

## Vadym V. Mashtalir

General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine  
ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8132-217X>

## Serhii A. Salata

The National Defence University of Ukraine named after Ivan Cherniakhovskyi  
ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4753-6753>

# The contribution of public organizations to the creation of the Ukrainian National Army (1989–1991)\*

## Introduction

The collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (hereinafter referred to as the USSR), a process that began in the second half of the 1980s and ended on 26 December 1991, opened a new page in world history and marked the creation of new sovereign states. As one of the 15 former Soviet republics, Ukraine also gained independence from the USSR, but the path to independence was long, thorny and filled with numerous events that brought Ukraine closer to this milestone at various points in its history. Naturally, state independence also implies the creation of a national army to protect the citizens, territory, and resources. Throughout the history of the Ukrainian people, various organizations fulfilled the role of the national army, including the Zaporozhian Cossack Army, Legion of Ukrainian Sich Riflemen, Ukrainian People's Army, West Ukrainian People's Republic Army, and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

At the onset of the "Perestroika" reform movement, in fact since 1987, changes in the economic and political structure of the USSR, the problems associated with the Soviet armed forces, and with the emergence of national-state formations in different parts of the country came to the forefront in the political life of society. As Anatoly Rusnachenko rightly notes in his research<sup>1</sup>, the Red (later Soviet) Army not only played a huge role in protecting the country and the world against Nazi invaders, but was also a component of

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<sup>1</sup> A. Rusnachenko, *On the way to the national army (1989–1991)*, Kyiv 1992.

the parity that emerged in international relations after World War II. In particular, for the citizens of the Baltic states, Poland, Finland, and partly Ukraine, the Soviet Army became a symbol of the loss of state independence. The Soviet invasions of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan were also dark spots in the history of the Soviet Army. For many soldiers and officers, these military operations had mainly dramatic moral consequences because by following the orders of the military command, they were not defending their homeland – the USSR – but became unwitting invaders of other countries. The divide between ordinary and officer corps, between officers and the top army command increased. In the decades preceding the collapse of the USSR, “zemlyatstvo” (the formation of cohesive teams based on territorial/ethnic origins) and “didivshchyna” (an informal practice of initiation (hazing) and constant bullying of junior conscripts during service) became commonplace in the army. Every year, 10,000 to 12,000 members of the armed forces died from hazing and accidents, and 35,000 to 36,000 young men were disabled. Desertion was common in the army.

Since 1989, the army has not been used for its intended purpose, in particular to suppress democratic transformations in Soviet republics or to resolve national conflicts (Tbilisi, Nagorno-Karabakh, Baku, South Ossetia, Baltic states). There was a real threat that the USSR army would become a mainstay of reactionary forces. However, the concept of freedom also permeated the army. The “Shield” Union for the Social Protection of Servicemen (Ukrainian: Щит, Shchyt) was formed. Proclamations of independence and the formation of sovereign republics led to the emergence of organizations with a military orientation, including organizations responsible for regional security and defense (Baltic states) and military units such as the National Guard (Transcaucasia). The prerequisites for the creation of the armed forces in Ukraine require more extensive research at the theoretical level. In particular, the processes that gave the impetus to the creation of the National Army should be identified, and the objectives and achievements of the first constituent assemblies (congresses, conferences, etc.) that were formed to resolve this issue should be analyzed. At the same time, further comprehensive research is required to assess the contribution of public organizations to the creation of the Ukrainian armed forces before Ukraine declared independence. Many research studies rely on the authors’ own archives, which makes it difficult for researchers to access the source database. Therefore, the task of systematizing the existing information is relevant.

A. Rusanenko<sup>2</sup>, B.Z. Yakymovych, and other scientists who took an active part in public affairs at the time made a significant contribution to the portrayal of the formation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. A review of the materials compiled by A. Rusanenko indicates that the author had conducted extensive research on the formation of the Ukrai-

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<sup>2</sup> Ibidem.

nian army based on the information found in the archives of the Military Board of the People's Movement of Ukraine, the media, and personal memories of events in which he directly participated. A historical essay on the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other publications by Ukrainian historians B.Z. Yakymovych and L.I. Letnianshyn also provide extensive information on the issue<sup>3</sup>.

D.R. Buchko<sup>4</sup> discussed the regional aspects of the establishment of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, in particular the role and achievements of the Lviv Public Committee in the revival of the Ukrainian National Army before the proclamation of independence and the Lviv regional organization of the Ukrainian Officers Union at the beginning of Ukrainian independence. The main purpose of the article is to analyze the processes related to the creation of the National Armed Forces during the formative years of Ukraine's independence. Above all, various democratic organizations and the Ukrainian citizens take full credit for the creation of the Ukrainian armed forces. Under their influence, the public authorities became involved in this process.

### **An analysis of the contribution of political parties to the creation of the Ukrainian National Army**

The People's Movement of Ukraine (hereinafter referred to as the PMU) laid the foundations for and initiated the process of creating the Ukrainian army. This organization was founded in September 1989 in opposition to the existing power structures in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (hereinafter referred to as the Ukrainian SSR), and it set the ground for the creation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The program adopted by the PMU during the founding congress made no references to the issue<sup>5</sup>. However, there were very few military personnel at the congress. In particular, only Colonel V. Martirosyan, a people's deputy of the USSR, assured the audience that as long as the armed forces had commanders like him, the army would never go against the people<sup>6</sup>. The founding congress of the PMU expressed its attitude to the army in the "Appeal to the Servicemen of the Ukrainian SSR, Employees of the Ukrainian Police and KGB". The title of the appeal indicates that it made a broad reference to national statehood, and not

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<sup>3</sup> B.Z. Yakymovych, *Armed forces of Ukraine: an essay on history*, Lviv 1996; L.I. Letnianshyn, *Direct effect of the norms of the Constitution of Ukraine: from the principle to the practical application*, "Visnyk Natsionalnoi Akademii Pravovykh Nauk Ukrainy" 2017, vol. IV, no. 91, pp. 115–127.

<sup>4</sup> D.R. Buchko, *The role of the Union of Officers of Ukraine at the stage of formation of the foundations of the Armed Forces of Ukraine: regional aspects*, Lviv 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Program of the People's Movement of Ukraine for Perestroika, "Literary Ukraine" 1989, vol. XXXIX, no. 9, pp. 4–5, <https://archive.odessa.gov.ua/files/derjarhiv/VISTAVKI/1989nru/1989perelik.pdf> (accessed: 27 X 2023).

<sup>6</sup> Z. Kisil, O. Tarasenko, *International experience in preventing corruption as a vector for creating a national anti-corruption strategy in Ukraine*, "Social and Legal Studies" 2022, vol. V, no. 3, pp. 9–15, <https://doi.org/10.32518/2617-4162-2022-5-3-9-15>.

only the army. The appeal presented a list of significant goals that should be pursued in joint effort by the PMU, the army, and law enforcement agencies. These were: “reliable defense of the republic and state security, reducing crime and eliminating public problems that lead to crime (...), eliminating «hazing» in the army, improving the housing conditions of military personnel, protecting police officers against organized crime, fighting against harassment by the administration of conscientious, democratically-minded servicemen (...)”. The PMU called on all conscientious restructured forces in the army, law enforcement agencies, and the Committee for State Security (hereinafter referred to as the KGB) to consolidate, search for compromise, abide by principles of mutual tolerance and respect for human rights in the process of democratization of society<sup>7</sup>.

Since that time, various democratic parties that had emerged from the PMU proposed theoretical solutions to the problem of creating a state army. The Ukrainian Republican Party (hereinafter referred to as the URP) was the first political organization that defined the most important principles in the process of establishing an army in independent Ukraine. The party’s program deserves a quote in recognition of its achievements: “The URP supports the restoration of the Armed Forces of Ukraine as one of the main guarantors of Ukraine’s independence. Built on the principles of reasonable sufficiency and professionalism, the armed forces should be subordinate only to the Ukrainian authorities. The URP will seek the adoption of legislation that would prevent the government from using the armed forces against its own people or involving the army in an ideological struggle between various political forces”<sup>8</sup>. This was the first official statement to acknowledge that the Ukrainian army could exist only in an independent state, and the same principle was later adopted by other opposition organizations.

