

THE GRANITE REVOLUTION: A ROLE MODEL OR A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

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Abstract: *The events that took place on Kyiv's Maidan in 1991 went down in history as the 'Revolution on Granite'. It was one of the first student performances in the USSR. Over the years, however, the revolution lost part of its name because, as Oles Donii* himself recalls, the full name of the events he helped organise was 'Student Revolution on Granite'. However, the activity of young people was not rewarded, and the opposition, together with the Communists, raised the age for running for election to the Verkhovna Rada, which clearly destroyed the careers of young activists. The authors of the article try to show not only little-known facts from the history of Ukraine's systemic transformation, but also the changes that the revolution brought about in Ukraine's political system. The authors mainly use methods of source analysis, often a little-known position, which undoubtedly positively affects the cognitive value of the article.*

Keywords: *Revolution, Youth, Protests, Soviet Union, Ukraine, Maidan.*

Rezumat: *Revoluția pe Granit: un rol model sau o oportunitate ratată. Evenimentele care au avut loc pe Maidanul din Kiev în 1991 au rămas în istorie ca „Revoluția pe granit”, în fapt fiind vorba despre una dintre primele spectacole studențești din URSS. De-a lungul anilor însă, revoluția și-a pierdut o parte din nume pentru că, așa cum își amintește însuși Oles Donii, numele complet al evenimentelor la a căror organizare a contribuit a fost*

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* Oleksandr (Oles) Donii (born August 13, 1969 in Kiev) - Ukrainian politician and cultural activist, deputy of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in the 6th and 7th terms. One of the leaders of the Student Revolution on Granite.

„Revoluția studențească pe granit”. Cu toate acestea, activitatea tinerilor nu a fost răsplătită, iar opoziția, împreună cu comuniștii, a ridicat vârsta de candidatură la alegerile pentru Rada Supremă, ceea ce a distrus în mod clar cariera politică a tinerilor activiști. Autorii articolului încearcă să prezinte nu numai fapte puțin cunoscute din istoria transformării sistemice a Ucrainei, ci și schimbările pe care revoluția le-a adus în sistemul politic al țării. Sunt folosite în principal metode de analiză a surselor, adesea puțin cunoscute, fapt care, fără îndoială, aduc un plus valorii cognitive a articolului.

INTRODUCTION

The 1991 revolution in Ukraine is the least known political uprising in the history of modern Ukraine, although it was unique in the region of the countries that were part of the USSR. In order to understand the process of national and state formation in modern Ukraine, it is necessary to delve into the period when, despite the totalitarian system, young people were the first to express their dissatisfaction with the socio-political situation in socialist Ukraine. The authors of the article would like to draw attention to the thesis of the work, which is: the generational conflict inhibited pro-democratic social changes in the Ukrainian SSR. It is worth noting that the only academic works dealing comprehensively with the issue of student protests in Ukraine are the Ukrainian-language articles by Luydmila Yuzva,¹ Vitaliy Kulyk² and Nadiya Popyk.³ Also abroad, the Polish language monograph⁴ by

¹ Luydmila Yuzva, *Student-s'ka molod' pro sotsial'ni revolyutsiyi v Ukrayini pochatku XXI stolittya (za rezul'tatamy analizu avtobiohrafichnykh tekstiv)* [Students Youth about Social Revolutions in Ukrainian in the beginning of the 21st century (by the results of the autobiography texts)], in “Visnyk of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University. Series Sociological Studies of Contemporary Society: Methodology, Theory, methods”, 2015, No. 1148, pp. 140-146.

² Vitalii Kulyk, *Revoliutsiia na hraniti: bunt pokolinnia 1990-kh* [Revolution on Granite: Rebellion of the 90s Generation], 03.10.2017, in <https://hvylya.net/analytics/history/revolyutsiya-na-graniti-bunt-pokolinnya-1990-h.html>.

³ Nadiia Popyk, *Studentskyi rukh Ukrainy v umovakh zmahannia za yii derzhavnu nezalezhnist* [The Student Movement of Ukraine in the conditions of the struggle for state independence], in “Naukovi zapysky z ukrainskoi istorii. Zbirnyk naukovykh statei”, Vol. 44, 2018, pp. 99-104.

⁴ Mateusz Kamionka, *Wzory zmiany społeczno-politycznej w świadomości ukraińskich studentów po 1991 roku* [Patterns of Socio-Political Change in the Minds of Ukrainian Students after 1991], Warszawa, Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2022.

Mateusz Kamionka, articles by Hurska-Kowalczyk⁵ and English language publications by Tom Junes,⁶ Christine Emeran⁷ and Nadia M. Diuk.⁸

The paper should present two key theoretical concepts for the scope of the research. The first is the concept of 'generation', seen especially from a social point of view, and the second is 'conflict' in society. A generation is understood in historical terms, i.e. as a community of attitudes and a hierarchy of values, and is used to refer to less tangible, more subjective characteristics, such as life wisdom and experience, which are nevertheless shared by wider communities. Note that in this sense the term is close to, but not identical with, the concepts of age group and social category.⁹ A generation understood in this way is, as Piotr Sztompka¹⁰ points out, not a community but a collective behaviour – a form of activity less complex than collective actions, social movements and organised actions. They are characterised by a lack of common goals and coordination, a lack of orientation towards social change and a lack of institutionalisation. However, the emergence of the generation phenomenon can allow these characteristics to emerge and thus the transition from collective behaviour to higher levels of organisation.

