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HISTORY

POLITICAL PROGRAM OF THE SUBCARPATIAN AGRICULTURAL UNION PARTY (SAU) IN TRANSCARPATHIA (1918-1938)

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the activity of the political party Subcarpathian Agricultural Union in 1918-1938 in Subcarpathian Rus. The article analyzes the political programs of the party, describes the various stages of its activities. The peculiarities of the party's cooperation with Hungary have been studied. The role of the party in the occupation of Transcarpathia by Hungarian troops at the end of the existence of the Czechoslovak Republic was determined.

Keywords: First Czechoslovak Republic, Subcarpathian Rus, political parties, political programs.

After the First World War, Transcarpathia became part of Czechoslovakia under the name of Subcarpathian Rus. There were many parties in Czechoslovakia. All of them had a characteristic feature: the formation on a national basis. Traditionally, Russophilism was a strong political trend in Subcarpathian Rus. One of the first autonomous Russophile parties in the region was the Subcarpathian Agricultural Union (SAU). The party became popular among the population immediately after its formation.

The aim of the article is to study the political activity of the Subcarpathian Agricultural Union.

The source base of the article is the funds of the State Archives of the Transcarpathian region [1]. Scientific works by M. Tokar[2], M. Boldyzhar[3], I. Pop [4,5], M. Barnovsky [6], were written on the basis of archival sources. The scientific research of these authors provides valuable factual material about the activities of a political party.

The political party was established in the summer of 1920 in Mukachevo. The initiators of its creation were the wealthy peasantry of the region. M. Lakes became the leader of the party, and F. Chulak became his deputy. The party newspaper was called "Karpatorusky Visnyk" [4,s.310]. Party leaders wrote an appeal to Transcarpathian peasants. In the address they named the reason of a bad situation of peasantry: "the peasantry is silent, isn't organized for protection of the interests" [1]. The task of the party was to improve the living conditions of the people: "not to be poor, not to starve, not to walk in torn clothes, to have bread, work, housing."[1].

The party's program was approved on June 10, 1920, by J. Kaminsky. It consisted of three sections, which contained requirements for the Czechoslovak government.[5, s.44]

The first section was called "Economic Requirements". It consisted of the following provisions:

- 1. Transfer of state and lordly lands to landless and landless people.
 - 2. Urgent land reform.
- 3. Ordering and development of animal husbandry and dairy farming, pastures and meadows.

- 4. Development of the forest industry and forests of peasant communities.
- 5. Establishment of economic and industrial unions in each village.
 - 6. Ensuring fair requirements for each worker.
- 7. Development of the forestry and mining industry in the region, opening of new factories, employment of workers and fulfillment of their requirements, settlement of wages.
- 8. Introduction of a fair tax system, tax exemption for the poor.
- 9. Opening of new salt and coal mines, lower salt prices.
 - 10. Development of free tobacco for their needs.
- 11. Ensuring fairness and free trade in the market. Fighting usury.
- 12. Construction of rural and regional highways and railways[1].

Thus, the party focused on improving the economic situation of the region. According to M. Tokar, the SAU was the only political organization that considered political demands to be secondary. [2, s.63].

However, this was a short-lived phenomenon in the party's activities and political demands quickly came to the fore. The second section, "Political Requirements", contained provisions on the establishment of the borders of Subcarpathian Rus from Poprad to the Tisza, the unification of all Ruthenians of the republic, the immediate introduction of autonomy with their Ruthenian language and under the leadership of local officials.

It is worth noting that the demands for the autonomy of the region were presented in the form of a friendly reminder to the Czechoslovak government. At the same time, SAU did not make any anti-state demands, showing loyalty to the government's policy. The third section, "Religious Requirements," concerned interfaith relations, freedom of conscience, and the introduction of religious self-government on a democratic basis. The issue of priests' salaries was raised. This was due to the presence of a large number of clergy among the party members [2, s.64].

At the heart of the SAU's material and technical base, according to the charter, were voluntary donations. They covered party expenses. Fixed membership fees were not paid. Therefore, it is difficult to establish the exact number of party members.

The party structure consisted of a regional executive committee, to which district and village branches were subordinated. The management of the cells was entrusted to the head and the secretary. The main office was headed by M. Demko. Despite the approval of the statute and program of the SAU, its official activities began only on June 24, 1920. Thus the existence of the SAU became legal and the party gained the right to political activity within the Czechoslovak Republic [7, s.947].

