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HISTORY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND ACTIVITIES OF THE KHORUNZHYYI SERVICE OF THE 1ST CORPS AZOV OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OF UKRAINE

The article examines the formation, functioning, and evolution of the Khorunzha (Herald) Service of the 1st Corps Azov as a distinctive institution of ideological, worldview-based, and moral-psychological support for military personnel. The study substantiates the deliberate rejection of Soviet and post-Soviet models of "educational work," which were often characterized by formal bureaucracy and a lack of clear national identity. Instead, the research highlights the development of an alternative value system deeply rooted in the traditions of the Ukrainian national liberation movement, Cossack heritage, and the historical military experience of the Army of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA).

Special attention is paid to the specialized educational institutions within Azov, such as the Colonel Yevhen Konovalts Commander School and the Mykola Stsiborskyi Khorunzha School. The study explores the role of khorunzhyi in shaping an ideologically motivated warrior-citizen, moving away from the "zampolit" (political officer) archetype. Furthermore, the article analyzes the formation of a unique corporate military culture through specific symbols, sacred rituals (such as the Day of the Fallen), and traditions like the "handshake of wrists" and the "swords in the stone" monument. These elements are shown to be crucial in strengthening unit cohesion, combat morale, and psychological resilience.

The research further evaluates the significance of the Khorunzhyi Service in countering the ideological influence of Russia and overcoming the consequences of long-term humanitarian occupation by reinforcing national identity. The experience of Azov during the siege of Mariupol and the defense of Azovstal serves as a case study for the effectiveness of a coherent ideological markers system in extreme combat conditions. The article concludes that this model, which successfully combines modern NATO professional standards with a profound national ideological framework, can serve as a blueprint for reforming moral and psychological support within the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other security formations to bolster national resilience and decolonize military traditions.

Keywords: National Guard of Ukraine, khorunzhyi service, Azov, war for Ukraine's independence, ideological markers, military traditions, national identity, moral and psychological resilience.

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Statement of the problem and its relevance. The large-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russian troops has brought to the fore the problem of the moral and psychological resilience of military personnel, their motivation, worldview certainty, and identification with the armed struggle for state independence. In the current conditions of a protracted and exhausting war, material and technical support and tactical training alone cannot guarantee the effectiveness of the army without a deep ideological foundation and a comprehensive system of personnel training. At the same time, the Ukrainian army has long retained elements of the Soviet and post-Soviet model of ideological work, which was characterized by formalism, low efficiency, and alienation from national traditions. In these conditions, the experience of individual units that have been able to form an alternative, Ukraine-centered system of ideological and educational support is of particular importance. One such example is the khorunzhyi service of the 1st Azov Corps, which combined military training with the national idea, historical continuity, and its own system of rituals and traditions. The relevance of the study is determined by the need for scientific understanding of the phenomenon of the khorunzhyi service as a tool for forming an ideological warrior-citizen capable of resisting not only armed but also ideological aggression by the enemy, as well as the possibility of using this experience to improve the system of moral and psychological support of the National Guard of Ukraine.

Analysis of previous studies. The issues of moral and psychological support for the troops, military ideology, and national identity in the National Guard of Ukraine have been considered in the works of Ukrainian and foreign researchers in military pedagogy, social psychology, and military history. In his scientific research, V. Vasyshev identified the leading groups of educational methods and clarified the specifics of their application in working with personnel based on materials from the National Guard of Ukraine (Vasyshev, 2023: 25). In her article, A. Midina reveals a model for developing the personnel potential of the National Guard of Ukraine as a component of state regulation at various levels (Midina, 2023: 38). The author analyzes the multifaceted nature of human resources potential, regulated by military law, and justifies approaches to its effective development to ensure the functions of the National Guard of Ukraine. Researcher O. Orel conducted a comprehensive study of the self-realization of the human resources potential of the National Guard of Ukraine as a component of the social and legal support of the personnel of the National Guard of

Ukraine, its stages and phases of development, as well as separate aspects of military patriotic education in independent Ukraine (*Orel, 2023: 113*). At the same time, scientific literature does not sufficiently cover alternative, non-institutionalized models of ideological work that emerged during the Russian-Ukrainian war on the basis of the volunteer movement. The experience of Azov and, in particular, the khorunzhyi service, is mainly represented in memoirs, journalistic and information-analytical materials, in the recollections of people who stood at the origins of the transformation of the institution of deputy commanders for moral and psychological support, such as V. Dutchak, M. Kravchenko, and A. Ignatiuk. They became inspirers for Azov recruits and fighters, but today their work is almost unrecognized in academic discourse. Thus, there is a scientific gap in the study of the khorunzhyi service as a holistic socio-military institution that combines educational, ideological, and symbolic functions and is based on the traditions of the Ukrainian national liberation movement.