Raymond W. Mack and Richard C. Snyder, in an article intended to provide an overview and synthesis of the meanings of the term conflict, suggest (without providing their own definition) that conflict should be understood in behavioural terms, as a particular system of interactions, which we will call conventionally hostile interactions.¹¹ Vilhelm Aubert, for example, defines conflict differently,

⁵ Liana Hurska-Kowalczyk. *Studencka "Rewolucja Na Granicie" w Kontekście Przemian Społeczno-Politycznych w Ukraińskiej Socjalistycznej Republice Radzieckiej* [Student 'Revolution on Granite' in the Context of Social and Political Changes in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic], in "Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne", 2014, No. 4, p. 197, <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssp.2014.4.11>.

⁶ Tom Junes, *Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity: A Case Study of Student Protest as a Catalyst for Political Upheaval*, in "Critique & Humanism", Vol. 46, 2016, No. 2, pp. 73–96.

⁷ Christine Emeran, *New Generation Political Activism in Ukraine 2000–2014*, London, Routledge, 2017.

⁸ Nadia M. Diuk, *The Next Generation in Russia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan. Youth, Politics, Identity, and Change*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2012.

⁹ Andrzej Klimczuk, *Kapitał społeczny ludzi starych na przykładzie mieszkańców miasta Białystok* [Social Capital of Old People on the Example of Inhabitants of the City of Białystok], Lublin, Wiedza i Edukacja, 2012, p. 19–23.

¹⁰ Piotr Sztompka, *Socjologia. Analiza społeczeństwa* [Sociology. Society Analysis], Kraków, Znak, 2002, pp. 175, 154, 173.

¹¹ Raymond W. Mack, Richard C. Snyder, *The Analysis of Social Conflict. Toward an Overview*

using psychological terms. For him, conflict is a kind of mental tension between the parties, open antagonism, hostility. And he distinguishes the conflict from its basis, which he sees as the conditions of the system, the whole social structure. Hence the concept of potential conflict.¹² Clinton Fink wanted to combine the two meanings of the term. He formulated a definition that would allow for a broad theory of social conflict: "Social conflict is any situation or process in which two or more social entities are related by at least one of the psychological antagonistic relations or at least one of the antagonistic interactions".¹³

But the most important thing is the combination of both parts in the 'conflict of generations', which influenced the political and social situation of Ukrainians at the time of the slow collapse of totalitarian power. During the protests, there were not many opportunities for young people to realise their dreams. The official communist youth political organisation, *Komsomol*, was no longer attractive to young people. Nationalist and national opportunities were one of the possible ideological choices, more attractive as they were pro-independence, and such actions fit in with Margaret Mead's¹⁴ anthropological and cultural concept as a manifestation of configurative culture, characterised by generational conflict, young people's conscious resignation from existing ideals and the search for others. The social sciences have long drawn attention to the fact that the young generation is looking for its own way. For example, Maria Braun Gałkowska argues that young people formulate their own world view, norms and values and acquire social skills.¹⁵ It should also be stressed that the 90s were a new era for the style of protests and revolutions, not only in Ukraine. In most of the earlier protests, the proletariat¹⁶ was the form of manifestation, which had the 'monopoly' on protesting in most of the countries in the region. However, as early as the 90s this situation changed, the new protesters were mostly youth (students), women and people from the global south living on the edge of survival.

and *Snythesis*, in "The Journal of Conflict Resolution", Vol. I, 1957, No. 1, pp. 211 – 248.

¹² Vilhelm Aubert, *Competition and Dissensus: Two Types of Conflict and Conflict Resolution*, in "The Journal of Conflict Resolution", 1963, vol. VII, nr 1, pp. 26 – 42.

¹³ Clinton Fink, *Some Conceptual Difficulties in the Theory of Social Conflict*, in "The Journal of Conflict Resolution", Vol. 12, 1968, nr. 4, pp. 412 – 460.

¹⁴ Margaret Mead, *Kultura i tożsamość. Studium dystansu międzypokoleniowego* [Culture and Commitment. Intergenerational Distance Study], Warszawa, 1978, pp. 25-147.

¹⁵ Maria Braun-Gałkowska, *Who would like to have a year without spring*, in T. Ożoga (Editor), *Social Sciences about Youth*, Lublin, 1974, pp. 146-159.

¹⁶ Most of the revolutionary power in the former 'Communist' countries was based on the proletariat before 90s, like the Polish 'Solidarność' (Solidarity) movement, etc.

The groups which were active had nothing to lose, the proletariat at that time already changed their social situation on economic grounds, as well as political attitudes. That is why it was students who started the revolution on Kyiv Maidan, not workers, whom a lot of politics from system opposition believed in as the main political power. Opposition political leaders thought that the worsening economic situation in the USSR would cause workers' strikes and create similar protest movements as it had happened in other countries in the region, like the 'Solidarność' (Solidarity) movement in Poland.

'STUDENT' REVOLUTION ON GRANITE

At the beginning of September 1990, two problems were at the centre of public attention and political life in Ukraine – the conclusion of a new Union Treaty and the distribution of forces in the national parliament and its prospects for development. Consideration of other issues, which were periodically raised at rallies, pickets and other political actions of the opposition (the creation of a separate Ukrainian army, the dismantling of monuments to Vladimir Lenin, etc.), and demonstrations of force by the official authorities were usually only an excuse to talk “about the main thing”. Political tension in society grew. On 15 September, a meeting of representatives of strike, labour and trade union committees of Ukraine decided to hold an all-Ukrainian one-day warning political strike on 1 October.¹⁷ On the 30th of September there was a kind of test of strength of the opposition. According to them, 100–120 thousand people took part in the big demonstration.¹⁸ Journalists, who also attended the rally, were less optimistic: “We didn't understand where 30 000 demonstrators had disappeared to, if even the queue at the Khreschatyk cafe was shorter than usual... As we predicted, the demonstrators picketed the Verkhovna Rada. We didn't count 30 000, obviously, there wasn't even half of that number.”¹⁹ According to the party authorities, only up to 15 000 people were able to take

¹⁷ Vitalii Kulyk, Tetiana Holobutska, Oleksii Holobutskyi, *Moloda Ukraina: suchasnyi orhanizovanyi molodizhnyi rukh ta neformalna initsiatyva. Doslidzhennia* [Young Ukraine: contemporary youth movement and informal movements. Research], Kyiv, 2000, p. 156-157.

¹⁸ Oleksii Haran, *Ubyty drakona: z istoriyi Rukhu ta novykh partiy Ukrayiny* [To Kill the Dragon: From the History of the Rukh and New Parties of Ukraine], Kyiv, 1993, p. 125.

¹⁹ *Proba syl? Korrespondenty "Komsomolskoho znameny" dyktuiut s Kreshchatyka* [Test of strength? Correspondents of 'Komsomol flag' dictate from Khreshchatyk], in “Komsomolskoe znamia”, 1990, 2 oktiabria, p. 3.

part in the opposition rally and demonstration, the majority of whom came from the western regions of the republic.

On the decisive day for the opposition – 1 October 1990 –, 10 000 people out of 25 million workers took part in the all-Ukrainian strike throughout the republic, according to official data. Faced with these statistics, analysts at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine were optimistic: “This testifies both to the possibilities of active explanatory work by party committees, Soviet bodies and the mass media, and to the fact that common sense is beginning to prevail over collective passions.”²⁰

It should be admitted that it was indeed an extremely painful defeat for the opposition, which demonstrated, on the one hand, a significant degree of inertia in the course of political processes in the republic, the maintenance of a certain control of the power structures over the formation of public opinion and manifestations of social activity, and, on the other hand, the organisational weakness of the democratic forces, their lack of a broad social base. The defeat of the October strike had to be recognised at the 5th Congress of the Rukh by Viacheslav Chornovil, who declared: “it was a huge mistake.”²¹ Within the opposition itself, there were huge divisions as to what the future of Ukraine should look like, some of the old activists believing that it should last within the framework of the Soviet Union and younger activists that it should be independent. However, they were united by the opinion that the student youth were clearly too ‘radical’ in their views.

The student youth, however, saved the opposition from a real political knockout. On 2 October, representatives of the Ukrainian Student Union (USU) and the Student Brotherhood (mostly from the Lviv region) began a political hunger strike in the capital’s October Revolution Square. On the first day of the action, 119 students and 120 volunteers took part. Most of them were students from Lviv, but there were also 37 students from Kyiv.²² It should be emphasised

²⁰ Tsentralnyi derzhavnyi arkhiv hromads'kykh ob'iednan' Ukrainy (hereinafter: **TsDAHOU** [Central State Archives of Public Organizations of Ukraine], Fund 1, Inv. 32, F. 2768 – Informatsiia Sekretariatu TsK KPU “Pro rozvytok politychnoi sytuatsii u respubliksi” vid 13 zhovtnia 1990 r. [Information to the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine “On the development of the political situation in the republic”], ff. 30, 31.

²¹ Oleksii Haran, *Ubyty drakona*, p. 125.

²² TsDAHOU, Fund 1, Inv. 32, F. 2772 – Informatsiia “Pro holoduvannia studentiv v m. Kyievi 3 zhovtnia 1990 r.” [Information “About the hunger strike of students in Kyiv on October 3, 1990”], f. 133.

that this act of civil disobedience was not spontaneous. In the summer of 1990, during the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Ukrainian Cossacks in Zaporizhzhya, the Kyiv branch of the Ukrainian Students' Union first publicly expressed the idea of holding a political hunger strike in Kyiv. According to the plan of the radical youth, the whole set of measures (the hunger strike was only one part of a large-scale protest action that included meetings, strikes and demonstrations) should lead to a general student strike that would force the authorities to carry out political reforms.²³