In the political statement of the Ukrainian Inter-Party Assembly (UIPA), the formation of the Ukrainian army was addressed in narrower framework than in the URP program. The UIPA merely advocated certain measures in the process leading to the formation of the armed forces, without any references to the army’s formal character, the national security service, or the national police. However, an entire section in the program of the Ukrainian People’s Democratic Party (UPDP), which subsequently joined the UIPA, was dedicated to this issue, and it set the principles for the establishment of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, including the abolition of political bodies in the army and conscript service in Ukraine. One of the most interesting proposals was that under certain circumstances, the Republic Army could become a part of the army located on its territory. The program also

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<sup>7</sup> Appeal to the servicemen of the Ukrainian SSR, employees of the Ukrainian police and the KGB of the Constituent Congress of the People’s Movement of Ukraine for Perestroika, “Literary Ukraine” 1989, vol. XLII, no. 10, article 7, [http://search.ligazakon.ua/l\\_doc2.nsf/link1/Z898303.html](http://search.ligazakon.ua/l_doc2.nsf/link1/Z898303.html) (accessed: 27 X 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Program of the Ukrainian Republican Party, “Voice of Revival” 1990, vol. VI, no. 15, pp. 4–5, <https://vseosvita.ua/library/podii-1990-roku-v-ukraini-385335.html> (accessed: 27 X 2023).

asserted that Ukraine could become a nuclear-free state only if the issue of disarmament were to be resolved politically with the involvement of all former Soviet republics that proclaimed independence and other countries under international agreements.

The Party of Greens of Ukraine (hereinafter referred to as the RGU) proposed a fairly extensive demilitarization program and addressed several issues that could contribute to the independence of Ukraine, namely:

- dissolution of military blocs, neutrality of Ukraine, and rejection of any territorial claims;
- prohibition of the manufacture and deployment of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction;
- dismantling of military bases, heavy-duty radar stations, and other strategic military facilities and their withdrawal from Ukraine;
- prohibition of the import and export of weapons, refusal of any support for totalitarian regimes;
- introduction of alternative service with a gradual transition to contract-based recruitment.

The Democratic Party of Ukraine (DPU), one of the largest opposition organizations in Ukraine that was established in December 1990, repeated the main provisions of the mentioned programs and called for the creation of an authorized parliamentary body to monitor the implementation of the legislation concerning military activity. Thus, the notion that Ukraine should have its own armed forces evolved from a visionary concept to a topic that was discussed in democratic circles. However, it should be noted that only four parties (URP, RGU, UPDP, and DPU) addressed defense and military issues in separate sections of their programs. In the following years, these parties continued to conduct their primary work in this direction. At first, their announcements and the broad range of issues met considerable resistance in Communist Party newspapers, especially the newspapers of military districts.

It should be noted that the main focus of political programs and activities, as will be discussed later, was placed on the army, rather than the KGB or the police. The army is a more open structure that is more massive and less conservative than other organizations, and any success in resolving military matters would facilitate the transformation of other law enforcement agencies. As time has shown, democratic circles turned words into action. On 7 April 1990 (in fact, since the fall of 1989), the first Ukrainian military committee was formed in Kharkiv. The committee was headed by Petro Nedzelsky, and it consisted of a group of initiators from the ranks of military personnel and the reserve army. The committee aimed to create the National Armed Forces of Ukraine on a constitutional basis. The army were to be established by rebuilding the Soviet Army stationed on the territory of Ukraine. The committee members posited that the restructuring process

should be based on the principles of professionalism and reasonable sufficiency. The committee set out to accomplish the following goals:

- popularization of the idea of creating a National Armed Forces and the underlying rationale;
- study of Ukrainian history, restoration of military traditions and their popularization;
- cooperation with people's deputies of the Ukrainian SSR and the USSR;
- protection of the rights of military personnel and citizens eligible for military service in the Ukrainian SSR<sup>9</sup>.

Kharkiv residents came into contact with members of the People's Council in the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR<sup>10</sup>. An almost identical program was used by other groups and committees that emerged semi-legally in Ternopil, Uzhhorod, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Kryvyi Rih, Kherson, Chernivtsi, and Lviv<sup>11</sup>. The postulate that political bodies in the army should be abolished was also supported by Ukrainian miners<sup>12</sup>. On 16 July 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR adopted the "Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine". Paragraph three of the adopted Declaration stated that "the Ukrainian SSR protects and defends the national statehood of the Ukrainian people (...)". Based on the above, the ninth chapter of the Declaration, entitled "External and Internal security", reads as follows: "The Ukrainian SSR has the right to its own armed forces. The Ukrainian SSR has its own internal armies and state security bodies that are subordinate to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR. The Ukrainian SSR determines the procedures for military service involving the citizens of the Republic. As a rule, the citizens of the Ukrainian SSR perform military service on the territory of the Republic, and cannot be deployed in military operations beyond its borders without the consent of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR. The Ukrainian SSR solemnly declares its intention of becoming a permanently neutral state that does not participate in military blocs and adheres to three nuclear-free principles: not to accept, produce, or acquire nuclear weapons"<sup>13</sup>.

As can be seen, the document reflects the demands of the democratic parties. Obviously, the fact that the Declaration had been adopted did not imply that it would be implemented by the conservative majority of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR. Nevertheless, the legal basis for further work was laid down. The period of political demands and rallies came to an end, and the Soviet leaders were fully aware of this fact. On 25 July

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<sup>9</sup> Decision on the establishment of the Ukrainian Military Committee, "Voice of the Renaissance" 1990, vol. VI, no. 15, article 8.

<sup>10</sup> A. Dotsenko, *Ukrainian army – to be*, "Western Courier" 1990, vol. XI, no. 12, pp. 2–17.

<sup>11</sup> O.V. Yatsura, *Predecessors of the Union of Officers. Ukrainian victory and courage*, Ternopil 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Resolution of the political strike in Donetsk, 1990, <https://octbol.livejournal.com/113583.html> (accessed: 27 X 2023).

<sup>13</sup> Declaration no. 55-XII "On State Sovereignty of Ukraine adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of the USSR", 1990, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/55-12#Text> (accessed: 27 X 2023).

1990, the President of the USSR Mikhail Gorbachev issued a decree which prohibited the creation of armed formations that were not authorized by the Soviet legislation. Under the Constitution of the USSR, only union bodies had the authority to create such formations. The decree stated that all existing formations should be dissolved and weapons should be handed over to law enforcement agencies. The decree also applied to Ukraine, and it was to serve as a warning because there were no military formations in Ukraine at the time. However, General Mikhail Moiseev, the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the USSR and First Deputy Minister of Defense of the USSR, who was strongly opposed to the creation of national armies, pointed out that military units were stationed in western Ukraine. The regional departments of internal affairs in Galicia denied this claim. A debate was initiated by other leaders of the Armed Forces of the USSR who focused on the fact that the process of creating national armies would weaken the defense capabilities of the USSR and, therefore, should not be allowed<sup>14</sup>.

These claims were denied and debunked by the Chairman of the URP Levko Lukyanenko<sup>15</sup>. Based on the above, the leadership of the Armed Forces of the USSR was still concerned about the fate of its army on the territory of Ukraine. However, during a meeting with the officers of the Odesa Military District, President Mikhail Gorbachev suggested that a national-territorial army could be formed as part of the Soviet army<sup>16</sup>. In the Ukrainian SSR, public interest in the matter increased at the beginning of the autumn conscription campaign in the Soviet army. In previous years, a significant part of conscripts from Ukraine were deployed in zones affected by ethnic conflict (especially in Transcaucasia). Under pressure from public opinion, on 30 July 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR issued a statement that Ukrainian citizens who were performing military service or were employees of law enforcement agencies of the Ukrainian SSR could not be deployed in zones of ethnic conflict. The statement emphasized that, as a rule, Ukrainian citizens should perform active military duty on the territory of the Ukrainian SSR. However, there was no mechanism for implementing this statement. Therefore, it is not surprising that the place of military service for Ukrainian conscripts was one of the demands put forward by Ukrainian students who went on a political hunger strike on 2 October 1990.

