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**ETHNIC BACKGROUND OF WORLD WAR II**

**(Review of the monograph: Homenyuk I. The Harbingers of World War II. Border Conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe. From the collapse of the Empires to Gliwice Provocation. Kharkiv: Book Club “Family Leisure Club”, 2017. 352 p.)**

**ЕТНІЧНЕ ТЛО ДРУГОЇ СВІТОВОЇ ВІЙНИ**

**(Рецензія на монографію: Гоменюк І. Провісники Другої світової. Прикордонні конфлікти в Центрально-Східній Європі. Від розпаду імперій до Гляйвіцької провокації. Харків: Книжковий клуб “Клуб Сімейного Дозвілля”, 2017. 352 с.)**

The creation of a high-quality popular science literature is an important public task. History fulfills its social and cultural functions by means of the popular science literature. The latter is the mediator between professional historians and society. “Translating” the information from a special (narrowly specialized, scientific) language, into the language, understood by a wide readership, the science literature functions as an effective educational and cognitive information channel.

“The Harbingers of World War II ...” – the second monograph of the founder and editor of the historical Facebook page “The Mischievous Acts of the Eastern European Cleo”, by Ivan Homenyuk, the lawyer. The monograph “The Harbinger of World War II ...” came to light in the framework of the public educational project “LIKBEZ. Historical Front”, whose purpose is to popularize the Ukrainian history in various forms. The initial motivation for its creation was to counteract the Russian propaganda, in which the falsification of history occupies a prominent place. And Ivan Homenyuk’s book emphasizes that the new Russia’s tactics in the modern hybrid war against Ukraine and Europe is not a new one. Even then, in the conflicts there were used the theories of “the historical injustice” and the contemporary “resentment of the neighbour”, replicating them both domestically, in neighbouring states and in the international arena.

It’s not a secret that the history studios, the object of which are the peoples of the Central European region and the processes of their development in the Central European region, are extremely topical and important for the national history.

Analyzing the conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe, Ivan Homenyuk appeals to the earlier historical events – the territorial, national and economic disputes among the countries of the Central Eastern region of the interwar period. The diplomatic intrigues, the territorial claims, the border conflicts and the provocations are exactly the focus of Ivan Homenyuk's attention. And there is no coincidence, as the author notes, "all the neighbouring states of the region had the territorial claims to the neighbours, not to mention those, who did not gain their independence after World War I" (p. 6). That is why the monograph is based on the problem territorial principle, when the peculiarities and the course of the German-Czechoslovak, the Polish-Czechoslovak, the Polish-Lithuanian, the Hungarian-Czechoslovak and the Hungarian-Slovak relations in the interwar years are considered. Accordingly, the conflicts in the Balkans, the territorial expansion of the Soviet Union and the disputes, involving the non-state nations of that time (in particular, the Ukrainians and the Byelorussians), were out of the interest circle.

The relations between Germany and Czechoslovakia were, perhaps, the most controversial since the end of World War I. And Hitler made a good use of the mood in the Sudeten land. A generous funding came from Berlin, the party literature was sent, the skilled agitators came, not only they: within a year or two, there appeared the skillful organizers of the mass riots and the individual terror against the political opponents. The author pays a special attention to the diplomatic conflicts between Prague and Berlin, backing them with the official documents and statements of the politicians. From the point of view of a modern period, the thesis is interesting about the success of the Reich propaganda, which exposed the Sudeten Germans on the international scene as the innocent victims of the Czech arbitrariness and persecution (p. 40). A chain reaction was also noticeable when the territorial claims of the Third Reich intensified the claims to Czechoslovakia by the Poles and the Hungarians, who demanded the restoration of the historical justice in accordance with the ethnic principle.

That is why, the following extract of the book seems logical about the disputes between Czechoslovakia and Poland over Teshin region, which immediately after World War I became the apple of discord. According to the decision of the Entente, the region and the city of Teshin were divided between the two countries. This division did not satisfy any of the two countries. Interesting, among other things, are the information wars waged by the two Slavic states. Thus, with Prague's submission to the Western press, it was increasingly heard that only Czechoslovakia in Central and Eastern Europe was an "island of peace and democracy" in a sea of "anarchy and reaction", convincing in a priori Polish insolence (p. 116). On the other hand, they widely popularized the words of Józef Pilsudski that "the Czechoslovak Republic, artificially and ugly formed, is not only the basis of European balance, but, on the contrary, it is a weak link" (p. 133).

The culminating moment was September 30, 1938, when Warsaw presented the ultimatum to Prague, demanding that all the troops and police be withdrawn from Zaolzya. Czechoslovakia, broken by the Munich Treaty, had to obey. However, more important here is another thing – within a year the mutual claims of the Czechs and the Poles made no sense: neither Czechoslovakia nor Poland remained on the map of Europe. Just as the post-war fate of the disputed territories was decided neither in Prague nor Warsaw, but in Moscow (pp. 170–174).

It seems remarkable how far the events of the mid-20th century are the echo, as in the case of the Ukrainian-Polish, in modern Polish-Slovak relations. When Lech Kaczynski, the President of the Republic of Poland, inaugurated the monument to Józef Kuras-Ogny in 2006, who was accused of the deaths of the civilians in the Slovak village of Nova Bela, it provoked a strong reaction from the Slovak and European civic organizations (p. 176).