In order that the students' speech should be organised, large-scale and republican, it was necessary to coordinate and agree on the manifestations of political activity of various youth organisations. The main plan of action and the basic positions (the day of the action, the forms and methods of its implementation) were clarified during the negotiations between the Ukrainian Student Union (O. Donii, Y. Zubko) and the Student Brotherhood (O. Kuzan, T. Davydyak), which took place within the framework of the meeting of youth and student organisations of the USSR in Vilnius (Lithuania).²⁴

On the eve of the hunger strike, three demands were put forward in a leaflet distributed by the Kyiv organization of the Ukrainian Student Union:

- prematurely terminate the powers of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and call new elections on a multi-party basis in the fall of 1991;
 - adopt a law on the nationalization of the property of the Communist Party of Ukraine and Leninist Communist League of Youth of Ukraine;
 - prevent the signing of the alliance agreement (between soviet republics).
- Lviv students added two more items to this list:
- a decision to be made on military service by citizens of Ukraine exclusively within the borders of the republic;
 - resignation of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR Vitaliy Masol. In this respect, we have to mention that Masol was a supporter and at the same time a symbol of Soviet power in Ukraine, his Moscow-centric views were contrary to the national interests of the students).²⁵

²³ *Yak vse pochynalos? Pershi dni holoduvannia* [How Did it All Begin? The First Days of Starvation], in "Ukrainske studentstvo", 2000, 2 zhovtnia, p. 2.

²⁴ Oles Donii, Oleh Synelnykov, *Istoriia USS movoiu dokumentiv i faktiv (1989 – 1999)* [The History of the Ukrainian Student Union in the Language of Documents and Facts (1989–1999)], Kyiv, 1999, p. 3.

²⁵ *Yak vse pochynalos? Pershi dni holoduvannia* [How Did it All Begin? The First Days of Starvation], in "Ukrainske studentstvo", 2000, 2 zhovtnia, p. 2.

As we can see, the students' demands did not relate exclusively to youth problems, but covered a wide range of issues, the solution to which required a deep political reform of society. It is characteristic that in 1990 even the Baltic states considered them too radical. The organisers of the action wanted to turn the student hunger strike into a catalyst for social development, a factor destabilising the system and awakening national consciousness among the people, a factor that would lead first the youth and then the broad masses of the people to large-scale acts of civil disobedience. It is in this context that the statement of one of the youth leaders, Markiyan Ivashishin, should be understood, according to which the radical nature of the demands predicted from the very beginning that they would not be met, and therefore the student hunger strike could bring the country to an almost revolutionary situation.²⁶

The students who started the hunger strike were convinced that on the very first night the authorities would take decisive action: the tent city would be destroyed and they would be put in detention centres. Recalling those days, hunger striker Yuri Zubko emphasised: "When we went to the square on the first day, we were sure that we would be quickly 'demolished' from there. Because there had already been arrests – both during the Kyiv city council picket on 23 February and after the first student rallies on 23 February..."²⁷ At the end of February 1990, students organized the first protests, but, as in the case of the one carried out in front of the Kiev City Council, they ended in arrests for all participants, who received a prison sentence of 5–15 days.²⁸ Anticipating such a development, the organisers of the action prepared its next stage – they planned to launch a wave of strikes in the universities of the republic in defence of the imprisoned students. The role of initiators and leaders of this political action on the ground was assigned to the members of the Ukrainian Student Union and the Student Brotherhood.²⁹

However, events took on a completely different course. While the central

²⁶ Konstantyn Bondarenko, *Velyka Zhovtneva Studentska Revoliutsiia* [Great October Student Revolution], in "Polityka i kultura", 2000, no. 37, p. 10.

²⁷ *Chas khryzantem: potomu desiat lit* [Chrysanthemum time: ten years later], in "Stolytsia", 2000, 7 zhovtnia, p. 4.

²⁸ Dmytro Shurkhalo, *Pershyy Maydan: 30-richchya Revolyutsiyi na hraniti* [First Maidan: 30th anniversary of the Revolution on Granite], <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/revolutsiya-na-hraniti-studentske-holoduvannia/30874467.html> (Accessed on 17. 02. 2023).

²⁹ Volodymyr Kovtun, *Istoriia Narodnoho Rukhu* [History of the People's Movement], Kyiv, 1995, p. 187.

government adopted a wait-and-see attitude, the Presidium of the Kyiv City Council (the representative of the Democratic Bloc, Oleksandr Mosiyuk, was the acting chairman at the time) retroactively adopted a decision at 23:00 on 2 October, which did not mention the hunger strike but gave formal legal permission for its implementation. In particular, the document stated: "Condemning the provocative acts of violence against police officers that are taking place ..., allow during the work of the second session of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR to hold mass events in the central part of the city that do not interfere with traffic."³⁰ It should be emphasised that such a decision was made possible, to a certain extent, by the fact that 40% of the deputies of the then city council were representatives of the Democratic Bloc.³¹

