

SUMMARY

**Clandestine Blue
Network: Bodies of
the Interior of the
Republic of Slovenia
in the project
Manoeuvre Structure
of National Defence
in the year 1990**

In the beginning of 1990 the process of the democratisation of the social and political system took place also in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. This caused the disintegration of the socialist ideological model and authority of the League of Communists, and allowed for the establishment of a large number of new political parties as well as multi-party elections in the spring of 1990 in two republics: Slovenia and Croatia. The process in Yugoslavia was specific, as the democratisation also resulted in the demand of the elites of these republics, supported by a significant part of the population, that Yugoslavia should be redefined constitutionally in order to ensure a greater independence of republics – and therefore organised as a confederation. An increasing number of demands that an independent national state of Slovenia should be established also appeared in Slovenia.

Demos (*Democratic Opposition of Slovenia*), the coalition of new parties, received the majority of votes at the Slovenian elections and also formed the government on 16 May. The process, in which the power was supposedly taken over by »anti-socialist« forces, was observed with profound mistrust by the federal authorities and especially the Yugoslav People's Army, particularly because some of the political demands of the new government also concerned the position of the Army (departisation, demilitarisation of the state, and military service in the home republic, which would mean that the nationally mixed units would be abolished). The Army's resistance against the new reality manifested itself in several measures. One of the most important measures involved the orders that all the weapons of the Territorial Defence, systemically under the partial commands of the republics, should be transported to the military barracks where they would be controlled by the units of the regular Yugoslav People's Army. Namely, the Yugoslav armed forces consisted of two components that only had the same command in the war or during a threat of imminent war. This measure, which the Army and the leadership of the Territorial Defence of Slovenia that remained loyal to the Army started carrying out on the very day when Demos formed the new government, caused much indignation among the members of the Territorial Defence as well as the people and the republic's political leadership. After three days the President of Presidency of Slovenia forbade the further implementation of this measure with a unilateral command. Approximately 16 % of the weapons remained in the hands of the Territorial Defence (around 15 000 pieces of infantry weapons). The Presidency of the Republic of Slovenia immediately demanded that the weapons should be returned and persisted in these demands for several

months, but to no avail. The measure of the Army, supported by the federal political leadership, also provoked the concern of the Slovenian authorities about how to secure the republic against the intervention of pro-communist and simultaneously pro-Serbian federal authorities and the Army.

This concern resulted, at first in an improvised and later increasingly organised manner, in a secret defence organisation, called Manoeuvre Structure of National Defence. This organisation was initially based on self-organised cores, consisting of the members of Territorial Defence, civilians as well as the police. With the authorisation of the Ministers of Defence and Interior (the republican Secretaries of People's Defence and Internal Affairs), a stronger and more extensive organisation started forming in July 1990, which would stand up to the Yugoslav People's Army and protect the republic in case of the Army's intervention in the democratic processes and attainment of independence. Manoeuvre Structure of National Defence consisted of members, selected by the organisers from the ranks of the military structures and the police, including the Militia Protection Unit. It contained several hundred people representing the first line of defence in case of an intervention by the Yugoslav People's Army.

In the summer of 1990 the threat assessment became more severe, since the federal authorities had an increasingly negative outlook on the continuation of the democratic process and especially the efforts of both republics with regard to their independence. In July 1990 the Slovenian parliament (assembly), at Demos's initiative, adopted the Declaration of Independence, announcing the secession of Slovenia from the context of Yugoslavia and the adoption of the new constitution, which was to confirm the Slovenian independence and its democratic regime. Severe verbal threats intensified and a military intervention in Slovenia became more probable, especially since Croatia had been partly immobilised with the onset of the Croatian-Serbian national dispute, which already in the autumn led to the so-called Log Revolution and then the proclamation of the autonomous Serbian territory Krajina.

In July 1990 both Ministers formed a more solid idea for the provisional defence organisation. They entrusted this task to Tone Krkovič, who at that time commanded the people's defence section of the Kočevje municipality, and the commander of the special and military militia units training centre Vinko Beznik. Both turned to the people who they trusted, on the basis of personal relations and their decision to join the secret organisation. Namely, due to the risky nature of the affair – since they were forming an organisation unauthorised

by the legislation – the organisers were careful to select the people whose agreement to cooperate could be foreseen in advance. Since the beginnings the members of the Territorial Defence as well as the militia were included into this new organisation. Namely, in Yugoslavia a specific defence doctrine of general people's resistance and social self-protection was in place, which, besides the Army, also involved the Territorial Defence, police, civil protection service, and a special organisation – National Defence – in the defence of the state in case of an attack by one or the other military blocs at the Yugoslav borders. The police was organised in a specific manner, similar to gendarmerie, and also had Special Units and Military Units, trained for military conflicts in particular, at its disposal. In August 1990 the Secretary of Internal Affairs assigned the newly established Special Militia Unit, directly subordinated to him, to operate within the defence organisation. Its integration meant a significant strengthening of the forces available for the potential intervention, since the unit was skilled, strong, well-connected and trained in special operations.