The political hunger strike initiated on Khreshchatyk Street in Kyiv, during which students addressed a number of demands to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, was widely publicized and supported by all democratic circles in Ukraine. The parliament

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<sup>14</sup> A. Rusnachenko, op. cit.; D.R. Buchko, op. cit.; Y.I. Kitura, *Development of the Ukrainian National Army is a matter of our lives: a collection of articles, appeals, letters*, Lviv 2007.

<sup>15</sup> L. Lukyanenko, *Will the Soviet republics have their own armies?*, "Western Courier" 1990, vol. IX-X, no. 8, pp. 1-3.

<sup>16</sup> *It is worth passing the pass in the history of the country*, Gorbachev's speech in the Odesa military district, "Soviet Ukraine" 1990, no. 20888, pp. 1-2.

was forced to create a conciliatory commission to meet the protesters' demands. On the recommendation of the commission, the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR adopted a resolution stating that military deployment of Ukrainian citizens outside the Republic would be possible only with their voluntary consent. It was proposed that a Law on Military Service by Ukrainian Citizens on the Territory of the Ukrainian SSR and a Law on Alternative Military Service should be adopted, and that the necessary state bodies should be established by 31 December 1990<sup>17</sup>.

The government of the Ukrainian SSR took very few real steps to implement these decisions. The decision of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR was reported to the relevant authorities of the Union. A request demanding that Ukrainian citizens performing military duty in construction units should be returned to the Republic was sent to the Soviet Ministry of Defense. The ministry agreed that Ukrainian servicemen drafted in spring 1991 should remain in the Ukrainian SSR. On 11 November 1991, the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR held a meeting with the chairmen of regional executive committees, chiefs of staff of military districts, military commissars of regional military commissariats, and Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the USSR Colonel-General Grigory Krivosheev who was the head of the main organizational and mobilization department. However, no decisions were made at the meeting. In consequence, on 12 November 1991, the government of the Ukrainian SSR decided that conscripts would not be transported outside the Ukrainian SSR until the Soviet leadership made the appropriate decisions that would consider the requirements of the resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR.

At the same time, a telegram was sent to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR Mikhail Ryzhkov regarding Ukrainian citizens serving in strategic defense forces and the navy. The telegram posited that Ukrainian conscripts could not be dispatched to areas of ethnic conflict. Since conscription in the USSR was a matter that was decided at a low organizational level, an agreement with the leadership was reached on the following day.

Under public pressure, the government of the Ukrainian SSR had already taken certain steps to solve the problems of military personnel and the army. However, the government's actions were inconsistent and half-hearted. Until the end of 1990 and the beginning of 1991, no laws or bodies had been developed, adopted or formed. The reason was that the adoption of these laws and the formation of the relevant authorities would pave the way to the creation of Ukraine's own army, thus granting real independence to Ukraine, which neither the Government of the Ukrainian SSR nor the conservative majority of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR was willing to allow. At the end of November 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR adopted a resolution similar

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<sup>17</sup> A. Rusnachenko, *op. cit.*



to the July decree of the Soviet president which banned the creation of armed formations that had not been provided for by the legislation of the Ukrainian SSR. At the same time, the authorities decided that troops stationed in Ukraine would be subordinate to the highest authorities and the government of the Ukrainian SSR. In view of the political situation at that time, the decision was not a step towards independence, but a measure to strengthen the existing power system in the Ukrainian SSR.

The democratic forces were aware of this fact and decided to search for an alternative approach to the problem of Ukrainian armed forces. In October 1990, a group of democratically-minded officers, including members of the previously mentioned committees – Colonel Viktor Lazorkin, Lieutenant Colonel Valentin Pilipchuk, Captain Pyotr Nedzelsky, Captain Vitaly Chechilo, Lieutenant Sergey Rodyuk, soldier of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army Mykola Slivka, well-known members of the URP – Bohdan Matiyashek and Alexey Mikolishin, Igor Derkach, and others, attended a conspirator meeting in Lviv. During the meeting, the participants exchanged views on theoretical and practical problems concerning the formation of the Ukrainian National Army. Given the clandestine nature of the meeting, no records were made. The meeting gave rise to two approaches to creating an army. The first approach, which received majority support, argued that an army should be created by the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR. The second approach posited that armed forces manned by patriotic citizens should be created in parallel to the Soviet army (Serhiy Rodyuk). The participants concluded that a broader discussion was needed to address these complex issues and that a scientific and theoretical conference should be held first.

Military issues were also addressed at the Second Congress of the PMU in late October 1990. According to a report submitted by the head of the PMU Ivan Drach, Ukraine remained the breadwinner of the Soviet empire, its army, and the military-industrial complex (hereinafter referred to as MIC). The spending on the army stationed on the territory of Ukraine or its numerical composition remained unknown. People's deputy of Ukraine Mykhailo Kosiv pointed out that Ukraine had the necessary resources to create its own armed forces, including sufficient levels of technical education and a powerful defense industry. He also suggested that the PMU should focus on preparing the public for the division of the army and its assets between the republics. The following measures would have to be initiated to accomplish this goal:

- information about the quantitative and qualitative composition of the military-defense (including industrial) complex of Ukraine and its relationship to the USSR would have to be obtained;
- the conscription campaigns in the autumn of 1990 and the spring of 1991 should be restricted to the territory of Ukraine, and an exchange of military personnel with other republics should take place in 1991;

- additional staffing of divisions located on the territory of Ukraine with recruits from other republics should be prevented<sup>18</sup>.

### Political efforts to develop the concept of the Armed Forces of Ukraine

Mykhailo Kosiv proposed to determine the optimal size and structure of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, conduct an inventory of all territories occupied by the military, change the activities of medical commissions, remove primary military training from school curricula, and expand physical training programs. During the Second Congress of the PMU, a call was made to hold a Congress of Ukrainian officers. The All-Ukrainian Congress approved the efforts that had been initiated by PMU organizations and other socio-political associations with the aim of creating Ukraine's own army. Military personnel who attended the Congress appealed to servicemen stationed on the territory of Ukraine to disobey orders directed against their own people and to fight for the de-politicization of the army. The servicemen also demanded that the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR establish a Military Committee of Ukraine that would be tasked with creating the Ukrainian National Army (UNA). This committee would consist of military and socio-political organizations. The delegates proposed that the military create UNA initiative groups in military units. Prior to the establishment of the Military Committee of Ukraine, military delegates had formed an initiative group for the creation of the UNA. During the Second Congress of the PMU, the Ukrainian Committee of Soldiers' Mothers, the Union of Ukrainian Women, and the PMU Women's Community pleaded for the return of Ukrainian conscripts for further service in the Republican Armed Forces. As a result, the Second Congress of the PMU demonstrated that the UNA concept had gained sufficient social traction and that words should be turned into action. Specific measures were also proposed to achieve this goal.

On 1 December 1990, a new concept for the creation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine (authored by Vitaly Lazorkin and Petro Kishenya) was proposed during the first session of the PMU High Council. The first section of the document, entitled "The military and political situation in the USSR", and the second section entitled "Political, statutory and legal aspects of the creation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine", called for the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine, and addressed the presence of a large group of Soviet armed forces on Ukrainian territory, the outdated military doctrine of the USSR, strategic and operational-tactical plans for redistributing the functions of the center, and the role of sovereign republics in the formation of strategic defense plans. The main part of the concept was presented in the third section entitled "Principles for building the Armed Forces of Ukraine during the transition period". According to the authors of the project, the main

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<sup>18</sup> Ibidem.

challenge during this period would be to choose the optimal approach to creating the Armed Forces of Ukraine, since any rash steps during the process could cause great harm to the Ukrainian people. For this goal to be achieved, the public and military personnel should reach mutual understanding, and a law on the legal status of military personnel serving on the Republic's territory should be adopted.

The authors of the project proposed three practical approaches to resolving the problem<sup>19</sup>. The first involved the creation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in parallel to the existing Soviet military units on the territory of Ukraine and the dissolution and disbandment of Soviet troops in Ukraine. This option entailed numerous problems, primarily socio-economic issues, which could increase social tension and confrontation and lead to a civil war. This proposal met with strong opposition and was rejected. The second approach postulated for the creation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine by way of radical and consistent decisions made by the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR. This path required a consensus between all political forces in Ukraine and the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, which could not be achieved at that time. This proposal was regarded as unrealistic, and it was also rejected. The third approach proposed a reasonable compromise between political forces based on the Declaration of State Sovereignty that would account for the existing conditions. The authors postulated that a series of consecutive steps should be implemented to transform the Soviet armed forces on the territory of Ukraine, while maintaining the combat readiness of the troops and the defense capability of the republic.

The authors envisaged two strategic directions in the process of implementing the third solution<sup>20</sup>. As part of the first strategic direction:

- the Main Command of the Soviet army would be established on Ukrainian territory at the request of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, and it would coordinate all matters relating to military activity with the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR;
- a deputy commission on defense and security would be established under the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR;
- a military department that constituted the military commissariat would be established under the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR, and it would deal with conscription, recruitment of territorial units and formations based on the existing group of allied troops that would be reassigned to Ukraine. The department would work with the Ministry of Defense of the USSR, including on operational and tactical issues, and it would develop the military doctrine of Ukraine;

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<sup>19</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

- the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR would assume jurisdiction over all troops stationed on the territory of Ukraine.

The second strategic direction in the third approach to creating the Armed Forces of Ukraine differs from the first direction in that it would begin with the creation of a deputy commission on defense and security by the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR and that the Main Command of the Armed Forces of the USSR would not be established on the territory of the Republic. The authors postulated that the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, acting upon the recommendation of the defense and security commission of Ukraine, should adopt a package of laws concerning the military service of Ukrainian citizens in the Soviet army, the status of the armed forces in the republic, and the MIC. As the largest opposition force to the state-communist party structures, the PMU had an opportunity to organize and carry out the relevant measures. In January 1991, members of the initiative committee, including the above-mentioned officers and democrats, met in Lviv, agreed on the procedure of creating a Ukrainian army, and forwarded the proposal to Larysa Skoryk, a representative of the People's Council of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR. A decision was made to hold a scientific and theoretical conference in Kyiv in the near future with the participation of people's deputies. The participants had previously decided to create a military board in the Council of Boards of the PMU, and they proposed that military boards should also be created at the level of regional councils of the PMU.

After the meeting in Lviv, it was decided that the organizational process would be supervised by the newly created Military Board (Board on military problems) of the PMU. Since all members of the initiative committee belonged to the PMU, they became members of the PMU Military Board of the PMU Council of Boards. At the same meeting, a committee responsible for organizing the pre-planning conference was formed. The committee was headed by Igor Derkach. The conference was entitled "External and Internal Security of Ukraine. The Concept of the Ukrainian Army and the Search for Approaches to Creating the Ukrainian Army". In addition to the Council of Boards of the PMU and the Committee for the Revival of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the conference was organized by the Association of Democratic Councils of Ukraine and the People's Council of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR. A wide range of issues were to be considered during the conference, including the history of Ukrainian military formations, the state and legal basis for the revival of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the concept of its creation, and military duty performed by citizens of Ukraine.

The scientific and theoretical conference was held in Kyiv on 2–3 February 1991. During the opening speech, the chairman of the organizing committee stated that 123 people were present at the meeting and that more than half of them were regular military personnel. People's Deputies of the Ukrainian SSR were also present, including

Volodymyr Hryniiov, Oleksandr Moroz, Mykhailo Horyn, Levko Lukyanenko, and Larysa Skoryk. Volodymyr Hryniiov, Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, was the first speaker at the conference. He supported the idea of establishing the UNA and emphasized that choosing the right approach was the most challenging task. Neither Dmitry Yazov, the Soviet Minister of Defense, nor other military leaders took this idea seriously. The example of other Soviet republics in the struggle for independence clearly indicated that only the creation of their own armed formations could guarantee their sovereignty. The fact that a significant number of military personnel (100,000) did not have housing had to be taken into account, and reforms aiming to improve their social status had to be carried out.

Levko Lukyanenko, Chairman of the URP, presented a conceptual framework for creating the UNA. In particular, he submitted a justification for the establishment of the Armed Forces. Levko Lukyanenko pointed out that various approaches could be adopted to create an army, but that Ukraine should follow the experiences of other republics and push for the gradual transformation of Soviet troops stationed in Ukraine. National officers should be trained by military educational institutions located on the territory of Ukraine. Only soldiers and, subsequently, officers residing in the republic should be conscripted to the Soviet armed forces stationed in Ukraine to make the army completely independent from imperial command. The disproportionately large contingent of armed forces and the cost of the MIC should be sharply reduced.

The concept proposed by Lieutenant Colonel Anatoly Shmilo was based on a different principle of forming the UNA. He argued that the National Army of Ukraine should be created based on the organization of the Internal Troops of Ukraine. Before 1969, the troops had been subordinated to the government of the Republic and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA). Only Ukrainian citizens should be conscripted to these forces. The MIA declared that it was no longer subordinate to the Soviet Ministry. The Ministry of Defense of the Republic was formed at this stage. All military commissariats, garrison commanders, and military educational institutions of civil defense reported to the Ministry. The Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR approved the commanders of districts, Ukrainian Naval Forces, and took over MIC facilities. In the second stage, nuclear weapons would be removed from Ukraine and returned to the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. The material and methodological base of the UNA would be prepared. Border guards would be transferred to the MIA of the Ukrainian SSR. In the third stage, the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense would take control of all troops stationed on Ukrainian territory. A new mobilization plan would be developed and approved based on the military doctrine of Ukraine<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

Other speakers also made other proposals concerning the establishment of an armed force. However, these proposals were less developed and addressed only selected issues. All speakers agreed that the future army should be professional and depoliticized. The UNA would be less costly to maintain than the Soviet Army, and it would also be more combat-ready because its main goal would be to protect the national interests of Ukraine. Some speakers made references to historical events, including the Cossacks, and suggested that the post of hetman should be introduced. They stressed the need for an accurate military doctrine for the Republic, whereas others drew the participants' attention to the cultural and methodological aspects of organizing military formations and pointed out that soldiers should study the Ukrainian language and history as part of their preparation for military service.

Serhiy Rodyuk (Lviv) delivered an interesting speech which addressed the activities of the Committee for the Revival of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. He stressed that the army should be created based on the patriotic feelings of all citizens of Ukraine, soldiers and officers, and that official structures should be created in parallel to offer support in problematic situations. However, this idea did not find broad support at the conference.

It is worth noting that the conference was attended not only by like-minded people. Some of the military opposed the idea of the UNA. During the meeting, their task was to "identify and recognize in person" those who were in favor of housing the united armed in "national apartments", to voice arguments against this idea, and to convince at least some PMU supporters that their intentions were harmful and detrimental to the interests of the working people of Ukraine. In particular, the following arguments were put forward by the opponents of the UNA concept<sup>22</sup>:

- the true sovereignty of Ukraine would be well ensured by the unified armed forces;
- the division of the armed forces poses a threat to civilian security;
- the creation of the UNA would compromise the external security of the USSR;
- new armies would be more expensive than the existing one;
- the establishment of national armies can lead to civil war.

The scientific and theoretical conference concluded with an "Appeal to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR", the generalized "Concept of Creating the UNA", and a set of recommendations and proposals entitled an "Appeal to Military Personnel Serving in Ukraine". In the first document, which justified the need for a national army, conference participants stated that the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR should:

- make a decision on the restoration of the Ministry of Defense of the Ukrainian SSR which would pave the way to the creation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine;
- make a decision on the status of Soviet troops on the territory of Ukraine;

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<sup>22</sup> Ibidem.

- develop a package of laws on the defense of the republic;
- develop a law on the conversion of Soviet MIC enterprises in Ukraine.