Purpose of the article: based on the materials studied, to investigate the formation of the khorunzhyi service of the 1st Corps Azov of the National Guard of Ukraine in wartime conditions.

Presentation of the main material. From the moment of its creation to the present day, Azov has developed as a unique military unit of motivated patriots, which avoids any similarities, identities, or, in any case, copying of any legacy of the traditions of the "Soviet" and "post-Soviet" armies. Azov has never had any of the disgusting remnants of the Soviet Union. The people who formed it had nothing in common with the Soviet army or the Ukrainian army of the "developed" Kuchma period, when, unfortunately, people who learned not to "defend the motherland, but to plunder it" (*Dutchak, 2022*) were promoted through the officer ranks. Azov was based on nationalist volunteers who created a special worldview, a kind of corporate culture inspired by the ideology of the Ukrainian national liberation movement of the 20th century (*Yablonskyi, 2020: 15*). Military experience throughout history shows that motivated fighters fight better in all circumstances. Those who clearly understand what they are fighting for (*Grimell, 2025*). In Ukraine, which has been resisting a full-scale Russian invasion for more than four years and has been suffering from armed aggression by the Russian Federation for more than 12 years, there are many such motivated soldiers. At the same time, it should be acknowledged that exhaustion and fatigue from the war, both among the military and civilians, sometimes due to a lack of interaction,

mutual understanding, and communication between these two groups, combined with many social problems and issues, negatively affect the moral and psychological state and motivation of Ukrainian soldiers (*Kovalenko, 2020: 112; Dykun, Moroz, Stasiuk, 2023: 45*).

The military has always paid attention to ideological work. However, today's situation requires new approaches and non-standard solutions (*Kosiuk, 2019: 80*). The idea of forming Azov educational institutions arose as a result of the fact that what the National Guard and the Armed Forces of Ukraine were offering at the time, namely the training of sergeants, was not quite what the unit needed, which from the very first days of its formation tried to meet high NATO standards (*Biloshytskyi et al., 2020: 42*). Even when Azov was a separate special forces unit of the National Guard of Ukraine, the unit understood that fighters needed to be taught not only how to fight, but also how to become elite warriors who would first and foremost be ideological citizens, bearers of Ukrainian values with a Ukrainian-centric view of themselves and the history of their state (*Boiko, 2019: 115*). Azov began providing ideological and humanitarian training to its fighters in 2015, a year after the volunteer unit was created. In addition to systematic training, theoretical classes, and courses in specific specialties, Azov has conducted and continues to conduct its own advanced training courses throughout its history, ensuring the quality and consistency of its personnel's education (*Sukhomlyn, 2020: 18*).

The first educational institution founded by a team of experienced and enterprising military personnel based at the then Azov Regiment in 2016 was the Colonel Yevhen Konovalets Military School for Commanders (founder of the Ukrainian Military Organization and permanent commander of the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen, as well as co-founder of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists), which trained (and continues to train) sergeants and senior officers, who in turn trained recruits (*Hrytsak, 2000: 240*). Intensive physical and psychological training hardened future commanders for any challenges, and theoretical and practical knowledge was compiled into a single course based on foreign literature and the experience of instructors from various countries. In 2016, the first class of sergeants graduated. Subsequently, the school grew in terms of personnel. Graduates of the military school confirmed their training in the most difficult battles. Later, the school's instructors demonstrated their professionalism not only by training future elite fighters, but also by demonstrating their own training in the battles for

Mariupol. The sergeants proved themselves to be simply incredible, becoming an example for their comrades (*Vasyshchev, 2023: 26*). The Konovalets School constantly trained and hardened recruits.

The second educational institution, which was formed on November 20, 2017, was the Mykola Stsiborskyi School (the ideologist of the OUN, a man who shaped the worldview of young nationalists who fought with weapons in their hands in the last century. M. Stsiborskyi embodies high intelligence, personal courage, patriotism, and worldview guidelines that emphasize the humanistic component) (*Stsiborsky, 2007: 45*).