Under these circumstances, on 3 October, the tent city in October Revolution Square already had 49 tents and 137 people from Kyiv, Lviv, Dnipropetrovsk, Ivano-Frankivsk and other cities of the republic participated in the hunger strike³². In the centre of the majors' camp there is a flag with a medical cross, several dozen yellow and blue banners and two black and purple banners. The heads of the hunger strikers were tied with black ribbons. Posters were hung at various ends of the tent city: 'Destructive elements' of the Lviv Agricultural Institute are starving, "Our yoke: 239, KGB, KPU", "Kravchuk is persona non grata in Ukraine". One of the posters showed a monument to Vladimir Lenin on Taras Shevchenko Boulevard, and above it a hand with a hook from a lifting crane and the caption: "T. Shevchenko Boulevard, not Lenin." Already at this stage, the student hunger strike was perceived by the central party bodies not as an initiative of the youth, but as an action inspired by the opposition: "There is no doubt, it is noted in the information on the students' speech, that the above-mentioned action is one of the components of clearly planned actions of anti-Soviet, anti-communist, anti-socialist forces (Rukh – People's Movement of Ukraine –, URP – Ukrainian Radical Party –, SNUM – Ukrainian Youth Association –, etc.) aimed at seizing power, dissolving the parliament of the republic."³³

On 4 October, a group of deputies of the National People's Party of the USSR

³⁰ Mykhayl Svystovych, *Ne chipaite sviatoho! Tsiiei relikvii ne viddaiut chuzhym* [Do not touch the saint! This relic is not given to strangers], in "Polityka i kultura", 2000, No. 40, p. 39.

³¹ *Chas khryzantem: potomu desiat lit* [Chrysanthemum time: ten years later], in "Stolytsia", 7 zhovtnia, 2000, p. 4.

³² Vitalii Kulyk, Tetiana Holobutska, Oleksii Holobutskyi, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

³³ TsDAHOU, Fund 1, Inv. 32, F. 2772, Informatsiia "Pro holoduvannia studentiv v m. Kyievi 3 zhovtnia 1990 r." [Information "About the hunger strike of students in Kyiv on October 3, 1990"], f. 133-134.

from Ukraine (Y. Shcherbak, V. Yavorivskiyi, O. Honchar, V. Chernyak, S. Konev, O. Yemets, etc.) addressed a letter to the citizens of Ukraine, leaders and members of political parties, public movements, in which they noted that before the threat of a deepening of the general crisis in the USSR and Ukraine, it is necessary to immediately convene a 'round table' of the political forces of the republic.³⁴ This document was assessed by the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine as "an attempt to destabilise the situation, to provoke a governmental crisis", the aim of which was "to review the decision of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR on the formation of the government, to involve representatives of the opposition."³⁵

The next day, the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR, Leonid Kravchuk, met with the leaders of the student action – O. Donii and M. Ivashyshin. Although, as expected, the meeting ended inconclusively, leaving each side dissatisfied, it did clarify the positions of the opposing parties, which had a significant impact on the further development of events. In particular, new, more democratic accents appeared in the views of the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada. At a meeting with the leaders of the student action, he declared: "I want to be above the parties. I will not support any party, I will support the people. I am a member of the CPSU, but this is my personal position. There are interests higher than the party. This, I repeat, is in the interests of the people."³⁶ Incidentally, it was then that Leonid Kravchuk became convinced that the student hunger strike was not an action inspired by the 'adult' opposition, but a completely independent manifestation of the youth movement's activity. Recalling this historic moment, he remarked: "I wanted to hear whether this was really their point of view or whether there were older forces behind them and they were simply being used... The discussion was quite heated. After all, the students saw in me the communist forces of Ukraine. And they did not want that to be the case. Then I realised that these are convinced people. And they will stand until the end."³⁷

³⁴ *Zvernennia do hromadian Ukrainy, kerivnykiv ta chleniv politychnykh partii, hromadskykh rukhiv* [Appeal to citizens of Ukraine, leaders and members of political parties, public movements], in "Literaturna Ukraina", 4 zhovtnia 1990, p. 1.

³⁵ TsDAHOU, Fund 1, Inv. 32, F. 2768, Informatsiia Sekretariatu TsK KPU "Pro rozvytok politychnoi situatsii u respubliki", vid 13 zhovtnia 1990 r [Information of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine "On the Development of the Political Situation in the Republic"], f. 32.

³⁶ *Studenty i Kravchuk* [Students and Kravchuk], in "Ukrainske studentstvo", 2 zhovtnia 2000, p. 3.

³⁷ *Leonid Kravchuk* [Leonid Kravchuk], in "Ukrainske studentstvo", 2 zhovtnia 2000, p. 3.