The second document proposed a concept for the establishment of the Ukrainian Professional Army.

The preamble of the document described international, domestic and military-political conditions which necessitated the decision to establish armed forces.

The concept involved two stages<sup>23</sup>.

*Stage I* – transitional: all further activities of the Soviet Army on the territory of Ukraine should be regulated by agreements between the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, the president of the USSR, and the Union authorities. A permanent commission on internal and external security of the republic, headed by the Chairman of the Supreme Council (President), should be created in the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR to develop the relevant laws and to control the activities of Soviet troops stationed on the territory of the Republic.

The commission on internal and external security would be tasked with drafting laws related to:

- the status of Soviet troops on the territory of Ukraine;
- Ukrainian defense;
- military service of Ukrainian citizens;
- status of a service members – Ukrainian citizens serving in Ukraine and abroad;
- status of service members – citizens of other republics (states) serving in Ukraine;
- Ukrainian professional army;
- conversion and transfer of MIC enterprises to the Ukrainian government.

1. As an executive body responsible for the creation and management of the Ukrainian army, monitoring the activities of the MIC in the republic, establishing communication and mutual relations with the Soviet Army and the armies of states at present and in the future would be appointed under the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR and the Ministry (committee) of Defense of Ukraine. The executive body would be headed by the Minister of Defense who would be appointed by the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR on the recommendation of the President (Chairman of the Supreme Council).

2. All military formations located in Ukraine would be manned with Ukrainian conscripts willing to serve on its territory. Beginning from 1991, the Ministry of Defense of the USSR would acknowledge that as the graduates of military schools and academies who are citizens of Ukraine would serve in Ukraine.

3. The government of the Ukrainian SSR and the Ministry of Defense of the USSR would comply with the requests of officers who are Ukrainian citizens and would like to be transferred to Ukraine for military service.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibidem.

4. The representatives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (hereinafter referred to as the Central Committee of the CPSU) in the military councils of districts and armies on the territory of Ukraine would be replaced with chairmen of regional and city councils of people's deputies competent for the regions and cities where the Soviet military management bodies are located.

5. The appointment of district commanders, individual armies and fleets would be approved by the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR until the complete withdrawal of the Soviet armed forces.

*Stage II* – formation of a professional army.

The Ukrainian would consist of:

- ground forces,
- air force,
- navy,
- military commissariats,
- national guard corps.

Military operations would be initiated solely upon the consent of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine by a majority vote and, in some cases, by a decision of the President of Ukraine – the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The Minister of Defense of Ukraine would be appointed by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine upon recommendation from the President of Ukraine. Formation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

1. Basic principle: reasonable sufficiency for the defense of the Ukrainian state and its people. The cost of the Ukrainian army should not exceed 2% of the gross national product.

2. The Ukrainian army must be formed on a voluntary basis, and citizens of different nationalities living on the territory of Ukraine would sign minimum 5-year contracts.

3. During the transition stage, military service would be maintained only in ground forces and support forces.

4. Professional army soldiers should not earn less than the average salary in Ukraine. During the period of service, the state would provide soldiers and their families with decent housing, and housing for military personnel would be maintained in the existing place of residence.

5. Officers would be trained in military schools located on the territory of Ukraine, and they would be deployed for service depending on the needs of the Ukrainian army.

6. Strategic Defense Forces would be established on a voluntary basis under separate agreements between states or republics.

7. The army of Ukraine would be completely depoliticized, and any attempts to use the army to resolve domestic political issues would be prosecuted.



8. Pensions, benefits and services for retired military personnel would be kept at the union level or higher.

As can be seen, the general concept that Soviet troops stationed on Ukrainian territory would be legally incorporated into the Armed Forces of Ukraine had absorbed all the relevant proposals put forward by the democratic forces during 1990–1991. The concept was relatively balanced and reasonable. The “Appeal to the Military Personnel Serving in Ukraine” explained the position of the Ukrainian democrats regarding the state of the modern Soviet Army and called for support for the creation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine<sup>24</sup>. All deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR had an opportunity to become acquainted with conference documents. The documents were also distributed among democratic organizations in the structures of the PMU. Unfortunately, in the highest state authorities, these documents retained the status of opposition documents.

The official press barely reacted. “Pravda Ukrainy”, the newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine reported on the conference and condemned the idea of the UNA without presenting any counter arguments or concepts for its creation<sup>25</sup>. The “Kommersant” weekly presented its view on the issue<sup>26</sup>. The scientific and theoretical conference demonstrated that all democratic and patriotic forces of Ukraine had serious intentions to build the UNA and actively supported the relevant measures. The main efforts were concentrated in the Military Board of the PMU and the Council of Boards of the PMU under the leadership of Vitaliy Chechylo. The board was tasked with developing draft laws on the preparatory efforts for creating a Union of Officers who were citizens of Ukraine, providing assistance to military personnel who were citizens of Ukraine, and developing further concepts for the establishment of the Armed Forces of the Republic.

### **Legal and normative framework regulating the activities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine**

Several draft laws proposed by members of the Military Board of the PMU to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR are particularly noteworthy. The draft law “On the legal status of military personnel serving on the territory of Ukraine” deserves special attention. In this draft act, military personnel were defined as officers, ensigns and midshipmen of all military formations, as well as service men who were called up from the reserve. The act posited that the procedure for performing military service in the Re-

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<sup>24</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>25</sup> L. Altanov, *Whom are the democrats going to fight against?*, “Truth of Ukraine” 1991, vol. XLI, no. 2, pp. 1–3.

<sup>26</sup> E. Krasikov, A. Ostapchuk, *Ukraine: a national army will be created in one and a half to two years*, “Kommersant” 1991, vol. VI, no. 2, pp. 2–12.

public was regulated by agreements between the government of the Ukrainian SSR and the government of the USSR, and that military posts and specialties should be distributed based solely on the officers' personal qualities and achievements. Military personnel who were Ukrainian citizens had the right to serve on the territory of the Republic and, if desired, outside Ukraine, and had the right to return to the Republic for further service. All military personnel serving on the territory of Ukraine were required to sign the following pledge: "I, (last name, first name, patronymic), undertake to comply with the requirements of the Constitution, the Laws of the Ukrainian SSR, and to protect the democratic system and freedom of Ukraine". A compulsory insurance scheme was introduced for all military personnel. Officers, ensigns, midshipmen had the right to seek individual employment and own land; they would be provided with housing at the place of service, access to preschool institutions or compensation for housing (100%). Their family members were entitled to remuneration from the Ministry of Defense of the USSR. Military pensions would be paid by the Soviet Ministry of Defense on the terms and conditions established by the government of the Ukrainian SSR.

The draft law "On the Republican Guard" provided for the formation of a new structural unit in the armed forces which would protect the constitutional order in Ukraine, provide support during accidents, catastrophes, natural disasters, human and animal epidemics, and would establish reserve forces for service in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The commander of the Republican Guard would be appointed by the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine upon the Council's approval. The Republican Guard would consist of internal troops, state security troops, and other units. Depending on the scope of the problem, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, its chairman, the Prime Minister, and the chairman of the Regional Council of people's deputies would have the right to deploy Republican Guard troops.

Alternative service. The relevant bill provided for the creation of alternative service as well as charity units. Alternative service and employment in the national economy would also take place by way of conscription, at the request of citizens under the appropriate contracts. Contracts would be concluded for housing, welfare, clothing, and wages. The term of alternative service had to be longer than the term of active military service. Citizens who refused to serve in the army for religious reasons would be allocated to charity detachments based on the documents of religious institutions and communities. These individuals (men) would serve in hospitals, special medical institutions, nursing homes, and other charitable institutions. The PMU Military Board also developed a number of concepts for the Ukrainian armed forces. Most of them were consistent with the proposals that had been made by the PMU High Council at the scientific and theoretical conference in February 1991. The activities of the PMU Military Board were not limited to theoretical work or the development of draft laws. The Board also dealt with the conscription of

Ukrainian servicemen to the Soviet Army at both the central and local level, facilitated their transit to Ukraine, and provided advice to the parents, relatives and friends of military personnel.