It should be noted that at the first stage of the party's development, some politicians of the region, including the then governor of Subcarpathian Rus G. Zhatkovych, welcomed it. SAU was popular among officials of the regional administration. The reason for this popularity was the political party's favorable attitude towards national minorities and various religious denominations and its composition was multinational. This approach ensured membership in the party of Hungarian-speaking clergy, officials, and village teachers.

Describing the party's activities at the initial stage, M. Boldyzhar noted that both the regional and district leadership of the party carried out active work to implement the main provisions of the political program [3, s.25]. At the meeting and in the correspondence of the party members, the question of replacing the governor of the region and regional government officials with citizens born in Subcarpathian Russia was raised. The party leadership tried to contact other parties, especially the peasant ones, before the elections and to resolve important issues.

The policy of the state authorities regarding the realization of the autonomous rights of Subcarpathian Rus forced the leaders of various parties to look for political allies. The possibility of cooperation increased due to the fact that national parties were against the autonomy of Subcarpathian Rus. The majority of the local population were peasants, so the idea of forming a single bloc of political parties to protect the rights and freedoms of farmers became very popular. Moreover, the necessary positive changes in the agricultural sector of the economy have not taken place.

Given these circumstances, the SAU proposed to create a single political party of farmers in Subcarpathian Russia. The idea of such a union was before. However, at that time the political parties of the region believed that the need for such an alliance would not arise, as the government would fulfill its obligations and grant the region autonomy.

In the summer of 1921, the SAU sent its proposals for the formation of a party coalition to several autonomous political organizations. This initiative was supported by other parties. On January 16, 1922, representatives of Russophile agricultural parties gathered in Uzhhorod for a joint meeting. An agreement was reached to begin organizational work on the implementation of the party union between the agricultural, labor,

farmers' parties and the SAU. A commission of 12 people was created, which included: M. Braschaiko, Y. Dobey, A. Tovt, A. Gagatko, K. Prokop, D. Simulyk, I. Mochkosh, I. Iltio, V. Gomonai, J. Kaminsky, V. Ryzhak, M. Latsanych [2, s.65].

The new political party was named the Russian Agricultural Autonomous Party (RAAP). On February 21, 1922, the RAAP program was released. Its main provisions consisted of the following issues:

- 1. Unite the local population to protect its political, national and cultural interests.
- 2. To demand the establishment of fair borders from the Poprad River to the Tisza River in order to unite all the Ruthenians of the Czechoslovak Republic into a single administrative-territorial unit.
- 3. Advocate for the introduction of self-government (autonomy) guaranteed by the peace treaty. The party's position on this issue was that only full autonomy guaranteed freedom, economic and cultural development.
- 4. Conducting elections to the regional Seimas and local authorities at all levels.
- 5. Approval of the Ruthenian language as the state language.
- 6. Appointment of local people to positions in the gendarmerie, police, financial institutions, railways, post office, in the management of factories and state forests.
- 7. Ensuring the rights and freedoms of national minorities, their cultural and national development, as well as the importance of tolerant interethnic relations in the republic.
- 8. Scientific freedom, provision of free education, construction of schools in villages. A university was required to provide higher education.
- Proclamation of freedom of the press, assembly, elections.
- 10. The party advocated a fair settlement of religious disputes and the abolition of church taxes [1].

From the above provisions it is clear that the party had a clearly defined Russophile character, which was determined by the position in language policy and national and cultural orientation. Therefore, the pro-Ukrainian Farmers' Party withdrew from the union. The peculiarity of this political formation was that each of the parties continued its independent organizational activities in the region until the summer of 1922.

At the beginning of February 1922, the constituent assembly of SAU took place in the village of Zarichevo. The meeting was attended by 350 people. The leadership of the local branch was elected: chairman - V. Pekar, deputy - M. Penyak, secretary - I. Gerech, cashier - V. Kovach, controller - V. Mulesa, clerk - P. Magda [2, s.67].

On March 22, 1922, a meeting of fifteen local parties was held. This meeting had no analogues in the political history of the region, discussed the political situation in Subcarpathian Russia and the problem of deepening the crisis in this area. It was required to convene the Seimas with the participation of all parties and to establish the borders of the region. The government's current program plan has been widely criticized [6, s.85].

