The existence of Carpathian Ukraine as an independent state is certainly a significant period in the history of the country. And given certain features in general, we can say that this country has become the prototype of modern Ukraine. So it is not surprising that in addition to honouring the memory of the then statesmen, historians are interested in many questions: to understand the idea immediately, what was the problem, was there a full chance for Ukrainians, and maybe from the beginning Carpathian Ukraine was a hopeless project. This problem will be considered in this paper.


According to the historian Mykola Vehesh, the idea of independence in Zakarpattia began in the early twentieth century in the form of the Western Ukrainian People's Republic, but then they were defeated and the territories became part of Czechoslovakia.

Over the next decades, Ukrainian party activity evolved and gained strength. This made it possible in October 1938 to form an autonomous government - the Council of Ministers of Subcarpathian Rus – which united both Ukrainophile and Russophile trends.

Another Uzhhorod historian, Marian Tokar, says that this became possible as a result of the Munich conference and pressure on Czechoslovakia from Germany, Hungary and Poland.

The first prime minister of Subcarpathian Rus was Andrii Brodii, who held several meetings and later turned out to be a Hungarian spy. After Brodii's arrest, Ukrainophile Avhustyn Voloshyn, who began his political career before the collapse of Austria-Hungary, became Prime Minister.

As a result of the fact that the new government was formed from the pro-Ukrainian population in the territory of Subcarpathian Rus, an internal political crisis began. At the same time, in November 38, after the Vienna Arbitration, a large part of Ukrainian lands was ceded to Hungary, and this was already the basis for the economic crisis. According to Mykhailo Basarab, they both became quite significant for autonomy.

The domestic political crisis was exacerbated by anti-Ukrainian Hungarian agitation and confrontation between generations of Ukrainophiles. Despite this, the autonomy continued to gain influence: the security service, the police, the judiciary, and the Carpathian Sich were established.
In January 1939, a step was taken to resolve the political crisis – a single party, the Ukrainian National Union, was formed, uniting all nationally conscious forces. Fedir Reva becomes the leader of this party.

However, the Czech government did not like his views, so before the election to the Sejm, the official was dismissed. As we can see, Czechoslovakia continued to put pressure on Subcarpathian Rus, adjusting its domestic policy. Even after UNO's election victory, the President of Czechoslovakia constantly postponed the opening of the Seimas.

On March 14, 1939, the government of Subcarpathian Rus at a meeting proclaimed independence, which was adopted the next day. From that moment on, Carpathian Ukraine emerged with President Avhustyn Voloshyn.

The already mentioned Mykola Vehesh notes that the decision was made more by international factors, in particular, the concentration of Hungarian troops and the declaration of independence by Slovakia.

As we can see, Carpathian Ukraine approached the stage of its independence with a rather significant economic crisis, a difficult geopolitical situation, a rather young and small army, although quite united around the idea of independence. Simultaneously with the declaration of independence, Hungary began its offensive on the territory of the new state. Voloshyn, hoping for a diplomatic solution to the conflict, constantly sends telegrams to Germany, the United States, Romania and other countries. However, the reaction was unsatisfactory. So the Third Reich advised: "not to resist the Hungarian invasion", without giving the necessary protectorate.

Partisans and Sich members have to defend the land from the Hungarian army. But they could not defeat the larger regular troops.

Mikhail Basarab notes that the result could have been different, if not for tactical mistakes, in particular in relation to the Czechs. Numerous battles with them immediately before the Hungarian invasion brought significant losses. At the same time, there were conflicts between the government and the leaders of the Carpathian Sich, which also escalated a few days before the offensive.

One way or another, at the end of March 1939, the President of the Republic, Avhustyn Voloshyn, and part of the government headed by the Prime Minister emigrated. And already in May, Carpathian Ukraine ceased to exist.

As we can see, the actual declaration of independence can be considered rather hopeless, both in view of the internal problems in the organization and the external conflicts with Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the lack of support from other states.

But was it possible to approach independence in other conditions to really have a chance for further development. Indeed, we can say that it was possible to reconcile all the problems with the Sich. This would save the Carpathian Sich from conflicts with the Czech army and its own government. Of course, the general problem in this case remained, the Hungarian offensive. However, a similar situation was observed at that time in Slovakia, which was eventually able to maintain independence, although in that case it was supported by Germany.

But unlike its neighbours, Carpathian Ukraine borders the Soviet Union, which, according to Stepan Vidnyansky, would have reacted very sharply to granting the protectorate of the Third Reich to the Ukrainians of Transcarpathia, as this could incite Soviet Ukraine. In this case, the geopolitical position of the newly created state played against it.

Therefore, to call Carpathian Ukraine an untapped chance for Ukrainians is not entirely legitimate. After all, the Carpathian state, although it did not last long for these
reasons, it did almost everything that depended on it and gave impetus to the
development of the Ukrainian idea.

The government paid considerable attention to the education and culture of the
region. Old educational institutions were restored and new ones were opened,
science, literature, art, and publishing developed.

All this together made Carpathian Ukraine a real symbol of statehood. The
reactions of the Ukrainian diaspora confirm this. They organized the collection of
funds, food and other material assistance to the population of Transcarpathia. At the
same time, it incited Galicians to act. Thus, a wave of rallies and demonstrations
spread in Poland. Thus, Carpathian Ukraine was able to show that the ideas of an
independent state do not leave people.

Thus, after analysing the history of the emergence and development of the idea
of an independent Ukrainian state in Transcarpathia, we can say that Carpathian
Ukraine was purely politically really a hopeless project, both given some internal
conflicts and the external situation in the majority. But this state was able to do
something else - to become a symbol of the Ukrainian idea, both for the diaspora and
for those who at that time lived in modern Ukraine.

References:

