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Student Revolution on Granite – a Missed Opportunity of Ukraine's Democratic Transformation

Abstract

"The Revolution on Granite", which took place in Ukraine at the end of the USSR, is one of the least known events that took place in Kyiv's Maidan. On the one hand, the aforementioned "Revolution" can be seen as a typically youthful movement contesting the reality of that time, during which students fought for their rights. On the other hand, looking at the time in which the events described took place (the decline of the Soviet Union), the students proved to be a group that showed the courage to openly defy the still existing Soviet power. This "revolutionary" episode can also be analysed from the perspective of the clash of two generations – here were young opposition activists attempting to influence the future balance of power in the then still existing Socialist Republic of Ukraine. This article aims both to give an insight into these poorly known events, but also to give an account of the actual failure of the young leaders, who eventually had to surrender to the post-communist political system.

Keywords: Ukraine, Revolution on Granite, systemic transformation, generational conflict

Introduction

The events that took place in the then October Revolution Square in Kyiv between 2 and 17 October 1990, went down in modern Ukrainian history as the first mass youth social uprising. It was then that the students (initially mainly from Kyiv and Lviv) took a risk and, despite the threats of the regime and the precarious situation, decided to stand up against the power of the still existing USSR. The protests had three leaders: Oles Donii a representative of the capital's Ukrainian Students' Union, Markiian Ivashchyshyn, representing the Students' Brotherhood of the city of Lviv, and Oleh Barkov, chairman of the Dnieprodzerzhinskyi (today Kamianske) branch of the Ukrainian Students' Union[1]. They

[1] O. Zinčenko, *Rozsekrečena ìstorìâ. Revolûcìâ na granìtì. Čì mìg buti ìnšij scenarìj?*, https://youtu.be/FEnl9PIuRGE, 10:43–11:15.

led one of the largest protests within the Soviet Union, even though, as O. Donii, in the beginning there were only a few hundred students in their ranks and a dozen or so leaders throughout the country[2]. During the protests, which in the course of events turned into an occupation of Kyiv's main square, the students demanded, among other things, the passing of a law on the nationalisation of the assets of the Communist Party and the Komsomol[3]. Other demands included not allowing the signing of a new agreement on the continued existence of the Soviet Union, military service only on Ukrainian territory, the resignation of the then chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, Vitaliy Masol, and, above all, the dissolution of the republic's parliament and the holding of new elections on the basis of political pluralism (free access to elections for all political parties). The latter point proved to be a bone of contention not only for the communists, but also posed a threat to the People's Movement of Ukraine[4], which *de jure* supported the youth protests. It is worth quoting the words of Oleksandr Boyko, who believes that "from a real political knockout, the opposition was saved by student youth". It was the young people who, after the all-Ukrainian unsuccessful strikes organised by the People's Movement, started their own "revolution"[5].

This article does not seek to reconstruct the course of events that took place in Kyiv's Maidan[6], but is an attempt to find an answer to the question of whether the "Revolution on Granite" was a false start for the future democratisation of Ukraine as a result of a generational conflict between politicians in Ukraine. The thesis the author wants to look into is: "the participants of the political system of the time, both from the government side and the systemic opposition, did not want to allow representatives of the younger generation into the broader politics" during the period of the so-called "Revolution on Granite". The article will analyse first of all the recorded interviews with the leaders of the protests, often little known (the number of views on Youtube oscillates around a few thousand, which for the period of adding the material – 6 years – is an extremely modest result), but shedding new light on the difficult era of democratic transition in the post-Soviet area. The author used the method of analysing sources, especially foreign-language sources, but the interviews with the leaders can also be treated as qualitative analysis material. Especially as they are based on the memories of the leaders of the protests, active participants in these events. It is worth noting that the only items comprehensively addressing the topics of student protests in Ukraine are the Polish-language monograph by Mateusz Kamionka (2022) (*Patterns of socio-political change in the awareness of Ukrainian students after 1991*) and the English-language publications by: Tom Junes (2016) (*Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity: A Case Study of Student Protest as a Catalyst for Political Upheaval*), Christine Emeran (2017) (*New Generation Political Activism in Ukraine 2000–2014*), Nadia M. Diuk (2012) (*The Next Generation in Russia, Ukraine and Azerbaijan,*

[2] Ibidem, 8:35–8:57.