The RAAP structure was created in the traditional way. The party leadership was formed of leaders of united political organizations. The leadership was engaged in the creation of local branches, the organization of festivals of Russian culture and political gatherings. Such actions with the participation of A. Gagatko, A. Brody, I. Mochkosh, J. Kaminsky, V. Ryzhak and others were held on May 25, 1922 in the village of Velyki Luchky, and on May 28 in Zarichev. Each time the speakers explained the provisions of the party's program and adopted resolutions of the meeting, which concerned both issues of national and local importance [2, s.69].

On June 5, a mass meeting was held in the village of Rakoshino in the Mukachevo region. They adopted a resolution containing the following requirements:

- 1. Rapid call of elections to the Subcarpathian Seimas on democratic principles.
- 2. Removal from power of Uzhhorod officials in whom the people have lost confidence.
- 3. Introduction of the local language in all spheres of life
- 4. The requirement of complete freedom of religion and church self-government.
 - 5. Carrying out land reform.
 - 6. Tax reduction.
- 7. Payment of pensions to war invalids, widows and orphans.
 - 8. Protest against the new taxes.
 - 9. Abolition of taxes on the sale of livestock.
- 10. Reimbursement of expenses due to an unfair exchange rate.
 - 11. Protection of forests and pastures.
- 12. Permission for free production of tobacco for own needs [1].

These points indicated the main problems of the inhabitants of Transcarpathia of that period. Regarding the RAAP's attitude to the policy of the Czechoslovak government, the participants of the meeting noted that since the authorities did not fulfill the promises made to the deputies on March 24, 1922, the party could not trust the government. Therefore, beginning in the fall of 1922, the RAAP and with it the SAU as part of this political union moved to the opposition. SAU began to conduct mass campaigns among the local population. These actions provoked a negative reaction from the authorities, which tried to disrupt the party's activities by various methods. SAU meetings were closed several times, in other cases the party's planned events were banned in advance.

Controversy grew among the RAAP leadership, which led to the party's disintegration in December 1923. The SAU was also experiencing a deep crisis within the party. As a result of this crisis, the party ceased to exist, and a new party, the Autonomous Agricultural Union (AAU), was created on its basis [4,s 323]. The leaders of the party were I. Mochkosh, I. Kurtyak, Y. Feldeshiy. The party leadership decided to convene a congress and begin work to restore the party structure. The congress took place on January 26, 1924 in Khust, where 218 delegates from 163 villages of the region, 34 guests and 8 journalists were invited. This

congress of the AAU became a famous event in the political life of the region. He identified the further priorities of the entire Russophile movement and the AAU party as its leader [7, s.948].

Speeches by party leaders were heard at a congress in Khust. The AAU program was unanimously adopted, the main directions of work were determined. The party's participation in the first parliamentary elections in the region, scheduled for 1924, was discussed. The AAU decided to take part in them independently, and a committee of 100 members was chosen to coordinate the work.

The Congress in Khust approved the party's program. It consisted of three sections. The first was called "Economic Requirements" and consisted of 18 items. In addition to the previously known requirements for land reform, regulation of the transfer of land to peasants, the allocation of forests, the development of livestock and dairy farming, there are more specific. In particular, the AAU opposed the sale of forests by foreign corporations, for the settlement of fair earnings of farmers, factory workers, protection of the working class and meeting all the demands of workers. using. For the economic development of the region, it was proposed to open new salt and coal mines, unhindered cultivation of tobacco for their own use, the introduction of free trade, as well as the prosecution of usury.

The second section of the AAU program was called "Cultural Requirements". It provided for the following provisions: the governor of the region should deal with cultural, educational and linguistic issues; to regulate the remuneration of church teachers, the requirement of freedom of conscience and religion in religious matters. The party's political position has hardly changed. They were covered in the third section of the program "Political Requirements"[1].

The main provisions of this section were reduced to the following requirements: convening the Seimas and holding parliamentary elections, granting full power in the region to its governor, establishing the borders of Subcarpathian Rus from Poprad to Bila Tisa, in order to unite all Ruthenian people living in the Czechoslovak Republic; freedom of thought and assembly, ensuring the rights of national minorities guaranteed by the peace treaty and promoting the peaceful coexistence of peoples living in Subcarpathian Rus. However, a new provision appeared in the party's program: disagreement with the centralizing policy of the government. The AAU program was approved and accepted by all party members representing various regional branches and signed by party leaders.

