cultural life of Berehove between 1938 and 1944 was shaped by the interaction of political change, administrative restructuring, and wartime realities. Although institutional development was constrained by material and social difficulties, local authorities and civic organizations made considerable efforts to maintain educational services, strengthen youth engagement, and preserve cultural life. The case of Berehove illustrates both the resilience of local institutions and the broader social transformations that characterized Transcarpathia during this period.*

Keywords: *Berehove, education, youth organizations, cultural life, Transcarpathia, Second World War, social history, urban history.*

**Розвиток освітнього, молодіжного та культурного життя Берегова
(1938–1944 рр.)**

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Анотація. У статті досліджується освітнє, молодіжне та культурне життя міста Берегова в 1938–1944 роках, з особливою увагою до функціонування освітніх установ, діяльності молодіжних організацій та інституційних засад культурного життя. На прикладі адміністративного центру Березького комітату проаналізовано вплив політичних змін, адміністративних трансформацій і воєнних умов Другої світової війни на повсякденне життя місцевого суспільства та діяльність його інституцій.

Мета. Метою дослідження є комплексний аналіз освітнього, молодіжного та культурного життя Берегова в період 1938–1944 років. Особливу увагу приділено умовам функціонування освітніх закладів, ролі молодіжних організацій у вихованні та соціалізації молоді, а також основним характеристикам культурного життя міста. Дослідження покликане з'ясувати, яким чином політичні та суспільні зміни впливали на розвиток і діяльність зазначених сфер.

Методи. Джерельною основою дослідження стали документи Берегівського відділу Державного архіву Закарпатської області, доповнені матеріалами тогочасної преси, статистичними даними, офіційними звітами та науковою літературою. У роботі застосовано історичний, порівняльний та джерелознавчий методи, що дозволили реконструювати особливості функціонування освітніх, молодіжних і культурних інституцій у ширшому суспільно-політичному контексті.

Результати. Результати дослідження засвідчують, що впродовж досліджуваного періоду Берегово мало відносно розвинену та різноманітну мережу освітніх і культурних установ, однак їхня діяльність суттєво ускладнювалася інфраструктурними недоліками, фінансовими труднощами та соціальними проблемами. Місцева влада намагалася вирішувати питання переповненості шкіл та низького рівня відвідуваності навчальних закладів,

тоді як державні соціальні програми сприяли залученню до навчання дітей із малозабезпечених сімей. Молодіжні організації, насамперед скаутський та левентський рухи, відігравали важливу роль у патріотичному, фізичному та моральному вихованні молоді, а також брали участь у громадській та благодійній діяльності. Незважаючи на воєнні обставини, культурне життя міста залишалося активним: Березьке комітатське казино, Підкарпатське угорське культурне товариство та Північно-Східне угорське культурно-освітнє товариство регулярно організовували культурні заходи, тоді як кінотеатр і театральні вистави продовжували користуватися популярністю серед населення. Водночас із поглибленням воєнних подій військові та політичні чинники дедалі сильніше впливали на функціонування освітніх і культурних інституцій.

Висновки. У дослідженні встановлено, що освітнє, молодіжне та культурне життя Берегова в 1938–1944 роках формувалося під впливом політичних змін, адміністративних перетворень і воєнних умов. Попри численні матеріальні та соціальні труднощі, місцеві органи влади та громадські організації докладали значних зусиль для підтримки освітньої діяльності, організації молоді та збереження культурного життя міста. Приклад Берегова демонструє адаптивність місцевого суспільства та відображає ширші соціокультурні процеси, характерні для Закарпаття в роки Другої світової війни.

Ключові слова: Берегове, освіта, молодіжні організації, культурне життя, Закарпаття, Друга світова війна, соціальна історія, історія міста.

Problem statement. The study of educational and cultural life in Transcarpathian towns during the interwar and Second World War periods is essential for understanding the region's social and institutional transformations.

Berehove, as the administrative center of Bereg County, exemplifies processes through which political changes and wartime conditions shaped the functioning of local society. At the same time, the complex examination of institutional functioning at the local level, particularly in the fields of education, youth organizations, and cultural life, remains incomplete. It is insufficiently explored how changing political conditions influenced the everyday functioning of these sectors; therefore, their investigation contributes to a deeper understanding of the social historical characteristics of the period.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Several Hungarian and international studies have addressed the history of education and culture in Transcarpathia, primarily from institutional and educational policy perspectives. In the analysis of educational conditions of the period, the work of Csilla Fedinec is particularly noteworthy, as it examines the institutional framework of Hungarian public education in Transcarpathia [1]. Regarding local conditions, the research of Ibolya Szamborovszkyné Nagy provides important insights into the history of Hungarian-language education in Berehove [2]. Certain aspects of the city's social history are discussed in a study published in the monograph of Berehove, which addresses everyday life before and during the Second World War [3]. However, the complex examination of local social and institutional functioning, especially at the level of a specific town, in this case Berehove, remains incomplete. This is particularly true for the functioning of educational infrastructure, the activities of youth organizations, and the institutional framework of cultural life. Further research is justified by the fact that the Berehove Branch of the State Archives of Transcarpathian Region contains a significant amount of source material that has only been partially explored, offering opportunities for a more nuanced reconstruction of the period's social history.