The round table of 9 October, apart from the public declaration of their positions, did not have any positive results. During the meeting the leadership of the Verkhovna Rada, deputies, representatives of ministries were unable to find a common language and reach an agreement with the leaders of the student protest action O. Barkov, O. Donii, M. Ivashyshin, O. Kuzan, V. Kyrilenko, Yu. Hertsyk. After a sharp and long discussion, I. Yukhnovskiyi, who led the 'round table', thanked the students for their courage and activity and called on them to stop the hunger strike if two demands – on the Union Treaty and military service – were resolved positively. However, the starving students, through the voice of M. Ivashyshin, announced that they would remain in their positions regardless of the consequences.³⁸

The next day showed that each of the opposing parties was acting according to its own scenario: in the parliament it was decided by an open vote not to include the discussion of the hunger strikers' demands in the agenda of the session (only 161 deputies voted 'yes'), and the students, in violation of the decision of the Kyiv Council, organised a demonstration of tens of thousands that blocked the traffic on Khreshchatyk and the building of the State Television and Radio of the Ukrainian SSR. The main demand of the demonstrators was the provision of a 10-minute live broadcast to publicise the hunger strikers' demands. Under the circumstances, the authorities were forced to make some concessions – a group of People's Deputies were allowed to make a statement. The leitmotif of this speech was the thesis that the current parliament has exhausted its possibilities and a call for civil disobedience and strikes. The deputies of the People's Movement of Ukraine also announced that they would join the hunger strikers.³⁹ The hunger strike was started as a sign of support for the demands and actions of the youth by S. Khmara, L. Gorokhivskiyi, V. Kolinets, O. Gudyma, M. Kuzemko, F. Sviderskiy, B. Rebrik, Ya. Zaiko, Ya. Kenzyor, V. Bed, M. Horyn.⁴⁰

Further events – 100 000-strong demonstration in Kyiv, 11 October, launching of the general student strike, 13-15 October, 'occupation strike' (occupation of the Red Campus of Kyiv State University by students), on the evening of 15 October, the formation of a second tented 'Freedom Town' near the walls of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR, 16 October (298 students were already on hunger strike

³⁸ *Kruhlyi stil* [Round Table], in "Ukrainske studentstvo", 2 zhovtnia 2000, p. 6.

³⁹ Vitalii Kulyk, Tetiana Holobutska, Oleksii Holobutskiyi, *op. cit.*, p. 161; TsDAHOU, Fund 1, Inv. 32, F. 2768 – Informatsiia Sekretariatu TsK KPU "Pro rozvytok politychnoi situatsii u respubliksi", vid 13 zhovtnia 1990 r., f. 31.

⁴⁰ Oleksii Haran, *Ubyty drakona...*, p. 129.

that day, 27 of them had been on hunger strike since the first day, 60% of the hunger strikers had colds, seizures became more frequent) – testified to the radicalisation of students' attitudes and actions.⁴¹ According to the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Special Education of the Ukrainian SSR, about 30 000 of the 85 000 students enrolled in Kyiv universities took part in the hunger strike and strike. In Lviv, almost 59 000 out of 65 000 students were on strike. In Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk – ten thousand each, i.e. practically all students. Totally, almost 100 000 of the 510 000 students at Ukrainian universities took part in the campaign, one in five.⁴² At the time, a wave of protests against the official authorities' attitude to the starving youth was sweeping the republic. Such actions took place in Ternopil, Rivne, Donetsk, Kremenchuk, Horlivka, Kherson, Khmelnytsky and Dnipropetrovsk. As a sign of solidarity with the tent city in Kyiv, tent cities of the hungry were set up in the centres of Zhytomyr, Donetsk and Sumy...⁴³ These and other factors convincingly demonstrated that the socio-political situation in the republic, ignited by the student hunger strike, was rapidly approaching the limit beyond which uncontrolled processes could unfold. It is no coincidence that the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, analysing the dynamics and possible consequences of the hunger strike, stated as early as 13 October that “the danger of this action cannot be underestimated.”⁴⁴

Under the pressure of circumstances, the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR was forced to adopt a resolution on October 17, 1990, the content and spirit of which reflected the shaky balance of power:

1. During the second session of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR, adopt a number of laws – on the referendum, on political parties and organizations, on the status of the people's deputy of the Ukrainian SSR. In 1991, Ukraine should hold a national vote-referendum on issues of confidence in the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR and, based on its results, make a decision to hold new

⁴¹ *Pokhid ta piketuvannia Verkhovnoi Rady* [March and Picketing of the Verkhovna Rada], in “Ukrainske studentstvo”, 2 zhovtnia 2000, p. 4; *Studentstvo i likari* [Students and doctors], in “Ukrainske studentstvo”, 2 zhovtnia 2000, p. 8.

⁴² Vitalii Taranenko, *Peremozhstiv ne sudiat* [Winners are Not Judged], in “Literaturna Ukraina”, 25 zhovtnia 2000, p. 1.

⁴³ Serhii Kozak, *Shche v sutinkakh, ta vzhe bez iliuzii* [Still in the Twilight, but Without Illusions], in “Literaturna Ukraina”, 18 zhovtnia 2000, p. 1.

⁴⁴ TsDAHOU, Fund 1, Inv. 32, F. 2768 – Informatsiia Sekretariatu TsK KPU “Pro rozvytok politychnoi sytuatsii u respublitsi” vid 13 zhovtnia 1990 r. [Information of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine “On the Development of the Political Situation in the Republic”], f. 31.

elections by the end of the year.

2. To ensure that citizens of Ukraine complete military service outside the borders of the republic only by the voluntary consent of citizens. By December 31, 1990, adopt the law on the completion of military service by citizens of Ukraine on the territory of the republic, the law on alternative military service, and also establish the necessary state bodies.

3. To form a temporary commission of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to consider the issue of nationalization of the property of the CPSU and VLKSM on the territory of Ukraine.