By the summer of 1991, the democratic forces in Ukraine (as well as in the USSR) were significantly stronger. For this purpose, the referendum of March 17, 1991, the establishment of the All-Ukrainian Workers' Solidarity Organization and the rostrum of the Supreme Soviet were used, where a number of important laws were adopted on the initiative of the People's Council of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, and other legal acts were put up for discussion. In the end, the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR decided to rename the Supreme Soviet Commission on External and Internal Security to the Commission on Defense and State Security headed by Vasyl Durdynets. Both civilians and military personnel made significant contributions to soliciting the public's and military's support for an independent Ukraine and the creation of Ukrainian armed forces. Their achievements paved the way to the Congress of Officers – Citizens of Ukraine.

The I (IV) Congress of Officers – Citizens of Ukraine (hereinafter – the Congress) was held at the end of July 1991. The PMU assisted in preparatory efforts. The Council of Boards of the PMU and its Military Board, which took on the main burden of organizing the forum, asked the initiators to establish the Ukrainian Officers Union. The Commission on Human Rights of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, the People's Council of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, and a group of officers – citizens of Ukraine also participated in the preparations. The organizing committee involved Volodymyr Mulyava – Deputy Chairman of the Council of Boards of the PMU (Chairman), Captain Oleksandr Yemets – Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR (Deputy Chairman), and Captain Vitaliy Chechylo – Chairman of the PMU Military Board (Deputy Chairman of the Organizing Committee). The organizing committee consisted of Colonel Vilen Martirosyan – People's Deputy of the USSR, Colonel Vitaliy Lazorkin – Deputy of the Lviv Regional Council, Colonel Anatoliy Koshil, Colonel Oleksandr Nyzhnyk – Senior Lecturer of Vinnytsia Polytechnic Institute, Lieutenant Colonel Valentyn Pylypchuk, Lieutenant Serhiy Rodyuk, Captain Serhiy Kolesnyk, Igor Derkach – People's Deputy of the USSR, and Senior Lieutenant A. Rusnachenko - administration officer at the Council of Boards of the PMU.

The political bodies of military districts felt most threatened by the Congress. The military began a campaign to condemn the organizers and undermine the idea of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. During a Kiev meeting of the Coordination Group of the Councils of Officers' Meetings of the Garrison, the participants stated (at the suggestion of political bodies and the command of the military district) that since the Congress did not hold elections in military units, it remained unknown whose interests it would represent. They also argued that the Congress should be considered illegal because it had not been

approved by the Verkhovna Rada Commission on Defense and State Security.<sup>27</sup> The conflict escalated to such an extent that no one paid attention to the soothing appeal of the Presidium of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine regarding the army<sup>28</sup>. During a meeting with the First Deputy Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Ivan Plyushch, a group of generals demanded that the Congress be cancelled through state structures, but Plyushch declined the request. The organizing committee was forced to appeal to the press to explain the legitimacy of its position. “Literaturnaya Ukraina” was the only newspaper that agreed to publish an explanation<sup>29</sup>.

The first (IV) Congress of Officers – Citizens of Ukraine opened on 27 July 1991 in the Assembly Hall of the Teacher’s House (former House of the Ukrainian Central Rada), where three previous congresses had been held in the pre-Soviet period.

The Congress debated on the following issues<sup>30</sup>:

1. The political situation in Ukraine and the revival of the Ukrainian armed forces.
2. The statutory and legal aspects of the creation of the Ukrainian armed forces.
3. Legal and social protection of military personnel.
4. Organizational issues pertaining to the creation of the Ukrainian Officers’ Union.

Volodymyr Mulyava delivered a report on the first issue. He built his speech around the thesis that without the National Army, there can be no real sovereignty of Ukraine. He noted that the establishment of the National Army should be resolved only by parliamentary means. Mulyava argued that, according to foreign experts, the Soviet army had amassed large military formations on the territory of Ukraine in all districts and in the navy, and he pointed out that Soviet military command had always had a negative attitude towards the Ukrainian people’s struggle for independence.

Attention should be paid to the most interesting proposals that were voiced at the Congress. Petro Nedzelsky pointed out that Ukraine had always suffered when it was deprived of its own armed forces. He posited that the UNA should be created by parliamentary means, but he also noted that the process was fraught with significant difficulties. The communists in the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR were against the formation of a Ukrainian army because such a move would pave the way to the establishment of independent Ukraine and, consequently, the downfall of the existing ideological and state system. Therefore, it was not surprising that the proposal made by the people’s deputy of

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<sup>27</sup> Statement by the press center of the headquarters of the KVO, 1991, <http://samsv.narod.ru/Okr/prikvo.html> (accessed: 27 X 2023).

<sup>28</sup> Appeal of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR to the Soviets of People’s Deputies of all levels, their executive committees, the command of military units and ships, servicemen, conscripts and their parents, public organizations of the republic, 1991, <https://naukaprava.ru/catalog/1/951> (accessed: 27 X 2023).

<sup>29</sup> Statement on the Congress of Officers-Citizens of Ukraine, 1991, <http://www.officers.org.ua/> (accessed: 27 X 2023).

<sup>30</sup> A. Rusnachenko, *op. cit.*

Ukraine Vasyl Chervoniy in favor of creating the Ministry of Defense was rejected by the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR Leonid Kravchuk. According to the Decree of 25 July 1990 of the President of the USSR Mikhail Gorbachev, any parallel military formations would be immediately declared illegal and dissolved. People's deputy of Ukraine Oleksandr Gudyma pointed out that the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR had not yet formulated a clear view on the UNA. Most deputies did not understand that the transformation of the USSR would inevitably lead to changes in the Soviet army. Therefore, a party with a ready-made plan for reorganizing the troops stationed in Ukraine into a national army would emerge as the winner. A professional army that would be organized upon the formation of the national economy was the only solution. The people's deputy also believed that in the initial period of political instability, the regular army would have to be made subordinate to the president, and the National Guard – to the Verkhovna Rada. Oleh Zelinsky (Lviv) argued a national army was the only guarantor of Ukrainian statehood. The Soviet Army did not offer such a guarantee because it was not controlled by the government or the Verkhovna Rada, but by the Central Committee of the CPSU. He also pointed out that greater efforts should be made to reach conscripts among personnel officers.

The speech delivered by V. Martirosyan was warmly welcomed by Congress participants<sup>31</sup>. Martirosyan stated that complete de-politicization and “de-partization” of the armed forces should be the first step in the process of creating a national army because the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was an anti-democratic, reactionary force that was unable to see the prospects for the development of society. He demanded the resignation of thirteen deputies to the Minister of Defense of the USSR who had tainted themselves by establishing close ties with the Central Committee of the CPSU. The Armed Forces of Ukraine should be formed mainly based on Civil Guard resources because Soviet troops stationed in all regional centers had been substantially reduced. In another speech, he sharply criticized the practice of protectionism in the Soviet Army which involved high-ranking state and military figures and generals, including Alexiy Lizichev, Valentyn Varennykov, Dmitry Sukhorukov, Igor Rodionov and others. Vilen Martirosyan proposed a bill on the social protection of servicemen of the Ukrainian SSR to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine<sup>32</sup>.

Serhiy Rodyuk's report “Statutory and Legal Aspects of the Creation of the Armed Forces of Ukraine” continued the debate on the ways to form the UNA<sup>33</sup>. Based on history, international legal documents, and the legislation of the republic, Rodyuk justified the need and possibility of creating a national army for the republic. In his opinion, the

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<sup>31</sup> V. Martirosyan, *op. cit.*, article 7.

<sup>32</sup> A. Rusnachenko, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem.*

process was an integral part of the creation of the Ukrainian state. Vitaliy Chechylo, Chairman of the PMU Military Board of the PMU Council of Boards, addressed this issue in a report entitled "The Concept of the Ukrainian Army". This concept was partially discussed above. The establishment of a professional army in Ukraine was envisaged under the leadership of the Verkhovna Rada. The army was to be well equipped, depoliticized, and subordinate to the civilian authority of the Ministry of Defense. The concept described each step in the process of gradual transition from the Soviet Army to the National Army. The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine would be vested with the necessary powers to approve the commanders of districts, armies, and the Ukrainian Naval Forces.