The purpose of the article. The aim of the study is to provide a comprehensive examination of the educational, youth, and cultural life of Berehove between 1938 and 1944, with particular attention to the conditions of institutional operation, the role of youth organizations, and the characteristics of the city's cultural life.

Presentation of the main material. According to the 1941 census, 9.7% (1,706 persons) of Berehove's population was illiterate, which, compared to other Transcarpathian towns – Mukachevo 9.3%, Uzhhorod 10.1% – and to the conditions in Bereg County (10.5%), can be considered «average».

Several educational institutions operated in Berehove during the period. The state institutions included elementary schools for boys and girls, civic schools for boys and girls, an industrial and commercial apprentice school, and a grammar school [1, P. 15, 19]. Denominational schools included the Roman Catholic elementary school, the Roman Catholic convent girls' elementary school, the Greek Catholic elementary school, and the Jewish elementary school [2, P. 26–28]. However, infrastructural deficiencies significantly affected education, as there were not enough classrooms: «In Berehove there are only 22 classrooms (12 state, 3 Roman Catholic, 1 Greek Catholic, 2 Jewish schools and 4 in the convent), while the number of classes, also heavily populated, is 46» [3, P. 26–28]. For example, students of the civic school used classrooms in shifts: girls studied in the morning, while boys attended classes in the afternoon. Originally, only the girls' civic school had its own building, so the boys' school was relocated there as a temporary solution. This situation particularly affected boys' education, since the curriculum could not be fully delivered due to time constraints. The city council turned to the Ministry of Religion and Public Education to obtain funds for constructing a new building, as the city could not finance it independently [4, P. 1–3].

However, the construction did not take place, and the city was even obliged to fully assume the costs of the boys' civic school. Despite the difficulties, a new school was opened in 1942. The establishment of the commercial secondary school fit into the city leadership's concept of creating a new merchant or artisan class from landless and lower social strata. Another recurring problem was that parents simply did not enroll their children in school. In the 1941/42 academic year, 1,649 boys and 1,655 girls were of compulsory school age, but only about 1,200 were enrolled in educational institutions. Parents were informed about the compulsory schooling obligation through posters, the press, and public announcements by the mayor. Although parents eventually complied after official warnings, this often required the threat of legal proceedings. The background of absenteeism usually involved social difficulties, especially during winter when parents could not adequately clothe their children. Clothing and footwear assistance financed from the budget of the National Fund for Family and Population Protection aimed to alleviate these problems [5, P. 226–234].

One of the main pillars of rural extracurricular education was the folk high school movement. Within these frameworks – during courses lasting several weeks or months – the aim was to improve both general and professional education among the rural population while training socially conscious and professionally prepared rural leaders. During the 1930s, Protestant and Catholic youth organizations increasingly participated in organizing such courses, including Soli Deo Gloria, the Christian Youth Association, and the National Body of Catholic Agrarian Youth Associations [6, P. 116]. In Berehove, the first folk high school was organized in 1942 with the participation of the Christian Youth Association. Funding was provided partly by the county, the cities of Berehove and Mukachevo, the National Fund for Family and Population Protection, and Latorca Ltd. The courses lasted two months and hosted 20 young people from villages of Bereg County. However, the

initiative was not institutionalized, and another folk high school was organized only in 1944, when Berehove hosted a four-week national defense training organized by the Northeastern Hungarian Cultural Association. This course was larger in scale, attracting participants not only from Bereg but also from Ung, Ugocsa, and Máramaros counties [7, P. 1].

Considerable emphasis was placed on the patriotic, physical, and moral education of youth both within and outside schools. These tasks were fulfilled by the scout and Levente movements. The scout movement in Berehove began during the Austro-Hungarian period but developed institutionally during the Czechoslovak era. The local movement was based in the grammar school, where three scout troops operated: the «Bagoly» boys' troop, the «Havasigyopár» girls' troop, and the Jewish mixed troop Kadimah [8, P. 168]. After the First Vienna Award, local troops joined the Hungarian Scout Association, adopting the names 170th «Esze Tamás» for boys and 220th «Hungária» for girls. The scouts carried out extensive activities in the city; when necessary, they assisted Polish refugees and regularly participated in air defense exercises. During the war years, they organized collections for the military hospital established by the Red Cross in Berehove, sent packages to the front, cared for wounded soldiers, and performed observation duties at the hilltop lookout tower and the balcony tower of the Catholic church [9, P. 82].

The Levente movement was a specifically Hungarian institution created as a consequence of the Treaty of Trianon, which prohibited Hungary from maintaining a conscription-based army; thus the Levente institution functioned as a form of basic military training. According to the 1921 Physical Education Act, all boys aged 12 to 21 were obliged to participate in Levente training, which included weekend physical exercises, marching drills, and basic weapons training [10, P. 104–115, 104–108]. After the territorial revision, the institution was extended to the returned territories. In Berehove, the organization of the Levente movement began in April 1939, but not



without difficulties, partly due to infrastructural problems and partly due to resistance from both parents and youth [11, P. 10].