The khorunzhyi service itself was created in 2016. Its tasks were education, upbringing, ideology formation, ensuring the moral and psychological stability of fighters, etc. (*Hrytsenko, 2018: 156*). Khorunzhyi is not only a reference to Cossack traditions. This rank also existed in the army of the Ukrainian People's Republic and in the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. It became the basis for the ideological training of Azov fighters (*Dovbush, 2016: 210*). Approaches to working with personnel were radically changed, which, unfortunately, had undergone only minor, sometimes formal changes and transformations during the years of Ukraine's independence (*Medina, 2023: 39*). The creation of the khorunzhyi service showed that even in informal, friendly conversations, Azov fighters do not refer to employees of the ideological department as "zampolits" – a term from the Soviet army that, unfortunately, is still present in the vocabulary of some military personnel. A khorunzhyi is a person who guards the banner, monitors discipline, sets an example, preserves traditions, and is responsible for spreading ideology and organizing all events (*Kryvytska, 2020: 48*).

The khorunzhyis began to introduce new traditions, as is customary in almost every military unit in the world. A banner (khoruhva) is the battle flag of a military formation, which is the most sacred symbol representing the honor of the military formation (*Sokolenko, 2019: 72*). The Azov banner is kept in the flag service. Before the full-scale invasion, it was used during important ceremonial events: on the Day of Remembrance for Fallen Soldiers, during the parade on the Day of the First Liberation of Mariupol (until 2022), and on the day of the founding of the Azov unit (May 5, 2014). With the start of the large-scale Russian invasion on February 24, 2024, the banner was moved along with the unit to the city of Mariupol, where the Azov regiment was then fighting heavy battles in conditions of complete encirclement (*Melnik, 2021: 142*). During the defense of Azovstal, the banner

remained at the plant and was kept at the Bastion command post. During one of the air raids and bombings of Azovstal, one of the bombs hit the bunker where the defense headquarters and command post were located. The explosion damaged the banner's case, but the battle flag itself remained intact. During one of the air operations using helicopters to evacuate the seriously wounded and reinforce the Mariupol defense garrison with personnel, ammunition, medicine, and food, the battle flag was transferred to the so-called "big land," as the defenders of Mariupol called the territory of Ukraine controlled by the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the current political leadership. There it awaited the return of the unit's personnel from captivity, becoming a factor in preserving the national identity and resilience of the collective (*Shevchuk, 2020: 105*).

Standards were also introduced — the battle flags of the Azov units. During the ATO/JFO, the standards were presented to the units during solemn events on the unit's birthday (*Sokolenko, 2019: 42*). The ceremony was traditionally held in the city of Berdiansk, where Azov originated.

The functionality of the khorunzhyi service changed in the course of its activities. At its origins were: Andrii Ignatiuk "Spider," Serhii Bezv "Spolokh," Mykola Kravchenko "Kruk," Vladyslav Dutchak "Dotsent." These people performed ideological support work and trained deputy commanders to work with personnel, who would later acquire certain necessary skills (*Petrov, 2015: 112*). The foundation of Azov's ideology is patriotism. For Azov members, patriotism is not just love for Ukraine, but also a willingness to give their lives for their homeland (*Savitsky, 2018: 101*).

The Khorunzhyi service regularly gives lectures to personnel on ideological, historical, and military-pedagogical education. However, these lectures are not only given to the regiment's soldiers, but also to educational institutions, higher military institutions, and the civilian population. During lectures and discussions, the khorunzhyis talk about the blood shed by their brothers who died in this war and about the heroes who defended and fought for Ukraine in the past: the soldiers of the UPA, the Army of the Ukrainian People's Republic, the Sich Riflemen, the Cossacks, and the outstanding Ukrainians who are a source of pride. Meetings with civilians are always an opportunity to familiarize the public with the ideology and established value system of the 1st Azov Corps. Such meetings allow soldiers to share their experiences and talk about their personal choices. The audience has the opportunity to hear about the

war directly from an artilleryman, an infantryman, and a UAV operator (*Savytskyi, 2018: 101*). The khorunzhyis make considerable efforts to explain the existential nature of our confrontation in repelling Russian aggression. The lack of a focused policy in the humanitarian sphere allows Russia to continue to have a significant influence on Ukrainians. The Horunzha service has identified one of its priorities as combating the ideological legacy of the long occupation, which is firmly entrenched in the Ukrainian information space and continues to influence the mentality of the nation, fueling the inferiority complex of Ukrainians (*Onyshchuk, 2021: 115*).

Together with Azov, the khorunzhyi service is constantly evolving. Its activities are changing and scaling up in line with the demands of the times in order to be more effective and useful for the army and the country (*Medina, Orel, 2022: 19*). Almost all combat units have their own internal rituals. Azov has many unique traditions that take an important place in the life and formation of each soldier (*Sokolenko, 2019: 88*). Particularly noteworthy is the Day of Remembrance for Fallen Soldiers, which, prior to the full-scale invasion, was held in Urzuf during the autumn equinox. This is a tribute to those soldiers who have already gained eternal life in the struggle for the future of the Ukrainian nation. Honoring the Fallen Heroes. This tradition stands out the most among others. This ritual is considered the most sacred, closed event. Access to it is restricted. Only soldiers of the unit, relatives of the deceased, or guests with special invitations are allowed to attend. This is not a public event, but a closed military mystery that takes place at night.