[3] Komsomol (Russian Комсомол) – a communist youth organisation in Soviet Russia and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, founded in 1918 and active until 1991.

[4] People's Movement of Ukraine (ukr. Народний Рух України, NRU) – Ukrainian right-wing moderate nationalist political party, active between 1989 and 1993.

[5] O. Bojko, *Zagostrennâ političnoï konfrontacìï v Ukraïnì: atak aopozicìï ta kontrnastu pkonservatorìv*, Kyiv 2003, p. 85.

[6] For the analysis of the events from a historical perspective, L. Hurska-Kowalczyk's article, *Studencka "rewolucja na granicie" w kontekście przemian społeczno-politycznych w Ukraińskiej Socjalistycznej Republice Radzieckiej* ("Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne" 2014, vol. 4, p. 197–212) is valuable.

Youth, Politics, Identity, and Change) and a two-volume publication in English edited by Pavel Kowal, Iwona Reichardt, Georges Mink and Adam Reichardt (2019) (*Three Revolutions: Mobilisation and Change in Contemporary Ukraine*).

The participants in the protests as the voice of the young generation

The youth in the Soviet Union were not seen from a merely demographic or biological perspective, but, according to Karl Mannheim's conception, were the result of complex social processes[7]. Soviet leaders were aware of this. According to Soviet educator Anton Makarenko, it is the collective that is the tutor of the individual[8]. Makarenko's definitions were present in the educational process of the new citizens until the collapse of the USSR. This is evidenced, for example, by the fact that 35.5 million Soviet youth belonged to the Communist youth organisation Komsomol as late as 1989[9]. Citizens aged between 14 and 28 could belong to the Young Communists' Union. However, towards the end of the regime, it was not only the Communist Party that was losing supporters, the Komsomol was also losing members, and young people were looking for alternatives to the existing reality. As it seems, one alternative turned out to be the creation (as a counter to the ossified communist forms) of new organisations. Nationalist and national options were one of the possible ideological options, all the more attractive because they were pro-independence and such activities fit in with Margaret Mead's concept of anthropological-culturalism[10], as a manifestation of co-figurative culture, characterised by the conflict of generations, the conscious resignation of young people from previous ideals and the search for others. The social sciences have long drawn attention to the fact that the young generation is seeking its own way[11]. For example, Maria Braun Galkowska's idea is, that young people form their own worldview, norms and values and acquire social skills. It is also echoed by Erik H. Erikson, who defines youth in individual terms. He defines this social group as "individuals in an institutionalised transitional state between childhood and adulthood, during which the final framework of human identity is defined"[12].

Young People at the Barricades

The revolutionary activity of Ukrainian youth was fostered by the political climate of the time, which was conducive to social ferment. We are referring above all to the reform policy, the so-called *perestroika* (reconstruction), initiated by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, in April 1985. The Soviet system of the time was in need of reform, as it was increasingly

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[7] M. Kozakiewicz, *Youth – Theories of Youth*, in: *Encyclopedia of Psychology*, ed. by W. Szewczuk, Warsaw 1998, p. 256.

[8] *Anton Semënovič Makarenko citaty Istočnik*, [online] https://ru.citaty.net/avtory/anton-semionovich-makarenko.

[9] *DOS'E: Komsomol: istoriâ, cifry i fakty* [online], https://tass.ru/arhiv/712002?utm_source=pl.wikipedia.org&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=pl.wikipedia.org&utm_referrer=pl.wikipedia.org.

[10] M. Mead, *Culture and Identity. A study of intergenerational distance*, Warsaw 1978, pp. 25–147.