Youth passivity manifested itself in the fact that many failed to attend medical examinations. Only after Mayor Kálmán Hubay threatened legal proceedings against those who refused to participate did attendance improve. After some «encouragement,» the press enthusiastically reported on the establishment of the Levente Association: «The Berehove Leventes, numbering well over two thousand, appeared before the general public last Sunday and marched with shining eyes and chests outstretched before their commanders. A more colorful and warm celebration we have rarely, if ever, seen than this Levente review» [12, P. 4].

Organizations that withdrew from the reannexed territories, as well as associations incompatible with Hungarian national policy, had their property transferred to newly established institutions. The Berehove Levente Association, for example, received the movable and immovable property of the Pro Libertate Masonic lodge and the former Sokol association, thereby solving infrastructural problems [13, P. 3]. In 1940 three Levente homes were established – Rákóczi, Kossuth, and Esze Tamás – although an independent headquarters was obtained only in 1944. Other investments also took place, such as the establishment of a shooting range consisting of 12 firing positions. The honorary president of the association was originally Member of Parliament Jenő Ortutay, while practical matters were directed by Károly Krokovay as executive vice president (later president). According to some sources the institution united about 2,000 Leventes, although archival sources suggest the number of regular members was between 100 and 200 [14, P. 48].

In addition to physical and military education, the institution provided a wide range of opportunities through various sections (cultural, amateur theatre, singing, music, sports). Cultural events organized by Leventes were frequent, including

theatrical performances and concerts. Sports activities were also regular, and Berehove youth achieved outstanding success in the 1943 Levente football championship. The grammar school team, led by György Deák, won the VIII Corps championship and advanced to the national finals. They defeated Carei (Nagykároly) 6:1, then overcame Šahy (Ipolyság) 3:0 despite expectations, reaching the semifinals. Although they lost the semifinal 5:1 to Szombathely, the Berehove team ultimately finished third nationally [5, P. 226–234].

The center of cultural and social life in Berehove – as during the dualist and Czechoslovak periods – was the Bereg County Casino. It remained the venue of both formal and informal gatherings where the county and city elite discussed public matters. Numerous events were held there, including balls, tea afternoons, and thematic evenings. Membership exceeded 200 people in 1940, and the casino gradually opened toward broader social groups [15, P. 5].

Among cultural associations, the Transcarpathian Hungarian Cultural Association and the Northeastern Hungarian Cultural Association were particularly significant. The latter moved its headquarters from Uzhhorod to Berehove in 1943 and organized several major cultural events featuring prominent artists, including György Böződi, Kornélia Sallay, Erzsébet Török, and Dezső Zádor. The local branch also organized a national policy evening to support war orphans, featuring the Baumgarten Prize-winning poet József Erdélyi [16, P. 7].

Cinema enjoyed great popularity. The Berehove Cinema regularly screened films, often multiple screenings on Sundays. Before Hungary entered the war, foreign films also appeared in the repertoire; for example, the film adaptation of Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* was shown in January 1940. Hungarian film stars such as Pál Jávör, Antal Páger, Gyula Csontos, Zita Szelezcky, and Katalin Karády frequently appeared on screen. Theatre faced greater challenges due to the lack of a permanent company and suitable venue [17, P. 4]. Traveling troupes visited the city,

but audience interest varied. Another factor hindering theatre life was the lack of an independent building. While Uzhhorod and Mukachevo maintained permanent theatres, Berehove productions often had to share facilities. Despite these difficulties, theatre life revived somewhat by 1943: «Despite the shared building, the city's art-loving audience fills the theatre hall to capacity night after night» [19, P. 7].

A major role in organizing theatre life was played by Pál Homokay, director of the National Chamber Theatre, who obtained the concession for the northeastern theatre district and also managed the Uzhhorod Municipal Theatre. His troupe achieved success in all three cities and donated part of its revenue, gaining public support. In Berehove in May 1943 three productions were presented: *For One Night Only*, *Old Walnut Tree*, and *Nippon Rose*. Despite wartime conditions and air raids, performances continued even in April 1944: «While the play unfolds on the brightly lit stage, jokes crack and songs soar, from the road below the windows the rumble of passing convoys can be heard – armored vehicles and troop transports moving toward the Carpathians, across the Carpathians, Hungarian and German troops marching» [20, P. 2].

Conclusions. The study has demonstrated that between 1938 and 1944 the educational, youth, and cultural life of Berehove developed under the combined influence of political transformation, administrative restructuring, and wartime conditions. Despite the existence of a relatively diverse institutional network, the effectiveness of education was significantly limited by infrastructural deficiencies, financial constraints, and social problems affecting school attendance. At the same time, initiatives such as the establishment of new educational institutions and folk high school courses indicate the efforts of local authorities and organizations to modernize education and support social mobility.

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