4. To direct all efforts of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR to stabilize the political and economic situation in the republic, adopt the new Constitution of Ukraine and, until this is achieved, the conclusion of the union treaty should be considered premature.

5. To resolve, in accordance with current legislation, issues related to the resignation of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR V. Masol.

6. By November 30, bring the current Constitution into compliance with the provisions of the Declaration on State Sovereignty of Ukraine.⁴⁵

Subsequently, everything practically came down to the resignation of the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR. Kravchuk described the logic of putting the brakes on the conflict and making a 'sacred sacrifice' in his memoirs: during the student negotiations with Ivan Plyushch, "it was practically decided to hold early elections to the Verkhovna Rada, and it was approved by the Verkhovna Rada, but then it was rejected, and here too it was decided that it was necessary to throw someone out. But who? Masol, and so it was decided in the Politburo. Trying to find support in the situation, Masol went to Moscow, to Nikolai Ryzhkov, with whom they were on good terms. Ryzhkov, in the presence of Masol, called Mikhail Gorbachev to receive the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR, but Gorbachev refused in the audience."⁴⁶ So the fate of the head of the Ukrainian government was decided...

On October 18, 1990, the student hunger strike was stopped. Evaluating its consequences from the hot tracks, at the press conference of the Movement on that day, M. Horyn emphasized that "what the People's Rada could not achieve, the

⁴⁵ Oles Donii, Oleh Synelnykov, *op. cit.*, p. 99-100.

⁴⁶ *Interv'y u z Leonidom Kravchukom. Rozpad Radyans'koho Soyuzu. Usna istoriya nezalezhnoyi Ukrayiny 1988 — 1991, kaseta 3* [Interview with Leonid Kravchuk, Collapse of the Soviet Union. Oral history of independent Ukraine 1988–1991, tape 3], <https://oralhistory.org.ua/interview-ua/510/> (Accessed on 17.02.2023).

student youth achieved. This is our greatest conquest." I. Drach especially noted that "the young blood did what the Verkhovna Rada could not do. Our tactical, strategic moves could not achieve anything. We could not think of such a resolution (we are talking about the decision of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR dated October 17, 1990 – O.B.) a few days ago."⁴⁷

Paradoxically, however, ten years later the leaders of the opposing parties had almost exactly the same assessment of the situation: a missed opportunity, and they were unanimous in concluding that the student revolution had been betrayed not by the communists but by the national democrats. Thinking back to the past, Donii, one of the organisers of the hunger strike, said with pain: "Now, when our demands are mentioned, it is usually the resignation of Prime Minister Masol. And there really were a number of demands.... We talked about the complexity of political and social reforms... And just then, in that short period of time, in the event of elections, it would be possible to radically 'advance' the nomenclature, and this was an opportunity, if not the Central European, then at least the Baltic way. But in fact, there was a betrayal of national democracy. I use this word deliberately, because if the old nomenclature was a deliberate opponent against whom we knew how to fight, then it was an unexpected blow in the back from the side of national democracy, because the People's Council did not realise the need for new elections during the campaign. Its representatives came to us and asked us to cancel the only demand – new elections."

Recalling the events of that time, the then Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR Kravchuk emphasised: "If we had listened to the students and held early elections to the Verkhovna Rada, the development scenario in Ukraine could have been completely different, both politically and economically. On the wave of the uprising, we could elect real patriots to the Verkhovna Rada, people who want good for Ukraine. And that would mean that we would pass twice as many laws that are necessary for Ukraine... Then there would be different people in the positions."⁴⁸ In another interview, he added: "I regret to say, those national patriots who were supposed to support the students were against the re-election of the Verkhovna Rada."⁴⁹ Why did the opposition group in parliament

⁴⁷ TsDAHOU, Fund 1, Inv. 32, F. 2768, Dovidka "Pro pres-konferentsiiu Rukhu", vid 18 zhovtnia 1990 r. [About the press conference of the Rukh], f. 44.

⁴⁸ *Studentsku revoliutsiiu zradyl' ne komunisty, a natsional-demokraty* [The student revolution was betrayed not by communists, but by national democrats], in "Polityka i kultura", 2000, No. 37, pp. 12, 13.

⁴⁹ *Studenty i Kravchuk* [Students and Kravchuk], in "Ukrainske studentstvo", 2 zhovtnia

not support the whole set of students' demands? We think there were several reasons. Firstly, there was a lack of confidence in their own abilities. After unsuccessful attempts to mobilise the Ukrainian people for mass action in late September and early October, the democrats had no guarantee of victory in the forthcoming early elections. This conservative pragmatist view, which dominates the counter-elite, was eloquently expressed by O. Yemets: "If 100 000 out of 50 million people come out to demonstrate on 30 September and 1 October, the time has not yet come. In Bulgaria there were three out of 10 million – and not everything was changed."⁵⁰

Secondly, of the 190 deputies who worked in the Verkhovna Rada's committees on a permanent basis, almost 80 were representatives of the opposition, which significantly exceeded the percentage of opposition deputies in the overall composition of the Ukrainian parliament. Incidentally, Canadian researchers Taras Kuzio and Andrew Wilson point to the disproportionate weight of the opposition in the structures of the highest legislative body of the republic.⁵¹ The National Democrats did not have 100% confidence that such a balance of power would be improved after the early elections.