The ceremony honoring the Fallen Heroes was first held in October 2015 near Mariupol. A huge mound was erected on the field in front of what was then the Azov Regiment base. Three giant wooden swords were placed on top of the mound as a monument. The swords symbolize military valor. This symbolically recreates the bronze monument "Swords in Stone" erected in Hafrsfjord, Norway. The author of the original composition, sculptor Fritz Rød, invested it with the meaning of the symbolic unification of Norway after the Battle of Hafrsfjord, when Harald Fairhair united all of Norway under his rule. The three swords stuck in the ground signify the conclusion of peace. This structure became a memorial center for the cult of heroes for those warriors who had already passed away, "stuck their swords into the ground." Every year until 2022, a ceremony to honor the memory of the dead, the Day of the Fallen, took place at this site. After sunset,

soldiers lined up on the Field of Swords, some holding Shields of Heroes inscribed with the names of fallen or deceased soldiers. Bowls of fire were also lit. Searchlights from behind the mound illuminated the night sky with a burst of light, and lit torches illuminated the names on the shields. Illuminating mines were launched into the night sky, giving the event even greater poignancy. After the commander's address, the "Prayer of the Ukrainian Nationalist" is read aloud. This is another of Azov's main traditions. After that, the khorunzhyi calls out the call signs of the dead fighters by name. In response, the ranks reply, "In formation!" adding the oath, "We remember. We will avenge!" These are the main words shouted by the participants in the mystery. A salute is fired into the night sky.

Russian propaganda calls this event a "pagan ritual," although this is not true. The commemoration of those who died fighting for Ukrainian statehood on the Day of the Fallen in Azov has no analogues in other cultures, but in its nature it corresponds to European mysteries of the past, including Cossack and Slavic memorial events (*Syniok, 2018: 124*). The main rule on which the traditions of the 1st Azov Corps military formation are based is respect for the fallen and elitism (*Medina, 2023: 38*).

The khorunzhyi service also organized tributes to fallen soldiers. Until February 24, 2022, the Azov soldiers bid farewell to fallen soldiers during formations at their permanent deployment point. The commander recalled the soldier's military career and his achievements. In honor of the deceased, a volley of shots was fired and the "Prayer of a Ukrainian Nationalist" was read. This tradition establishes a strong connection between the living and their fallen comrades. Before the full-scale invasion, the fallen were regularly honored on the day of their death. Death does not take away a soldier's right to be called an "Azov soldier." He joins the "Heavenly Azov" by giving his life for Ukraine and his brothers-in-arms. The 1st Azov Corps covers all burial expenses and has regularly cared for the resting places of fallen soldiers since 2014 (*Regulatory Acts, 2026*).

Azov salute. Fist to the heart.

The military salute in Azov is performed by placing the fist on the heart. The fist is placed on the heart during the performance of the anthem, the reading of the "Prayer of the Ukrainian Nationalist," and as a sign of respect for a fallen brother during the farewell. In fact, this is an ancient Ukrainian greeting of placing the palm on the heart, which was somewhat militarized and popularized by Azov servicemen.

Currently, this military salute is performed in many units where former Azov servicemen serve (*Contemporary Trends...*, 2024).

Handshake.

Another variant of the traditional Azov salute, during which servicemen greet each other by shaking each other's wrists. In this way, the fighters acknowledge their brotherhood and sincerity of intentions. This greeting also dates back to ancient times. This is how the ancient Romans greeted each other, signaling that they had no hidden objects or weapons in their clothing. This greeting is gradually spreading to other units as a new symbol of brotherhood, mutual support, and mutual trust among military personnel (*Kryvytska, 2020: 50*).

Decorative cold weapons.

During the ATO/JFO period, a tradition was established of awarding cold weapons for dedicated service in Azov. The unit commander independently submitted lists of fighters who were preparing to leave the service and whom he considered worthy of this distinction. Azov soldiers were presented with engraved knives in special cases. Both the weapon and the case were engraved with the inscription: "No glory without battle." The knife was also engraved with the call sign of the soldier who became its owner (*Midina, 2023: 38*).

In 2024, the tradition of awarding assault knives was established. This award is a new tradition of the unit. It is awarded to the best Azov assault troops for their resilience, courage, and bravery in battle.