The holding of the party congress in Khust and its decision finally determined the policy of the AAU, pointing to the invariability of autonomous positions. After the adoption of the party program, a complex process of building party cells in the settlements began.

During the parliamentary elections of March 16, 1924, the AAU party received 21,117 votes in parliament and 20,018 votes in the Senate. This result was the third among thirteen parties that participated in the elections and gave I. Kurtyak and B. Riško the opportunity to represent the interests of the region in the parliament and senate of the Czechoslovak Republic. The

general results of the first parliamentary elections in Transcarpathia in 1924 showed that autonomous political forces were quite popular. The opposition as a whole received 60% of the vote. The AAU, which continued to lead among parties in this area, raised the issue of changes in the party's organizational structure at a regular meeting of the party's executive committee [2, s.70].

On October 12, 1924, the party newspaper AAU distributed a memorandum, which the party leaders, Ambassador Ivan Kurtyak, and Senator Bela Rishko, passed to the General Secretariat of the League of Nations in Geneva on October 5 of that year. It contained demands to grant Subcarpathian Rus the autonomy promised by the peace treaty. However, European politicians did not go further talking about this topic, even despite the support of the American Ruthenian diaspora.

In the circumstances, AAU policy became increasingly oppositional. The party newspaper Rusky Visnyk has been repeatedly censored by the authorities. The entire circulation of individual issues was completely removed and destroyed. AAU expressed its indignation at the fact that Romania had occupied areas of compact residence of Ruthenians in the Tyachiv region. The party members also distrusted the nationalization of rich land holdings. To draw attention to these problems, on November 9, 1924, in Tyachev, the party convened a people's assembly, which, through deputy Ivan Kurtiak, passed a resolution to the authorities to stop the harassment of local peasants by the Romanian authorities. However, these appeals were ignored by the Czechoslovak government [2,s.71].

In early 1925, the AAU did not significantly change its policy. The closer the next parliamentary elections, which were scheduled for 1925, were, the more the general political revival of the party cells was felt. There was agitation on the ground. The results of the AAU's participation in the 1925 parliamentary elections indicated a rapid increase in the party's popularity among the population [7, s.948].

This time the party received 28,799 votes, which was 12% of the vote. I. Kurtyak became the deputy. Thus, in just one year, the AAU won seven and a half thousand new votes. Researchers attribute the party's rapid success to a successful campaign approach. The demands for agrarian reform and the granting of autonomous rights to the then Transcarpathia were combined with increased criticism of the government's policy towards the Carpathian territory and disappointment with the results of government policy[5, s.81].

Commitment to the AAU was prompted by constant calls from party members to distrust the Czechoslovak parties and to defend "their rights and their party." Another factor in the popularization of the party was the cooperation in the cultural and educational field with the A. Dukhnovych Society, which was established with the direct participation of the party in 1923. It was through the reading rooms of this society that AAU attracted locals, especially young people. They held joint actions of cultural, spiritual, educational and sporting nature, which agreed during various events increasingly turned into political. As criticism of state

power became more severe, anti-Czechoslovak elements joined the AAU, especially the pro-Hungarian population, the clergy, and other social strata [5, s.90].

Feeling the growing popularity of the party leadership is gradually moving to radical methods of political struggle. Party leaders have brought to the fore the political struggle for autonomy. However, since then, the party's orientation towards changing the state system and territorial integrity of Czechoslovakia has become noticeable, which has put it on a par with antistate political organizations.

The peasants, who were the basis of the party during the first years of its activity, began to lose their leading position. Their place was increasingly taken by representatives of the intelligentsia and the clergy. Part of the employees and the wealthy peasantry were involved in the AAU. However, the party leadership underwent the greatest changes. It was headed by a young ambitious group of "autonomists", among whom stood out A. Brody, M. Demko, I. Kurtyak. It was I. Kurtyak who became the chairman of the party. Since then, the AAU has become the leader of the Russophile movement. The party was financed not only by membership fees, but also by foreign investment. Of course, such grants were provided for specific tasks [2, s.95].

