



UKRAINE'S ARMY CHIEF MEETS CANADA'S DEFENCE CHIEFS



From December 10-13, 1995, the Chief of Ukraine's Military Intelligence, Lt.-General Oleksandr Skipalsky, and Col. Yuriy Levchenko visited Canada's Department of Defence, accompanied by Maj.-General Ihor Smeshko, Ukrainian Defence Attaché to the United States, and Col. O. Sarnatsky, Assistant Defence Attaché. They discussed a wide range of issues with their Canadian hosts, including the NATO Partnership for Peace program, mutual experiences in Bosnia, and current and future Canada-Ukraine cooperation. Lt. General Skipalsky outlined some of the international priorities in Ukraine's defence for the Monitor.

This has been my first visit to Canada. Canada has always been a special interest to me and I used this opportunity to get to know the country and to see life in Canada. My list of tasks on this mission included working sessions with the military staff at the Embassy, as well as a number of meetings at the Department of National Defence concerning strengthening our cooperation in the spirit of the Memorandum signed last year during the visit of our Minister of Defence Shmarov. I would like to say that the attitude towards our delegation at the Department of National Defence was very positive. It was clear to us that the Canadian side wants to expand cooperation. We found support and understanding on a wide variety of questions. I am returning with a feeling of deep satisfaction and will convey this to the Chief of the General Staff, the Minister of Defence, the Security Council and the President himself, that Canada is indeed our reliable partner with a very friendly disposition towards Ukraine. I hope that our visit will contribute to the development of closer relations and cooperation between our armed forces.

In future, I would like to see increased contacts between Canada and Ukraine, although, practically speaking, it is difficult for Ukraine, due to our tight financial situation. It would be beneficial to establish direct cooperation not only between the executives at the Ministry and the Department of Defence, but also between specific units and individuals in the military in order to strengthen comradeship between the forces. It is also necessary to standardize the arms systems and tactics. I have a very high opinion about the role of the Canadian armed forces in peacekeeping. They have a wide range of experience from Africa, to South Asia and Europe, so we can adopt many things and learn a lot from them as well as develop joint programs and ways of cooperation.

At the present time, Ukraine is still considering our participation in Angola. You know that a lot of mines remained after the combat actions. They cause unjustified casualties among the population. The engineering system was destroyed. Ukraine is going to take part in this peacekeeping process and in the development of the infrastructure (roads, bridges) in Angola. The decision on this issue was approved at the United Nations level. Now the Ukrainian parliament has to say its word, and only then can Ukrainian soldiers go to Angola to take part in the peacekeeping process there.

Ukraine has had a positive experience of participation in the Yugoslavian crisis under the auspices of the UN. The UN executives concluded that Ukrainian soldiers performed their duties successfully, they demonstrated their military skills and had a responsible approach to their duties.

Ukrainian soldiers also took part in the joint military exercise under the "Partnership for Peace". Our soldiers, marines and a reconnaissance platoon took part [in the exercise] on the territory of the United States. According to the results we did quite well and our servicemen made a good impression. For example, if some countries "lost" up to half of their troops during the exercise, we had only one "wounded" person thanks to the knowledge of tactics and good training of the Ukrainian platoon. Such are the results of this test and they demonstrate that our soldiers are well prepared.

On the question of Bosnia, Ukraine cannot remain uninvolved, especially since we have already made a contribution from the very beginning. The only problem now is to determine the level and to find money for the upkeep. This is a painful problem for us. According to Eastern European experts, on the average it would cost about \$50 million a year to provide for this battalion and ensure its functioning. According to the decision, the country which agreed to participate has to pay the money, so now Ukraine faces a difficult problem - where to find the money? We hope for possible assistance from industrialized countries. Both our authorities and I agree that it is advisable to deploy as many military personnel from different countries as possible. It cannot be perceived that it is only in the interest of a certain group of countries, which would certainly cause misunderstandings or even increasing instability in the region. So this controversy - whether under NATO leadership, or not - is, in my opinion, an artificial escalation of the situation and continuation of the political speculations on this matter. Once NATO accepted responsibility for guaranteeing stability in Europe, and other countries agreed to

this, then Ukraine will also work towards integrating itself into this framework.

On the average we have had more than 500 people stationed in Bosnia. We are looking at similar numbers - a battalion plus ten transport aircraft (Antonov-76's) to provide transportation for the operations.

On the question of relations between Russia and Ukraine: Unfortunately, during these past years, we see that the higher military command (of Russia) does not want to develop relations with Ukraine based on the principles of equal partnership. Even during our meetings here in Canada and elsewhere, we get the impression that, in its contacts with foreign countries, Russia tries to project the image that it is ready to be constructive. It lays all the blame on Ukraine. All the while, it is trying to draw Ukraine into a unified military structure, a single defence alliance - and this slows down discussions. We do not want to be under any foreign authority again - we want to develop our relationship as an equal partnership, in accordance with the military doctrine and Ukrainian legislation. There was no full understanding of this principle until, probably, the last meeting (between Ukraine's and Russia's military leaderships) which took part in Sochi. The idea of separate commands continues to be viewed by some as a concession on the part of Russia, but I will believe this only when I see it myself. I rather think that it is simply a change of



Ukraine's Lt.-General Oleksander Skipalsky (c) is flanked by his host, Canada's Chief of Defence Staff General D. de Chastelaine (r) and Defence Attaché to the U.S., Maj.-General Ihor Smeshko.