[11] Braun-Gałkowska M., *Którzy bez wiosny rok by mieć chcieli*, w: *Nauki społeczne o młodzieży*, T. Ożóg (ed.), Lublin 1994, pp. 146–159.

[12] E.H. Erikson, *Identifikation und Identität*, in: *Socjologiczne teorie młodzieży, wprowadzenie*, H.M. Griese (ed.), Kraków 1996, p. 70.

losing ground to the West in the economic and military fields, as well as in the level of social development. However, as Anna Jach emphasises, it was *glasnost* (openness) that introduced an irreversible transformation of social mentality into Soviet society, which in turn translated into a redefinition of attitudes towards the state, state power, decision-makers and the decisions they made, as well as towards oneself as a citizen[13]. As is well known, these changes could not go unnoticed by the youth community, especially in the European part of the USSR, where nationalist movements were strong, despite decades of communist indoctrination. One did not have to wait long for the whiff of revolution, however, as political scientist Oleksiy Haran points out, "it was much easier to criticise Gorbachev there in Moscow than to criticise local communist party structure, and as we now understand the situation here in Ukraine, was much more conservative than in Moscow"[14].

On 25 May 1989, the founding conference of the Lviv Student Brotherhood took place in the halls of the regional Komsomol building, at which the statute and programme were adopted and the Coordinating Council was elected. It was headed by Lviv University history student Demjan Malyarchuk (the *de facto* founder of the brotherhood was Markiian Ivashchyshyn). The main goal of the organisation was "to ensure the active participation of students in radical social change, to defend their constitutional rights and to create a democratic, national intelligence"[15]. The newly established Student Brotherhood had around 1,500 active members together with supporters. The organisation had its own printing press and the press organ was the *Brotherhood* newspaper. The activists also took part in the congress of the People's Movement of Ukraine, which took place between 8 and 10 September 1989. Also on the initiative of the Brotherhood that same month, the Ukrainian Student Union was formed in Kyiv[16]. Its field branches were established in Dnipropetrovsk, Odessa, Ternopil and other Ukrainian cities. However, political divergences among the participants of the Ukrainian Student Organisation led to the division of the newly formed student organisation into the Ukrainian Student Union and the Confederation of Students. During this period, political parties also established their youth organisations. The most numerous of these were formed under the Ukrainian Christian Democratic Party (Plast), the Ukrainian National Party (Sich), the Ukrainian Republican Party (Association of Independent Ukrainian Youth – SNUM). At this time, the student youth, thanks to their great organisational abilities, but also due to their growing membership, were beginning to prepare themselves to carry out pro-democratic actions.

Initially, the demonstrations were to take place in a park near Kyiv's Maidan. The organisers knew that the services were invigilating their community, so at the last minute the place of the protest was changed to the centre of the capital. This action came as a huge surprise to the security forces. No less surprising, however, was the fact that a small group of students were not forcibly removed in the first hours of the event. The students were prepared for a so-called forcible resolution of the protest, especially bearing in mind how

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[13] A. Jach, *Wpływ głasnosti na narodziny nowej kultury politycznej i społeczną aktywność obywateli ZSRR w drugiej połowie lat 80. XX w.*, in: *Na wschód od linii Curzona: księga jubileuszowa dedykowana profesorowi Mieczysławowi Smoleniowi*, R. Król-Mazur, M. Lubina (eds.), Kraków 2014, p. 49.

[14] O. Zinčenko, *Rozsekrečena ìstorià…*, 15:24–15:37.

[15] Statut Students'kogo Bratstva.