The party's funding by Hungarian political circles unequivocally points to the anti-state goal of this cooperation. The first mention of the pro-Hungarian orientation of the AAU dates back to the first half of the 1920s. Even then, financial aid came from Hungary to the political organization, as well as its leaders, including Joseph Kaminsky, who was a member of various political parties at various times. In order to spread antistate sentiment among the local population, Hungarian political circles tried to bring the party closer to the Hungarian national parties of Transcarpathia. Since 1922, one of the leaders of the party A. Brody was under constant control by the secret services, as he repeatedly met with Hungarian agents [2, s.93].

The faster the 1929 parliamentary elections approached, the more actively the party campaigned. However, the party began to feel a weakening of voter support. This was due to the pariah's suspicious ties to Hungarian political forces. In this situation, the party's executive committee was forced to look for allies to help the party gain the required number of votes. The leadership of the political party formed an alliance with the centralist party, which was not very popular in the region - the Czechoslovak People's Democratic Party. (CPDP). This union of parties was supported by 48 thousand 509 voters. As a result, AAU leader Ivan Kurtyak became a member of the Chamber of Deputies, and Yuliy Feldeshiy became a member of the Senate.

After the parliamentary elections, when Czechoslovakia was engulfed in an economic crisis, the AAU, like all other political organizations, partially withdrew from the political struggle and focused on solving the economic problems of the local population. To this end, a meeting of its members was held in the regional branches of the party, at which the issues of structural and organizational development of the AAU and its participation in rural elections were discussed. It should be noted that the party also enjoyed some support in Eastern Slovakia. Instead, AAU leaders continued to move closer to pro-Hungarian forces both inside and outside the country. It was this goal that the party paid the most attention to in the early 1930s. Increasingly, the party claimed the return of monarchical times, and the policies of the Czechoslovak government at the time were subjected to devastating criticism. All this together formed the appropriate public opinion of the local population. Both the moral and financial support of the AAU from various sources played an important role in this situation [7, s.950].

In 1933, after a serious illness, the party's longtime leader Ivan Kurtyak, who enjoyed considerable authority in the region, died. A young ambitious politician, Andriy Brody, was elected the new chairman of the party. He immediately began to strength.

As early as 1934, the party's campaign began with renewed vigor. The so-called "Ten Commandments of every Ruthenian", which were published in the pages of the party newspaper and the annual "Agricultural Calendar", became widespread. The party's demands remained unchanged. The idea of autonomy continued to live on in the requirements of granting autonomy to the region within its ethnographic and natural-economic borders from Poprad to the Tisza. en the party's regional branches. Despite the further radicalization of the autonomous Russophile movement and the rapprochement of the AAU with pro-Hungarian political forces, the party officially advocated for the territorial integrity of Czechoslovakia [7, s.951].

Since the mid-1930s, the party leadership has significantly intensified pro-Hungarian activities. The slogans of the struggle for autonomy in fact remained only a cover. in politics: advocating for the granting of autonomy to Transcarpathia, the autonomists believed that this would make it easier to separate the region from Czechoslovakia and include it in Hungary [3, s.29].

The AAU initiated the creation of a strong bloc of political parties to accelerate the implementation in practice of the autonomy promised by the center. Such a bloc was created from Russophile parties in 1938. After long political upheavals in the conditions of an acute political crisis, on October 12, 1938, the autonomy of Subcarpathian Russia was proclaimed and the first autonomous government was approved. Andriy Brody became the Prime Minister of this government. After becoming prime minister of the autonomous government, A. Brody did not give up his Hungarian orientation. On the contrary, having power in his hands, he, along with other party leaders, began to prepare for the occupation of Transcarpathia by Hungarian troops, for which he was arrested [6, s. 93].

AAU played a significant role in the fact that in early November 1938 part of Transcarpathia was handed over to Hungary, and on March 15-18, 1939 its entire territory was occupied by Hungarian troops.

Thus, the AAU has gone through a difficult political path. At the beginning of its activity, the party was loyal to the Prague authorities, and the slogans put forward by the party were a kind reminder to the authorities of their commitments. Later, after the party was renamed AAU, it switched from Russophile to pro-Hungarian orientation, and the slogans of autonomy became a means for Transcarpathia to join Hungary.

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