The relations between Lithuania and Poland in the interwar period were significant for the European history. Even so, as Ivan Homenyuk points out, before the outbreak of World War I, it would be very easy for the skeptics to deny the very likelihood of Lithuania's declaration of independence. One of the roots of the future conflict, the researcher sees in the active struggle against the Polish influences of the Lithuanian national revival representatives. At the same time, as in Ukraine, the choice of the Lithuanian (as well as the Ukrainian) or Polish identity became the cause of family enmity, as it was in the case with Andrzej Ronomanski or Michal Quint and the others (p. 187).

The agreement in Suwalki on October 7, 1920, according to which Poland recognized Vilnius and Vilenshchyna as the part of Lithuania, bound Pilsudski's hands. Therefore, the solution of the topical issue was planned in the guise of the "rebellion". It is notable how General Lucian Zheligovsky was perceived. Ivan Homenyuk draws attention to it. Although his popularity during the interwar period in the Polish society, and especially in Vilnius region, was huge, he became one of the most negative characters in Lithuania (p. 217, 218). This refers to the subject of the heroes and the anti-heroes of the national stories. In general, the author draws parallels between the current "L. Zheligovsky's" method and modern events in the Crimea and the Donbass.

The Polish-Lithuanian conflict is mentioned, when the two states during the interwar period, were in the state of a deaf confrontation without any diplomatic and trade contacts. If desired, the Polish army could quickly break the Lithuanian resistance – at the expense of the quantity superiority. However, this did not happen because the ruling top of Poland did not want the annexation of the Lithuanian territories, and the consequences of the Lithuanians to the Polish occupation were unpredictable, and that was deadly for the Polish economy and statehood.

The defeat of the Austria-Hungarian Empire in World War I led Hungary to a national disaster. According to the Treaty of Trianon, signed by the Entente countries at the Trianon Palace of the Versailles Complex, Hungary received only one third of the land considered to be Hungarian in the Austria-Hungarian Empire, including Transcarpathia, which was the part of Czechoslovakia. Hungary lost 3 million ethnic Hungarians, about 90 % of the forest land, more than 80 % of the mining and metallurgical complex, and the major part of the banking system. During the interwar period the losses caused the revanchism, which exists in Hungary at present.

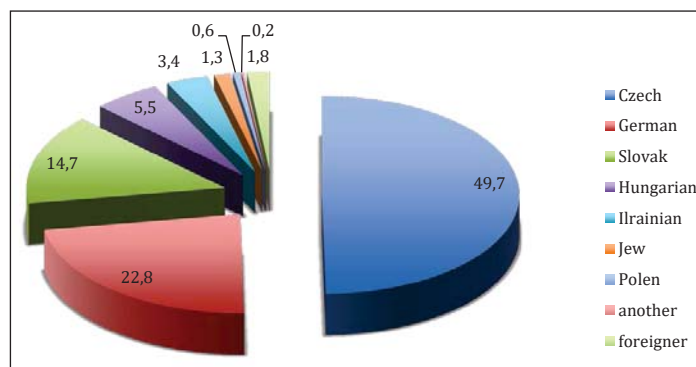
As nowadays, the political expediency pushed the countries of Central and Eastern Europe into paradoxes, for instance, the union of Hungary and Poland, "reaffirming the thesis of the absence in politics of the eternal alliances and eternal enmities" (p. 279). For the Ukrainian reader, the part of this section is likely to be particularly interesting and useful as it relates to the events of the Carpathian Ukraine and the joint struggle of our neighbours against the Sichovyks.

From the history of Central and Eastern Europe (with its territorial claims almost all to all) we can make very interesting conclusions. So, the book provides a great deal of material (to which the author draws a reader's attention from time to time) to understand the origins of the "hybrid war" that Russia is currently conducting against Ukraine and Europe. The experience of the Central European peoples during the interwar period allows to trace the similar methods and approaches of provocations, the organization of the terrorist groups, etc.

Despite the obvious positive items of the publication and a clear recommendation to all concerned, reading the monograph has raised a number of reflections that are subjective.

Recognizing a rather light author's style (which is obviously necessary for the popular science literature), the text appears to be overburdened with the military terminology and details, concerning the involvement of the certain military units into the border conflicts during the interwar period. Instead, it would be logical to include at least a minimum amount of the maps that would only add some information on the border conflicts.

To our subjective point of view, more attention should be paid to the ethnic composition of the states as one of the elements of the conflict in Central and Eastern Europe (though, for the sake of justice, Ivan Homenyuk does not omit this issue). More informative and obvious, probably, would be the following diagram but not a simple statement of the residence of 3,25 – 3,3 million ethnic Germans in Czechoslovakia, or about 23 % of the total population of the country (p. 16).



Without any doubt, the monograph will be of value not only to the professional historians, but first and foremost (what the author counts on) for the average Ukrainian reader, partly confusing and poorly oriented in the vicissitudes of the war conflicts in Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, Ivan Homenyuk not only reveals a historical fact, but also encourages the formation of his own view on the difficult pages of the past.

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