[16] Studenty stvoryuyut' spilku, "Vybi" 1989, no. 9, p. 1.

the Chinese Communist authorities had treated their peers in Tiananmen Square more than a year earlier. The youth were confident of a swift forceful solution, so female students were banned from joining the protests on the first day. This supposition did not come true, to the surprise of all political actors, both communist and systemic opposition. The protests were initially scheduled to take place on 1 October 1990. As one of the organisers of the protests, Oles Donii recalls, it was on this day that the wedding of Lviv leader Markiian Ivashchyshyn was to take place. Consequently, the demonstrations started the day after[17]. It is also worth noting that workers' strikes, organised by the People's Movement of Ukraine, were planned for 1 October. In the end, however, the protests did not turn out to be as strong as the organisers themselves had expected. Consequently, the young leaders probably tried not only to avoid being identified with the opposition, but also did not want their protests to be associated with the concurrent strikes. This version is confirmed by M. Ivashchyshyn, explaining that an all-Ukrainian strike was planned for 1 October 1990, to be initiated by the forces of national democracy. As a result, the Student Brotherhood decided to organise its own event[18]. However, not having enough experience, the students used solutions used by revolutionaries from other countries. During the creation of the tent city, the idea of using field beds and white ribbons was born – these elements were somehow borrowed by Ukrainian students from their Chinese peers. The practice of so-called "occupational strikes" had previously been used by members of the Polish Solidarity movement[19]. All participants in the protests wore different coloured ribbons on their heads: hunger strikers – white, medical aid workers – blue, student security – black[20]. The cited actions indicate that the students were well prepared both logistically and organisationally for the protests, having probably followed how similar events in other parts of the world took place.

It did not take long for the authorities to react. Within a couple of days against the students, the authorities had gathered a huge force. There were 10,000 uniformed personnel in the vicinity of Kyiv's central square, plus a few thousand military support in the region[21]. However, no forceful solution was chosen. Most outside observers of the events were convinced that on the fifth day of the protests, 6 October, the young people would be "trampled" by a counter-manifestation organised by the communists, in which mainly veterans of the Soviet-German war (people around 60 years old at the time) and Komsomol activists were to participate[22]. It was an example of a generational conflict, where radical youth protested, demanding change, and on the other side were the mostly retired people with conservative views present. As Andriy Salyuk, one of the student-participants in the protests, recalls, 'around 9am, Kyivites started coming, walking, walking, walking, and they stood between us and Khreshchatyk[23], absolutely such an invincible living cordon, and they said that "we didn't come, well, because work and such, but when we heard that

[17] O. Zinčenko, *Rozsekrečena ìstoriâ…*, 25:24–25:40.

[18] L. Petrenko, *Markìân Ìvaŝišin: goloduvannâ – ce ne avantûra, ceradše – romantizm* [online], https://zaxid.net/markiyan_ivashhishin_goloduvannya__tse_ne_avantyura_tse_radshe__romantizm_n1113576.

[19] V. Ginda, *Students'kij granìt nezaležnostì* [online], https://zbruc.eu/node/42120.

[20] Ibidem.

[21] O. Zinčenko, *Rozsekrečena ìstoriâ…*, 18:10–18:20.

[22] A. Salûk, *Rozrahovuvali mi viklûčno na vlasnì sili* [online], https://zbruc.eu/node/42191.

[23] Main street in Kyiv crossing the Maidan of Independence.

they want to trample you, we came to defend you, you protest, starve, it's yours, and we will not let anyone pass to you"[24]. The involvement of the people of Kyiv saved the revolution (protest) from collapse. It also proved that the student action was increasingly popular, even though the regime media did not report on the events. As it seems, the best marketing campaign for the students was unwittingly done by the chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR, later president, Leonid Kravchuk, meeting the strike leaders in a tent city. The whole event was broadcast live on public television, which had a positive impact on the image of the protesters in the eyes of the population. Thanks to the meeting, Ukrainian citizens saw that it was not extremists who had gathered in the Maidan, as presented by Communist Party propaganda[25]. Oleksander Boyko points out, however, that the authorities underestimated "the opponent". Not coincidentally, when analysing the dynamics and possible consequences of the hunger strike, the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine stated as early as 13 October that "one cannot underestimate the danger of this action"[26]. He also stressed that, according to the USSR State Committee for Higher and Specialized Secondary Education, almost 100,000 students took part in the protests across the republic, when there were 510,000 students in the republic as a whole, including 30,000 at Kyiv universities[27]. The numbers must have been impressive, both for the security services and the communist authorities. At the time, it was not only Kyiv that posed a problem for the authorities, student tent cities also sprang up in Zhytomyr, Sumy and Donetsk[28].