Some of the speakers proposed a different concept of the army from that recommended at the Congress. In particular, Anatoliy Shmilo (Zhytomyr) argued that the National Armed Forces could be created by subordinating the Internal Troops of the Soviet MIA to the government of the Ukrainian SSR<sup>34</sup>. Nearly all speakers addressed the legal difficulties associated with the formation of the Armed Forces if a new union treaty were to be concluded, so the idea of a treaty with a modernized USSR was criticized. Nuclear weapons were discussed in the context of strategic troops that would be established within the framework of the Declaration of State Sovereignty and Ukraine's pledge "not to accept, produce or acquire nuclear weapons" based on interstate treaties.

Vitaly Lazorkin delivered an interesting report entitled "Legal and Social Protection of Military Personnel" which concerned not only those present at the Congress, but nearly everyone who served in the army<sup>35</sup>. In terms of their legal and social security status, servicemen were nearly completely dependent on state structures, generals, and political party leadership. The progress of the military reform was slowed down in the army. The measures proposed by the officials for the social protection of military personnel did not take into account the transition to a market economy. The declared rights and freedoms of military personnel could be ensured only if servicemen had an independent source of income, because economic dependence leads to nepotism and corruption in the army. The state was unable to pay full wages for military service; therefore, laws would have to be adopted to provide servicemen with additional sources of income that were not related to military duty. The speaker warned that personnel issues were more complex due to the transfer of troops from Eastern European countries to the USSR. The state was not ready for that, which was yet another reason why the Soviet Army should be reduced.

People's deputy of Ukraine Alexander Yemets focused on the legal aspect of protecting the military, in particular, a legal guarantee that army members would be able to refuse service. At the same time, other speakers noted that reactionary forces pursued high-ranking officers of the army and the navy. They and some political leaders were

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*.

charged with “stretching the army to national apartments” and “nationalism”. Reactionary forces resorted to slogans such as “today nationalism – tomorrow fascism”, “we will protect the socialist choice”, “we will protect the conquest of socialism”, “no to the de-partization of the army”. Such instances were reported in Kharkiv (Petro Nedzel-sky), in the Ukrainian Naval Forces (lieutenant commander Igor Tenyukh). The Congress strongly condemned this policy<sup>36</sup>.

The Congress adopted a number of documents addressing the main problems that were discussed during the two-day meeting. The “Statement of the Congress of Officers – Citizens of Ukraine” was the main document of the Congress which analyzed the military and political situation in Ukraine, proposed the principles for establishing the Armed Forces of Ukraine, incorporating Soviet troops into the UNA, developing a social security system for military personnel, and submitting proposals on the formation of the Ukrainian armed forces to the Supreme Soviet of the Republic. The “Appeal of the Participants of the Congress of Officers – Citizens of Ukraine to the of the Ukrainian SSR” stated that only the state’s own armed forces could guarantee the independence of the Ukrainian state, and it contained a demand to speed up the process. In the “Appeal to the Officers – Citizens of Ukraine Serving on Foreign Land”, the Congress stated that their problems would find a better and faster solution in Ukraine, and all officers were advised to unite and return to their homeland.

The Congress of Officers – Citizens of Ukraine showed that democratic forces at all levels decided to carry forward the issue of creating the Armed Forces of Ukraine through the legislative process of the Verkhovna Rada. Two concepts of creating the UNA were initially considered: the existing Soviet army troops would be gradually transformed into the UNA and placed under the control of MIA as the basis for the future army, or the National Guard would be created as a structure that would subsequently lead to the creation of the national army. The first concept received greater support. In addition, the Congress explicitly stated that the national army should be created as part of a legislative process under the leadership of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

Secondly, the rationale behind the establishment of Ukrainian armed forces was widely publicized and attracted the attention of the media and the interested parties. The accusations that the PMU and democratic parties intended to create their own military formations in opposition to the existing units of the Soviet army in Ukraine were rejected. The latter confirmed the assumption that democratic forces would achieve their goals solely by peaceful parliamentary means.

Thirdly, the Congress stated that the creation of the army was a long process involving several stages. A general concept for the creation of the UNA, including the type and number of laws that needed to be adopted in the near future, was forwarded to the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibidem.

Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR. Notably, all concepts and bills on military issues were proposed by the PMU, URP and officer committees rather than state structures.

Fourthly, the Congress stated that the Armed Forces of Ukraine would be created in compliance with the international security system.

The fifth consequence of the Congress was the formation of a public organization of the Ukrainian Officers' Union. This organization was to contribute to the formation of the UNA and the social protection of military personnel. The achievement of these goals in the near future would enable the Union to become a large and influential force, especially since people of different nationalities, faiths and political views would become its citizens.

Public opinion on the achievements of the Congress also deserves significant attention. The analysis should begin with officer groups close to the Communist Party of Ukraine and the command of military districts. The head of the military-political department of the Kyiv Military District, Lieutenant-General Borys Sharikov, did not change his position<sup>37</sup>: the new union treaty provided for unified armed forces with a single command. Sharikov questioned the democratic nature of the Congress by pointing out that political officers were not represented at the meeting. Acting on the assumption that political officers did not contribute the moral and social atmosphere in the military as the representatives of the party monopoly, the organizing committee was against inviting them to the Congress. Borys Sharikov did not question the necessity of establishing the UNA. While welcoming the Declaration on State Sovereignty, he did not acknowledge section nine of the Declaration which dealt with the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Other articles and statements were issued in the same spirit, in particular the statements from the officers of the Prykarpethian military district, the leadership of the Kyiv City Council of Veterans of War, Labor and Armed Forces, and the Ukrainian anti-fascist movement who referred to the Congress an assembly of nationalist provocateurs, traitors and national fascists, without delving into its proceedings or the adopted documents<sup>38</sup>. A. Rusnachenko drew the most interesting conclusion by observing that the organizers of the Congress could be backed by more powerful forces than a group of deputies of the Ukrainian SSR – the People's Rada. According to Rusnachenko, the organizers received support from a republican lobby, industry leaders interested in the subjecting the MIC to the jurisdiction of the republic, or even Leonid Kravchuk. These forces were planning to

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<sup>37</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>38</sup> V. Bilan, *Congress of officers of Ukraine: there were few arguments*, "Lenin's Banner" 1991, no. 14140, pp. 2–16; idem, *Without giving the floor to opponents*, "Soviet Ukraine" 1991, vol. CXLV, no. 6, pp. 1–3; Y. Djuyandi, M.K. Putra, H. Faozan, *Political communication between the house of representatives and the ministry of defense in discussing the republic of Indonesia state defense policy*, "Central European Journal of International and Security Studies" 2018, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 82–95.



gauge the reaction of the center (the leadership of the USSR) and to regroup for further work<sup>39</sup>.

Interestingly, the “Kommersant” newspaper noted that in the previous two to three months (until August 1991), more had been done in Ukraine to strengthen the security of the republic than to sign a new union treaty<sup>40</sup>. It is possible that these reasons and considerations influenced the organizers of the “August coup” in August 1991, their actions in Kyiv, and the creation of the Verkhovna Rada. Republican press responded to the Congress with restraint and did not comment on the event. These were the unexpected results of the Congress. The newly created Ukrainian Officers’ Union continued to expand. Departments and organizations were formed in cities, districts, and regions. Legislative work was underway. During the “August coup”, when Kyiv was surrounded by the military, the Ukrainian Officers’ Union was one of many public organizations that openly opposed the coup and called for an end to all activities that could lead to dictatorship and civil war<sup>41</sup>.

