Information and Political Provocation by Hungary Against Ukraine: Analysis of the Manipulation Around the Death of Soldier Yosyp Shebesten



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The death of Ukrainian soldier Yosyp Shebesten on July 6, 2025, at the Berehove Psychiatric Hospital, according to the official information from the Armed Forces of Ukraine — due to pulmonary artery thromboembolism — became the pretext for a large-scale and cynical propaganda attack by Hungary against Ukraine. This tragic case was not used for humanitarian compassion, but as a trigger for Hungarian state propaganda — within the framework of an information-psychological special operation aimed at discrediting the Ukrainian army, the mobilization campaign, and Ukraine's overall state policy during the brutal Russian-Ukrainian war (2014–2025).

Provocation: Scenario and Execution

Spreading of a Fake Version

Hungarian media, followed by official persons, including Hungarian Foreign Ministry State Secretary Levente Modyor, spread an unproven and emotionally charged version alleging that Yosyp Shebesten was brutally beaten during mobilization by representatives of the Territorial Recruitment and Social Support Center (TRSSC). This information lacks confirmation from medical or law enforcement authorities but was presented as a confirmed fact.

Manipulative Emphasis on Ethnic Origin

The Hungarian side deliberately emphasized the Hungarian ethnic origin of Yosyp Shebesten and his possession of dual citizenship — which directly violates Ukrainian legislation. Thus, the tragedy was used to impose a narrative about the oppression of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine and to politically exploit the issue of ethnic identity.

Staging Diplomatic-Media Pressure

The summoning of Ukrainian Ambassador Fedir Shandor to the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was accompanied by a pre-planned media campaign: provocative questions, staged recordings, and out-of-context remarks designed to portray "guilty Ukraine" even before any objective circumstances were established.

Use of Video Materials with Emotional Interpretation

Hungarian media published a video showing Yosyp Shebesten, in a state of physical exhaustion, stating he had sustained his injury independently. The language in which he spoke was not clearly

specified in public sources. Moreover, the video was presented without translation or subtitles, but with emotional voice-over commentary that imposed the image of a victim of violence by the Ukrainian side and appealed to “ethnic solidarity” among Hungarians. Such an approach created a distorted and biased perception of events.

Reaction of the Ukrainian Side

The Command of the Ground Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine promptly published an official medical explanation regarding the cause of death of serviceman Yosyp Shebesten: pulmonary artery thromboembolism, with no signs of violent impact. This conclusion was confirmed by the results of a forensic medical examination.

The Embassy of Ukraine in Hungary also issued a statement refuting the accusations against Ukrainian state institutions. However, this response became public with a certain delay, which allowed the Hungarian side to form and promote its own, self-serving narrative.

At the same time, there is a serious lack of effective counter-propaganda and crisis communication on the part of Ukraine’s official structures. Particularly critical is the passive and ineffective position of Ukraine’s Ambassador to Hungary, Fedir Shandor. Despite his professional background in social communications, his activity as a diplomat in this crisis situation proved to be professionally weak, and his expertise — clearly overrated. This reaction did not meet the level of threats and the challenges posed to the diplomatic service of Ukraine under the complex conditions of a hybrid and full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war.

Deeper Dimensions of the Situation

Hungarian Anti-Ukrainian Propaganda as Systemic Policy

Hungary consistently and demonstratively uses the ethnic factor as a tool of external anti-Ukrainian propaganda. This is not only about informational manipulation, but about an integrated system of influence, which includes:

- Promotion of Hungarian nationalism and separatist ideas;
- Continuous interference in Ukraine’s internal affairs through a network of Hungarian political structures that essentially function as an influence agency in Zakarpattia: KMKSZ, the eponymous party of Hungarians in Ukraine, the Democratic Party of Hungarians of Ukraine, as well as deputies in local self-government bodies and representatives in some structures of state authorities;
- Legalized practice of dual citizenship, despite its prohibition under Ukrainian legislation;
- Cultivation of the image of the "ethnic Hungarian" as a separate supra-national category, allegedly possessing special rights beyond Ukrainian identity;
- Historical revisionist assertions about the supposed “natural belonging” of Zakarpattia to Hungary, which undermines the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Political Coordination with the Russian Federation

A telling indicator is the recent address by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to the Hungarian leadership proposing “joint actions to protect the rights of national minorities in

Ukraine" (July 2025). This step confirms the existence of a coordinated information-political attack within the framework of the hybrid war that the Russian Federation is waging against Ukraine. In this context, the regime of Viktor Orbán acts as an informal ally of Moscow, having long been involved in implementing destructive scenarios in favor of the aggressor.

Destructive Impact on European Solidarity

Hungarian actions have a systemic undermining effect not only on Hungarian-Ukrainian relations but also on the level of the entire European Union. The dissemination of biased and destructive narratives about Ukraine:

- Complicates negotiations regarding Ukraine's integration into the EU;
- Fuels skepticism in member states regarding military and financial aid;
- Fractures the unity of the EU's policy of support for Ukraine during wartime.

Internal Problems in Ukraine

Despite the open information attack by Hungary and a coordinated disinformation campaign, the response from Ukrainian state bodies remains insufficient and unstructured. Among the key problems are the following:

Weakness of the Communication Strategy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine

Under conditions of hybrid and full-scale Russian-Ukrainian war (2014–2025), as well as active information interference by neighboring states, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine demonstrates a significant lack of proactive stance, systematic public communication, effective crisis response, and strategic interaction with international partners and the media.

Lack of Timely Public Response by Competent Authorities

Disinformation attacks aimed at discrediting Ukrainian state institutions remain unanswered in a timely, reasoned, and consistent manner by the authorized state bodies responsible for such functions under current legislation.

Insufficient Counteraction to the Influence Network of the Hungarian Regime in Zakarpattia

Amid the long-term activity of structures connected to Viktor Orbán's political regime, the Ukrainian state shows insufficient determination in counteracting the subversive anti-Ukrainian influence of Hungarian political lobbying networks — in particular, KMKSZ and its affiliated political and public organizations. Their activity systematically affects the political, cultural, and informational situation in the Zakarpattia region, forming an environment loyal to external interference and national fragmentation.

Formalism in Work with National Minorities

Responses of state institutions to appeals or inquiries from national minorities are often formalistic, lacking adequate informational support, interethnic dialogue, and public defense of national interests. As a result, this creates a vacuum that is filled by external influences and manipulations.

Conclusions

1. The death of a Ukrainian serviceman of Hungarian ethnic origin was used by the Hungarian authorities as an information-political pretext for launching another attack on Ukraine in the international information space.
2. The incident became part of a hybrid anti-Ukrainian operation, implemented both internationally and on the territory of Zakarpattia — primarily through deliberate manipulation of public opinion among Ukrainian citizens of Hungarian origin. The coordination of this campaign by the aggressor state — the Russian Federation — is confirmed by the diplomatic and media activities of its official representatives.
3. Ukraine requires an urgent review of its diplomatic tactics, strengthening of strategic counter-propaganda, and influence in both the international and internal information space — especially in regions subject to external influence, particularly Zakarpattia, and in neighboring states that serve as platforms for information pressure.
4. The Ukrainian government must firmly and systematically communicate real guarantees of the rights of all citizens, regardless of ethnic origin, including the Hungarian national minority — while clearly defending national dignity, the interests of the titular Ukrainian nation, and the sovereignty of the Ukrainian state from any external encroachments or provocations.

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