Who has Not Grown up to Govern?

One of the leaders of the People's Movement of Ukraine was Vyacheslav Chornovil, a politician of great renown and authority. However, he was a representative of the dissident opposition movement. The movement continued to be sharply divided even at the end of the 1980s; supporters of one conception proclaimed that Ukraine should move towards complete separation and independence. Others that the country should take up the struggle for real sovereignty within the Soviet Union. Dissidents active from the late 1970s to the late 1980s advocated full Ukrainian independence. Activists representing the "sixties" generation, on the other hand, insisted on remaining within Soviet statehood[29]. Thus, even within the opposition bloc there were significant divisions.

This was no different during the period of the "Revolution on Granite". The main problem for the opposition was the attitude to one of the main youth demands. It was the holding of early parliamentary elections. As Oles Donii recalls, the Movement helped the youth to print leaflets "but was sceptical about them [the students – M.K.], even though

[24] *Revolûcìâ na granìtì. Čogo ì âk domoglisâ učasniki students'kogo goloduvannâ u žovtnì 1990?*, https://youtu.be/k_iDCuXz0co, 8:40–10:00.

[25] T. Bazûk, *Revolûcìâ na ġranìtì: 25 rokìv potomu* [online], https://zbruc.eu/node/42122.

[26] O. Bojko, *Narisi z novìtn'oï ìstorìï Ukraïni (1985 –1991 r.)*, Kyiv 2004, p. 214.

[27] Ibidem, p. 213–214.

[28] S. Kozak, *Še v sutìnkah, ta vže bez ïlûzïj, lìteraturna ukraïna*, 18 žovtnâ 2000, p. 1.

[29] A. Kobus, *Opozycja polityczna od lat 50. po schyłek Związku Radzieckiego*, "Piotrkowskie Zeszyty Historyczne" 2011, vol. 12, p. 177.

it was their biggest ally"[30]. Ihor Yukhnovsky, chairman of the People's Council (the first opposition organisation in the Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR), claimed in an interview that the early elections called for by the students did not necessarily have to succeed, "due to the fact that the Soviet Union still existed, the NKVD [probably simply the security services – M.K.] or other […] KGB were still active […] the two-way street. I believe that in this [early elections – M.K.] there was no need at all"[31]. In his statement (although recorded thirty years later, in 2020), one can still see above all the fear of the communist terror apparatus. In the same report, another opposition MP, Viktor Bed´ recalls the activities of his party colleagues as follows: "The liberal part of the opposition with, among others, Ihor Yukhnovsky, Dmytr Pavlyuchko, they presented such a position in order to both communicate with the authorities and calm the protesters, and not to share the views of the radical group of the opposition, that is, our part"[32]. Yaroslav Kendzior, also an MP from the People's Movement faction, only announced that a group of opposition parliamentarians had joined the hunger strike on 11 October, nine days after the students began their strike. One of them was Stepan Chmara, who, unlike his colleagues, was a great advocate of change. He believed that it was important to persist among the students, and it was essential that their ideas were realised. In his own words, he "tried to convince the Verkhovna Rada that there was a mood in society for change in the Parliament and it was necessary to move towards early elections and to maintain the mechanism, for democratic change in Ukraine"[33]. Disagreements and discrepancies between the students and the opposition are also highlighted by political scientist Oleksiy Haran, who directly emphasises that the students' demands were too "radical" for some opposition politicians[34]. The insufficient support from opposition politicians is mentioned by one of the leaders of the protests, Oles Donii. It is worth quoting his longer statement from one of the documentaries on the "Revolution on Granite":

