

Ukraine celebrates Independence Day

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On Thursday, August 24, Ukraine marks the 32nd anniversary of Independence.

Independence Day is an annual holiday in Ukraine, which is celebrated on August 24 on the occasion of the adoption of the Act of Proclamation of Independence of Ukraine in 1991. The document, adopted by an extraordinary session of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, proclaimed the creation of an independent Ukrainian state.

The act was not the first attempt to legitimize Ukraine's independence: at different times in the stormy 20th century, various regions of Ukraine announced the creation of self-governing states. Three of those did so in 1918. In January of that year, the Ukrainian People's Republic adopted the Fourth Universal, declaring independence.

"Today, the Ukrainian People's Republic becomes an independent and self-sufficient Free Sovereign State of the Ukrainian People. We seek to live in harmony and friendship with all the neighboring states: Russia, Poland, Austria, Romania, Turkey, and others, but none of them can interfere in the life of the Independent Ukrainian Republic, where power shall belong only to the People of Ukraine," the document says.

In the same year, the Kuban and West Ukrainian People's Republics declared their independence as well. None of these state formations lasted long: the Bolsheviks seized Kuban and the Ukrainian People's Republic in 1920, while the statehood in the west of Ukraine never survived the Polish-Ukrainian war, so in July 1919, the lands of Bukovyna, Halychyna, and Zakarpattia were annexed by Poland, Romania, and Czechoslovakia.

In 1939, another state emerged on the territory of Ukraine - Carpathian Ukraine - which a year earlier had gained autonomy as part of Czechoslovakia. However, the move left Hungary dissatisfied over its own territorial claims. In the early hours of March 14, Hungarian units invaded Carpathian Ukraine along with Hitler's troops, and literally the next day the Seim announced the independence of Carpathian Ukraine. But already on March 18, Hungarian troops occupied the region.

Ukrainian statehood did not end there as the governing bodies of the mentioned states continued to operate in exile.

The next declaration of the restoration of the independence of the Ukrainian state was passed on June 30, 1941, in Lviv, which at that time was occupied by German troops. The act of restoration of the Ukrainian state was pronounced by Yaroslav Stetsko, the first deputy leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), Stepan Bandera. But it was not in Germany's plans to create an independent Ukraine, so in September 1941, the Germans arrested and executed OUN leaders.

And in just 50 years, Ukrainians made the fifth, most successful, attempt to build their own self-governing state: on August 24, 1991, Ukraine gained its long-awaited independence, which its citizens are now defending against the descendants of the Bolsheviks.

Ievgen Matiushenko