On 24 August 1991, Ukraine was declared an independent state. On the same day, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a resolution on the military formations of Ukraine, which subordinated all troops stationed in Ukraine to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, created the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, and instructed the government to initiate the process of establishing the Ukrainian army<sup>42</sup>. The parliament also adopted a resolution to depoliticize all state institutions and organizations, including the army, the KGB and the MIA. The accomplishments of the PMU Military Board of the PMU Council of Boards and the Ukrainian Officers’ Union significantly facilitated this process. A group of officers who were members of the Ukrainian Officers’ Union took an active part in the preparation of draft laws, concepts on the formation of the National Army, and defense policies for the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. In October 1991, the parliament passed a package of defense laws based on the achievements of democratic officers before and after the Congress.

## Conclusions

To summarize, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1) The ideas and concepts that were put forward by public organizations during various meetings, in particular the Ukrainian Military Committee (Kharkiv), the Assembly of Democratic Forces (Lviv), the Second Congress of the People’s Movement of Ukraine,

<sup>39</sup> A. Rusnachenko, op. cit.

<sup>40</sup> L. Beletskaya, A. Ostapchuk, *Ukrainian army: independence must be with fists*, “Kommersant” 1991, no. 31(81), pp. 3–13.

<sup>41</sup> Appeal of the Union of Officers of Ukraine to officers. 1991, [https://portsou.at.ua/news/zvernennja\\_spilki\\_oficeriv\\_ukrajini\\_do\\_delegativ\\_vseukrajinskogo\\_forumu\\_veteraniv/2010-09-29-678](https://portsou.at.ua/news/zvernennja_spilki_oficeriv_ukrajini_do_delegativ_vseukrajinskogo_forumu_veteraniv/2010-09-29-678) (accessed: 27 X 2023).

<sup>42</sup> Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine no. 1431-XII “On military formations in Ukraine”, 1991, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1431-12#Text> (accessed: 27 X 2023).

the accomplishments of the scientific and theoretical conference of 2–3 February 1991, the Military Board of the People's Movement of Ukraine, and the Congress of officers – citizens of Ukraine, were reduced to the basic premise that parts of the Soviet Army stationed on the territory of the Ukrainian SSR would be legally transformed into the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The transformation process was to be carried out on the principles of professionalism and reasonable sufficiency.

2) The activities of public organizations and meetings (conferences, congresses, meetings, etc.) dedicated to the creation of the Ukrainian army received mostly negative or, at most, neutral coverage in the mass media. Only a small number of newspapers, mainly of Ukrainian patriotic orientation, made a real contribution to the process of creating the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

3) It was the democratic forces of Ukraine, above all the People's Movement of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Republican Party, and, partly, the Democratic Party of Ukraine that strongly pushed for the creation of a national army, often in opposition to the state authorities. These organizations take full credit for the theoretical underpinnings of the concept, its practical implementation in the army, and social support for the idea. The ideas and actions that had not been recognized in 1979, rejected in 1990, and officially denied in the first half of 1991, finally received recognition from the legislators of the independent state and the majority of the Ukrainian people in the second half of 1991.

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**The contribution of public organizations to the creation of the Ukrainian National Army (1989–1991)**

**Summary:** This study describes the main processes that took place during 1989–1991 in Ukraine during the creation of the Ukrainian armed forces. The role of the People's Movement of Ukraine and political parties, in particular the Ukrainian Republican Party, Party of Greens of Ukraine, Ukrainian People's Democratic Party, and the Democratic Party of Ukraine, in the formation of the Ukrainian army and the influence of these organizations on the processes that contributed to the formation of the Ukrainian armed forces are discussed. The articles published in democratic, central and republican press at the time were analyzed. The study also examines the way in which the events surrounding the creation of the Ukrainian armed forces were portrayed in the media (press). Military issues and the solutions proposed by the Ukrainian military committee (Kharkiv) at the meeting of Democratic Forces (Lviv) and the Second Conference of the People's Movement of Ukraine were described. The article highlights the achievements of the scientific and theoretical conference of 2–3 February 1991, the Military Board of the People's Movement of Ukraine, and the First Congress of Officers – citizens of Ukraine (including the most interesting proposals for the formation of the Ukrainian army, as well as other concepts that differed from the recommendations made during the Congress) and their impact on the formation of the Ukrainian National Army.

**Keywords:** Armed Forces of Ukraine, Ukrainian National Army, union, board, army, democracy, People's Movement of Ukraine, political parties

**Beitrag der gesellschaftlichen Organisationen zur Bildung der ukrainischen Nationalarmee (1989–1991)**

**Zusammenfassung:** In diesem Artikel werden die wichtigsten Prozesse dargestellt, die zwischen 1989 und 1991 in der Ukraine bei der Bildung ihrer Streitkräfte stattgefunden haben. Es werden die Rollen der Volksbewegung der Ukraine und der politischen Parteien, insbesondere der Ukrainischen Republikanischen Partei, der Grünen Partei der Ukraine, der Ukrainischen Volksdemokratischen Partei und der Demokratischen Partei der Ukraine, bei der Bildung der ukrainischen Armee und ihr Einfluss auf die Prozesse, die zur Bildung der Streitkräfte beitrugen, dargestellt. Analysiert wurden die Veröffentlichungen, die in der demokratischen, zentralen und republikanischen Presse jener Zeit erschienen. Der Artikel zeigt auch, wie einige Medien (die Presse) die selben Ereignisse im Prozess der Bildung der Streitkräfte darstellten. Der Artikel befasst sich auch mit den militärischen Fragen und deren Erörterung im ukrainischen Militärkomitee (Charkiw), in der Versammlung der Demokratischen Kräfte (Lemberg) und auf dem Zweiten Parteitag der Volksbewegung der Ukraine. Der Artikel beleuchtet die Arbeit der wissenschaftlich-theoretischen Konferenz am 2. und 3. Februar 1991, des Militärausschusses der Volksbewegung der Ukraine und des 1. Kongresses der Offiziere - Bürger der Ukraine (Beschreibung der interessantesten Vorschläge, die für die Bildung der ukrainischen Armee vorgelegt wurden, sowie Hinweise auf Ideen, die

etwas anderer Natur waren als die, die auf dem Kongress empfohlen wurden) sowie ihren Einfluss auf die weitere Bildung der ukrainischen Nationalarmee.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Streitkräfte der Ukraine, Ukrainische Nationalarmee, Vereinigung, Verwaltung, Armee, Demokratie, Volksbewegung der Ukraine, politische Parteien

### **Wkład organizacji społecznych w tworzenie Ukraińskiej Armii Narodowej (1989–1991)**

**Streszczenie:** Niniejszy artykuł przedstawia najważniejsze procesy, jakie zaszły w latach 1989–1991 na Ukrainie, dotyczące tworzenia sił zbrojnych. Przedstawiono rolę Ruchu Ludowego Ukrainy oraz partii politycznych, w szczególności Ukraińskiej Partii Republikańskiej, Partii Zielonych Ukrainy, Ukraińskiej Partii Ludowo-Demokratycznej, Demokratycznej Partii Ukrainy, w formowaniu ukraińskiej armii. Dokonano analizy publikacji, które ukazały się w ówczesnej prasie demokratycznej, centralnej i republikańskiej. W artykule wskazano również, w jaki sposób niektóre media (prasa) przedstawiały te same wydarzenia. Autorzy zajęli się także kwestiami militarnymi i sposobami ich rozwiązania, które rozważano w Ukraińskim Komitecie Wojskowym (Charków) na zebraniu Sił Demokratycznych (Lwów) i na II Zjeździe Partii Ruchu Ludowego Ukrainy. Zwrócono uwagę na prace konferencji naukowo-teoretycznej z 2–3 lutego 1991 r., Zarządu Wojskowego Ruchu Ludowego Ukrainy i I Zjazdu Oficerów – Obywateli Ukrainy (opis najciekawszych zgłoszonych propozycji formowania armii ukraińskiej, a także wskazania idei, które miały nieco inny charakter niż rekomendowane na Zjeździe) oraz ich wpływ na dalsze formowanie Ukraińskiej Armii Narodowej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** siły zbrojne Ukrainy, Ukraińska Armia Narodowa, związek, zarząd, armia, demokracja, Ludowy Ruch Ukrainy, partie polityczne