> The greatest pressure on the students came not from the direction of the KGB and the Communist Party, but from our allies the People's Movement and the People's Council, which did not support our greatest demand, which unfortunately neither the public nor our senior colleagues had grown up to. What was this demand? Earlier elections to the Supreme Chamber on a multi-party basis, the rest of the demands were either fully or partially realised. But if this postulate – the most important one, if it had been implemented, then Ukraine would have followed the path of Poland, the Czech Republic, Lithuania. The public wanted change and the Communist Party was tired, if there had been an election they would have changed policy. Unfortunately then this demand was understood by Stepan Chmara and 8 more deputies, and the People's Movement of Ukraine and the People's Council were frightened by this demand, no less than the Communists. They did everything, for actual sabotage […] in the media they said that no elections were needed, after all, we have 1/3 of the parliament, and they only realised, the necessity of elections after 2 years. This topic was taken up by Chornovil, but it was too late, after Kravchuk's victory, we had already lost the chance. The Student Revolution in Granit was not only one of the biggest events in Ukraine's independence, it was also a lost opportuni-

[30] O. Zinčenko, *Rozsekrečena ìstorìâ…*, 22:43–22:50.
[31] *Revolûcìâ na granìtì. Čogo ì âk domoglisâ…*, 12:38–13:08.
[32] Ibidem, 25:08–25:32.
[33] Ibidem, 25:37–26:20.
[34] O. Zinčenko, *Rozsekrečena ìstorìâ…*, 30:40–30:50.

> ty for the whole country, unfortunately the student leaders understood more than our senior allies, the serious people from the People's Council and the People's Movement of Ukraine, they didn't understand that it was necessary to seize power[35].

The historian and journalist Vakhtang Kipiani, on the other hand, was of the opinion that it was not so much that the opposition was "frightened" by the early elections, but "[…] it was more inconvenient for them […], they were already sitting in those chairs, they were chairmen of the commissions, they had already received a Zhiguli car [it's a Lada 1200 – M.K.], they had already received a business flat in Kyiv […] They no longer wanted to lose that by going to new elections, and with what chance that they would come back?"[36]. Andriy Salyuk, one of the participants in the Revolution, recalls in turn the relations with the politicians of the People's Movement: "They would come to us from the People's Council[37] and demand: 'stop with this hunger strike! What have you arranged here?' […] they chastised 'what do you allow yourselves to do, how could you not establish this with us?'"[38]. A. Salyuk also unequivocally blames the opposition environment of the time for the protesters' lack of full victory. As he himself recalled:

> We were young, green and completely inexperienced, when we did something, we gave it all on a platter to our beloved "People's Council". We won, and you are still there, so wise, our elder brothers, teachers, now you are bringing it to an end so that we get an independent Ukrainian state. And one of the biggest, key moments was the decision to hold early elections in the spring of 1991. Who failed? "The People's Council". Kravchuk repeatedly said afterwards: "I was ready to hold new elections. 'The People's Council' came to me and said: 'No'"[39].

The People's Movement of Ukraine only called for early parliamentary elections in August 1992, but failed to collect the necessary 3 million signatures[40]. The next elections were not held until the period of hyperinflation, on a wave of dissatisfaction with the effects of independence, in 1994, when it was – according to V. Kipiani – simply catastrophically too late for them[41]. Nor did the Kyiv Revolutionary leader, Oles Donii, hide his emotions, claiming:

> The biggest attack against the student movement, apart from the KGB trying to divide us on the Kyiv–Lviv line, was the passing of an electoral law by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine jointly by two factions, the Communist Party and the People's Movement of Ukraine, which raised the minimum age for candidates in parliamentary elections from 21 to 25. They did this in order to prevent the young student leaders, who were popular at the time, from getting into the Verkhovna Rada and making radical changes. This was collusion between the communists and the opposition[42].