Finally, there were serious contradictions between the older generation of the opposition and its new wave. Characterising the essence of the problem, Donii sensibly observed: "The student movement did not emerge as expected, not only for the Communist Party and the KGB, but also for the National Democrats. It was perceived as a political rival. And there was pressure not only from the Communist Party and the KGB, but also from our 'political partners', from various diaspora centres. The final straw came when the Verkhovna Rada passed amendments and additions to the law on elections: the age limit was suddenly raised to 25. And all the student leaders were simply denied the opportunity to turn the student movement into a political phenomenon."⁵² Increasing the age of candidates jointly by the ruling party and the opposition was intended to prevent the candidacy of new 'radical' but extremely popular young leaders of social-political changes.

Obviously, the extremely heterogeneous composition of the national counter-elite, which, on the one hand, consisted of former dissidents, veterans of

2000, p. 3.

⁵⁰ Oleksii Haran, *Ubyty drakona*, p. 132.

⁵¹ Taras Kuzio, *Ukraine: Perestroika to Independence*. 2nd edition, London, Macmillan, 2000; Volodymyr Lytvyn, *Politychna arena Ukrainy: Diiovi osoby ta vykonavtsi* [Political Arena of Ukraine: Active Persons and Performers], Kyiv, 1994, p. 260.

⁵² *Studentsku revoliutsiiu zradlyly ne komunisty...*, p. 13.

the anti-Soviet movement, i.e. radicals who were not inclined to compromise, played a certain role in this development of events, and, on the other hand, was formed on the basis of moderate oppositionists, i.e. those who were used to carefully weighing up their every step, because, for a long time, circumstances had forced them to hide their true views while cooperating with the system. The sum of excessive radicalism and moderate caution in the ranks of the opposition gave rise to an insecurity that, at that stage, destroyed all hopes and opportunities for radical changes in society.

The October events in Kyiv stimulated the emergence of new features and accents in the process of forming Ukraine's image in the international arena. Characterising the reaction of the world press to the course of events in the Republic, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine stated: "If one compares publications on Ukraine with similar material on, say, the Baltic States or Georgia, then one feels that the current situation in the Republic is still surprising, because in the memory of Western journalists the image of Ukraine as a stronghold of a stagnant period is still alive". Canadian newspaper "The Toronto Star" called the students' public disobedience "an impressive testimony to the awakening of the consciousness of the youth, whose alienation could not be overcome even by the novelty of the reforms of the first stage of perestroika". The "Globe and Mail" (Canada) emphasised that the resignation of V. Masol was the first in the history of resignations of political leaders under the pressure of public opinion. The resignation of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR was evaluated by the "Ottawa Citizen" (Canada) as "evidence of the rise of the independence movement in Ukraine."⁵³

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, it is clear that the aftermath of the first contemporary Maidan in Ukraine caused and initiated changes in the socio-political development of the nation. First of all, it was the first protest action of Ukrainian youth which achieved partial goals (mostly symbolic). But nevertheless, fulfilling some of the students' demands was a sensation in the Soviet totalitarian system. The students, who until those events had been locked up in prisons for any attempt to protest, showed the

⁵³ TsDAHOU, Fund 1, Inv. 32, F. 2764 – Zapyska Ministerstva zakordonnykh sprav Ukrainy "Zakhidna presa pro Ukrainu pislia pryiniattia Deklaratsii", vid 28 lystopada 1990 r., [Note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine "Western press about Ukraine after the adoption of the Declaration"], f. 188.

public opinion that peaceful resistance was possible. However, the mistrust of the older generation of the opposition towards the youth did not create an opportunity for a complete transformation of the political environment, as was the case in Central Europe. The situation was similar in Hungary, where the future Prime Minister Viktor Orbán was a youth activist during the transformation and stayed in politics.⁵⁴ Therefore, after the collapse of Soviet power in Ukraine, there was no room for young 'radical' politicians who would support rapid democratic changes, but the previous political class remained in power.

The Student Revolution on Granite is a continuation of the Ukrainian national spirit of 'maidan' democracy, but it is also the beginning of the following events that should determine the fate of modern Ukraine. The role of the active youth generation in Ukraine's pro-democratic and pro-Western transformation has been above average, starting from the Revolution on Granite until today, when the youth is defending values on the front line, ideas for which the previous generation was protesting⁵⁵.

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⁵⁴ Bulent Kenes, *Viktor Orbán: Past to Present*, ECPS Leader Profiles Series, No. 1. European Center for Populism Studies (ECPS), August 2, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.55271/lp0001>.

⁵⁵ Mateusz Kamionka, *Młode pokolenie Ukrainy jako katalizator zmian społeczno-politycznych w latach 1990–2022* [The young generation of Ukraine as a catalyst for socio-political changes in 1990–2022], in "Youth in Central and Eastern Europe", Vol. 10, 2023, No. 15, pp. 48-55, <https://doi.org/10.24917/ycee.10107>.

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