In August and September 1990 the defence organisation reached its final developed form. The republican authorities gave the organisers the task of ensuring the full organisation to the level of the municipalities, specifying which Territorial Defence and police units would be included in the defence organisation, and setting up a hierarchically organised chain of command throughout the republic. This organisation was named the Manoeuvre Structure of National Defence. Namely, the legislative framework only allowed the republican authorities to assume full jurisdiction in case of the National Defence organisation. However, since this organisation was only responsible for the local security tasks, the denotation »Manoeuvre Structure«, which reflected its origins and applicability at the whole territory of the republic, was added to describe the new dimension of its tasks. Within a month the organisers established, besides the headquarters at the level of the republic, 13 regional and 62 municipal headquarters. The chain of command of this new organisation was twofold and parallel: for the military and for the police part of its members. The commanders selected the Territorial Defence units which would be mobilised in case of an intervention. It was envisioned that around 21 000 Territorial Defence servicemen, for whom the basic weapons were available, would be mobilised. In August the Secretary of Internal Affairs ordered that the Special Militia Units (around 1300 men in 13 police directorates) under the command of Jože Kolenc should be included in the organisation. The mobilisation of around 10 000 members of Military Militia Units, consisting of all active and

reserve members of the militia, was also planned. Namely, in the Yugoslav system, the militia also had defence tasks, thus the organisers could take advantage of that without additional organisational solutions. In the end of September the defence plans together with mobilisation locations, envisioned intervention directions and manner in which the forces would be deployed, were drawn up. Since the militia was controlled by the republican authorities in the context of their legal power, its resources could support the newly established organisation in terms of contents, organisation and materiel. Therefore the militia could be organically integrated into the defence force, almost without any systemic and organisational changes, virtually in the context of its work assignments. Namely, the preparation of the organisation for the potential activation in light of any security threats did not only call for a lot of organisational work while selecting suitable commanders, but also for the equal division of the weapons among all envisioned units and the establishment of convenient secret weapons repositories in the vicinity of each unit. The internal affairs bodies also partly distributed their completely legal weapons among the improvised hidden depots, only known to the members of the organisation. That is one of the reasons why this was a period when the Slovenian defence system as an increasingly autonomous part of the defence system was largely based on the police forces and their material resources.

In the end of the summer of 1990, the Slovenian authorities decided to put in order the paralysed military system of the Territorial Defence by taking it into its own jurisdiction. Since due to the legal-political circumstances the only way to do this was to amend the constitution, the Slovenian authorities drew up two constitutional amendments, No. 96 and 97, which the republican assembly adopted on 28 September. These two constitutional amendments implemented a full responsibility of Slovenia with regard to the command and management of the Territorial Defence and regulated the military service of the Slovenian recruits in the Yugoslav People's Army. The adoption of the constitutional amendments meant that legally the Slovenian authorities could take over the management and command of the Territorial Defence, despite the resolute opposition of the federal authorities and the leadership of the Yugoslav People's Army. Immediately on 28 September 1990, the Slovenian authorities appointed an acting commander of the Territorial Defence of Slovenia, reserve major Janez Slapar, who had until then been the regional commander of the National Defence for the Gorenjska region. A week later, on 4 October 1990, another seven regional commanders of the Territorial Defence were appointed. The National Defence commander Tone

Krkovič solemnly transferred the command of the secret organisation to the new Territorial Defence commander. Thus the organisation of the Slovenian defence forces in the form of Manoeuvre Structure of National Defence was complete. The military segment focused especially on strengthening and transforming the concept and doctrine of the territorial defence. As far as the police part of the defence forces was concerned, the plans for its use in the defence operations remained, even though they were not put to use until the spring of 1991, when the concept of joint defence forces came to life in the wake of the impending security tensions after the planned proclamation of the Slovenian independence, announced for 26 June 1991 at the latest. In the summer and autumn 1990, the use of the internal affairs bodies in the defence doctrine of the state attaining its independence meant a significant strengthening of its defence potential. The use of such different forces in the defence and the establishment of the principles for its interoperable realisation required a lot of coordination. This is why the period of the intensive formation of the defence forces in the form of the Manoeuvre Structure of National Defence was so vital, which only became obvious later – namely, it was a starting point for the identification and solution of the problems involved in the joint defence of the Slovenian independence in June 1991.