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[35] Ibidem, 34:55–36:43.

[36] Ibidem, 36:53–37:27.

[37] The People's Council is an alliance of opposition forces formed in the Ukrainian Parliament between 1990 and 1994. The largest part of it consisted of politicians from the People's Movement of Ukraine.

[38] A. Salûk, *Rozrahovuvali mi viklûčno na vlasnì sili* [online], https://zbruc.eu/node/42191.

[39] Ibidem.

[40] L. Hurska-Kowalczyk, *Studencka "rewolucja na granicie" w kontekście przemian społeczno-politycznych w Ukraińskiej Socjalistycznej Republice Radzieckiej*, "Środkowoeuropejskie Studia Polityczne" 2014, vol. 4, p. 209.

[41] O. Zinčenko, *Rozsekrečena ìstorìâ…*, 37:30–37:54.

[42] Ibidem, 45:55–46:40.

Markiian Ivashchyshyn, one of the leaders of the protests, when asked in 2010 about the meaning of the demand for multi-party elections and the aspirations of the student leaders to actively participate in politics, did not answer directly, but emphasised that the youth wanted to break the monopoly of one party [communist – M.K.] through the participation of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group and the People's Movement of Ukraine in the elections[43]. In the same interview, M. Ivashchyshyn confirms the claim of other protest leaders. According to him: "Fear played its role. They [opposition MPs – M.K.] feared that they might not be elected in early elections. And most likely this would have happened, as the experience of Eastern Europe shows. Then many new, young people would have become part of politics"[44].

It is worth mentioning the aftermath of the protests, rarely touched upon in the literature, as a certain "myth of victory" was created, and the youth only after the events, were often repressed by the services. As one of the participants of the strikes, Angelika Rudnytska, recalls, the worst times for the participants of the manifestos turned out to be after the end of the revolution, "when the persecution by the KGB started. They took us straight out of classes, and seated us in front of the auditorium, where 'uncles' in civilian clothes, staring straight into our eyes, reprimanded me to say that drug abuse, alcohol, sex and rock and roll were flourishing in the tent city. In reality, nothing of the sort took place"[45].

The events in Kyiv's Maidan changed the public's (including the world's) perception of the broader anti-communist opposition in Ukraine. Not only was the students' point of view recognised in the national media thanks to their demands for airtime[46], but also the general public was able to see that they were not "Banderovci", as the regime's propaganda called them[47]. Thanks in part to the students' attitude, more than a year later, Ukrainian citizens expressed support for independence. A total of 31,891,742 people – 84.18% of the Ukrainian population – took part in the referendum. Of these, 28 804 071 people (90.32%) voted "For"[48]. Although at the same time it was the communist candidate Leonid Kravchuk who won the presidential election[49], it is difficult to ignore the positive impact of the student revolution on the referendum result. Markiian Ivashchyshyn understood the mistake of the youth participating in the protests. As he himself confessed years later: "Something like a political body should have been created, which would have been ready either to enter into consultation with the People's Movement or to create its own structure, like the Hungarian Fidesz. Then there would have been a self-sustaining structure capable of remaining in a political niche"[50].

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[43] L. Petrenko, *Markìân Ìvaŝišin: goloduvannâ…*

[44] Ibidem.

[45] V. Gìnda, *Students'kij granìt nezaležnostì…*

[46] O. Zinčenko, *Rozsekrečena ìstorìâ…*, 28:20–29:00.

[47] Ibidem, 29:15–29:20.

[48] *20 rokìv referendumu na pìdtverdžennâ Aktunezaležnostì. Pìdsumki* [online], https://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2011/12/1/63565/.

[49] Člektoral'naâ geografiâ 2.0 [online], https://www.electoralgeography.com/new/ru/countries/u/ukraine/ukraine-presidential-election-1991.html.

