

THE INCORPORATION OF WESTERN UKRAINIAN LANDS INTO THE UKRAINIAN SSR AND ITS LEGISLATIVE FORMALIZATION

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The events unfolding in Ukraine since February 24, 2022, confirm the relevance of the issue of the Ukrainian territorial unity. The struggle of Ukraine for independence and indivisibility remains in the focus of research until the historical path of the Ukrainians toward independent statehood is thoroughly analyzed. Therefore, studying the incorporation of the Western Ukrainian lands into the Ukrainian SSR during World War II is very important, as most research on this topic was conducted under the influence of the Soviet ideology, which contradicts the modern review of those events.

The research is focused on the following tasks: 1) to identify the prerequisites and reasons for the incorporation of Western Ukrainian lands, which were part of Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia, into the newly established Ukrainian SSR; 2) to highlight the characteristics of the incorporation process and its legislative formalization; 3) to determine the legal consequences and significance of the incorporation of Western Ukrainian lands into the Ukrainian SSR.

The territory of Ukraine was historically not unified but was part of various states, which led to the emergence of the idea of unity. The Act of Unification between the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR) and the Western Ukrainian People's Republic (ZUNR) in 1919 confirmed the Ukrainians' aspiration for unity, but actual unification did not take place because of external political factors, particularly the Ukrainian-Polish War of 1918–1919. The UNR sought international recognition but, facing the Bolshevik threat, signed the Warsaw Treaty of 1920 with Poland, by which the latter got part of the Ukrainian lands. At the same time, Bukovyna was ceded to Romania, and Transcarpathia to Czechoslovakia. These states used the Ukrainian territories as buffer zones against Bolshevik Russia. The events of 1918–1920 laid the groundwork for the incorporation of the Western Ukrainian lands into the Ukrainian SSR. A key role in that process was played by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, which defined the spheres of influence between the USSR and Germany.

The process of incorporating the Western Ukrainian lands into the Ukrainian SSR was multifaceted, as these territories were part of Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia. The Soviet authorities gradually annexed those lands between 1939 and 1947, using political and military situations to carry out an occupation under the guise of "liberation." The first territories to be annexed were those that had been transferred to Poland in 1920. The elections to the Ukrainian National Assembly of the Western Ukraine in 1939 were fraudulent, and the results were inflated. That was followed by the laws of the USSR and the Ukrainian SSR regarding the inclusion of those lands into the Ukrainian SSR. The annexation of

the Northern Bukovina took place in 1940 after pressure from the USSR on Romania. Bukovina was incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR without the involvement of the Ukrainian SSR authorities. The same applied to the Transcarpathia, where the Soviet authorities, despite the agreements with Czechoslovakia, carried out the annexation through local committees, and in 1945, they concluded an agreement with Czechoslovakia. All the territories became part of the Ukrainian SSR as administrative-territorial units, and the process of their annexation was controlled by the USSR, presented as national liberation, even though most of the uprisings were organized by the Soviet government.

Within the research, the following tasks have been accomplished: the events of 1918-1920, which preceded the annexation of the Western Ukrainian lands to the Ukrainian SSR, have been analyzed; the process of annexation of these territories in the period from 1939 to 1945 has been characterized; the legislative formalization of this process was studied, and its significance for contemporary state-building processes in Ukraine has been determined. The annexation process was part of the efforts to unite all the Ukrainian territories, but in reality, it became an instrument of the Soviet occupation. The basis for its initiation was the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and the process lasted from 1939 to 1947, using the internal and external political situation in Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia. The Soviet authorities portrayed it as the "liberation" of the Ukrainians, although most of the national uprisings were organized not by the population but by the Soviet regime.

Summing up, the laws that formalized the annexation were passed in 1939-1945, all the territories became part of the Ukrainian SSR as administrative-territorial units. Under the Soviet power, Ukraine remained a formal republic under Moscow control, with further Sovietization and multiple repressions.

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