[50] L. Petrenko, *Markìân Ìvaŝišin: goloduvannâ…*

Conclusion

The period of transition in Central and Eastern Europe had individual characteristics, both in the socialist countries and in the Soviet Union republics. Ukraine was not an isolated case and there, too, the transformation took place similarly to the Baltic republics, Poland and Czechoslovakia. "The Revolution on Granite" was, however, something that distinguished Ukraine from all the countries that were part of the USSR. It was there that a huge democratic upsurge was initiated by a grassroots movement of the student community – patriots of their homeland – who were not willing to make any concessions to the old regime. However, the conflict did not end with the fight against the communists alone; the opposition of the time also underestimated the historic opportunity that the student revolution then presented. The then lack of long-range political thinking of opposition representatives is often overlooked in Ukraine's historiographical discourse. O. Donii repeatedly points out in interviews that the adjective "student" was practically erased before the name "Revolution on Granite", while this was the full name of the events taking place in Kyiv's Maidan: "Student Revolution on Granite"[51]. It should also be remembered that it was thanks to the young Ukrainians that, more than two weeks after the protests began, i.e. on 18 October 1990, the student hunger strike was broken (in fact, only one of all the demands was met – the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Ukrainian SSR, Vitaliy Masol, was soon dismissed)[52]. The leaders of the revolution themselves did not play important state functions, which may seem unusual given the merits and media exposure that the young students had gained. The raising of the electoral threshold immediately after the protests, derailed the chance of their political development and thus closed the career path for a relatively large number of young activists. Their uncompromising thinking and youthful enthusiasm could undoubtedly have had a positive impact on the development of the country in the first decade of independence. Oleksander Boyko rightly notes that one of the reasons for the failure of the student protests was the conflict between the older generation of the opposition and the new wave of youth activists. He sees the blame in the non-monolithic composition of the opposition's parliamentary benches, where former dissidents, veterans of the anti-communist movement – or radicals, as he puts it – unwilling to compromise sat side by side, and moderate oppositionists on the other. Their traits include caution, as they have spent most of their careers collaborating with the system and hiding their views. The sum of excessive radicalism and moderate caution made the opposition incapable of making the right decisions[53]. It is worth noting, however, that unexpectedly the events at Kyiv's Maydan created a space for the construction of future social, artistic or political movements. It was there that the paths of representatives of Ukraine's future independent elite, such as Oksana Zabuzhko, Vyacheslav Kyrylenko, Volodymyr Holodniuk, Ihor Kociuruba and Taras Prochasko, crossed.

In conclusion, it is worth quoting the statements of the student leaders themselves, O. Donii and O. Synelnykov, that the main victory of the revolution was the psychological

[51] *Oles' Donìj: pro students'ku revolûcìû, ukraïns'kij vibìr ta "25 shodinok do suspìl'nogoŝastâ"*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFp0zTXLN8E&t=2435s&ab_channel=«Тойденьколи…», 2:05–2:20.

[52] O. Bojko, *Narisi z novìtn'oï ìstorìï Ukraïni…*, pp. 214–215.

[53] O. Bojko, *Čomu ne peremogla v ukraïnï žovtneva revolûciâ 1990 roku, literatura ta kul'tura Polìssâ Vypusk*, Nizhyn 2002, s. 267.

change of the youth. They became subjects rather than objects of the socio-political process, "organising themselves and taking their actions to their logical conclusion on their own"[54]. Young people were to play a key role in the country's democratic transition in the following years. This was already the case in 2004, initially during the Orange Revolution and, above all, during the Revolution of Dignity[55] (it is worth mentioning that in 2004, a student 'Grass Revolution' also broke out in the city of Sumy, but these were protests of a local nature)[56].

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[56] M. Kamionka, *Revolutionary patterns of behavior of Ukrainian youth student on the example of the Sumy "Revolution on the grass" in 2004*, in: Y. Kuzmenko, M. Kamionka, *Problems of European integration and democracy in awareness of Ukrainian and Polish youth*, Nizhyn 2019.

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