"During assault operations, in close combat, when a person is working at the limit of their capabilities, on the brink of life and death, at a critical moment, they reveal their true nature. And I am deeply convinced that only a fighter who can overcome their fear, control themselves, and not lose their composure has the right to call themselves a warrior. For me, this is the pinnacle of human valor, which every infantryman in our brigade should strive for," said Denys Prokopenko, commander of the 1st Azov Corps, during one of the assault knife award ceremonies.

Prayer.

One of the main and most comprehensive traditions of the unit is the recitation of the "Prayer of the Ukrainian Nationalist," which is revered in Azov on a par with the Ukrainian anthem. It is usually performed during celebrations of Azov's founding day, on All Souls' Day, on the day of Mariupol's first liberation, and on the anniversary of the Pavlopil-Shyroke offensive operation. These and other dates are celebrated annually with festivities (*Melnyk, 2021: 156*). Such rituals are an important component in the formation of social and legal

consciousness and ideological unity among military personnel (*Medina, Orel, 2022: 18*). Similar events ensure a high level of motivation and morale, which is critically important in the system of moral and psychological support for the troops (*Krut, Stadnik, Vashchenko, 2021*).

Parades.

Before the full-scale invasion of Mariupol, the khorunzhyi service held parades with the participation of soldiers and military equipment, festivals ("Free Mariupol") and concerts for the city's residents. They organized New Year's greetings for children in Mariupol, during which they decorated cars and themselves with New Year's attributes. Today, the flag service of the 1st Azov Corps organizes gift boxes for all Azov children throughout Ukraine for the New Year holidays. This includes children of Azov soldiers who have died since 2014 and children whose parents are being held captive in Russian torture chambers. This activity is part of a comprehensive system of support for military personnel and their families (*Regulatory Acts, 2026*).

The full-scale war has claimed hundreds and hundreds of lives, but it has also given rise to a new surge in the nationalist movement. Thousands of new recruits and volunteers have sworn to avenge the dead and fight until victory is achieved (*Dutchak, 2022*).

Young soldier training course

Everyone knows about the very strict selection process for Azov. In 2015-2022, if 100 recruits applied, 40 would pass the young soldier course (YSC), which was considered a very good result. There were people who came to the YSC several times. For example, my friend "Vuiko," who died defending Mariupol in 2022, came to the YSC three times in order to join the famous unit. This yielded results: motivated personnel who were eager to serve despite the obstacles and the harsh, "fierce" selection process became professionals. Military-patriotic education and ideological training during the selection stage are fundamental components of national security (*Sukhomlyn, 2020: 19*). All Azov commanders rose from private riflemen and grenade launchers to company commanders, battalion commanders, regiment commanders, and "clear ranks."

The tradition of taking up the position of chief sergeant at the Azov Military School of Commanders named after Yevhen Konovalets.

Symbolically, the Azov Military School named after Colonel Yevhen Konovalets is a training ground for new military specialists, both sergeants and officers. During the graduation of the first class of sergeants, a symbolic blow was struck on an anvil with a hammer,

where the forging of steel symbolized the process of forging new professional fighters at the school. A new tradition appeared at the Military School of Commanders on the eve of the graduation of the second class of sergeants.

The ceremony begins with the personnel lining up, the Azov and MSC flags being raised, and then the commander introducing the previous and new chief sergeants. Next, a wooden chest appears in front of the formation, on which the credo is engraved, which is read by the course sergeant and repeated by all sergeants. In this way, the sergeants swear allegiance to their comrades and their homeland. When the reading of the credo is over, the course sergeant takes a combat hammer from the chest as a symbol of the Chief Sergeant's weapon, because according to the hierarchy, the Chief Sergeant "forges," that is, trains all other sergeants. He hands the hammer to the old Chief Sergeant, who then hands it to the commander. The commander thanks him for his work and service and hands the Azov symbol to the new Chief Sergeant, telling him that he received this hammer from his predecessor, who fought a worthy fight, and now wishes the new Chief Sergeant strength in continuing his work. The new Chief Sergeant receives the hammer, then returns it to the course sergeant, and the places it on the anvil. This ritual of reciting the creed and oath of allegiance strengthens the ideological foundations of military service in conditions of armed conflict (*Onyshchuk, 2021: 114*).

The hammer.

The hammer, an Azov symbol of the transfer of command, was handmade by a renowned Ukrainian craftsman. On one side, it is engraved with the Azov coat of arms, and on the other, with the coat of arms of the Azov Military School of Commanders named after Colonel Yevhen Konovalets. The handle is engraved with the colonel's words, "Don't cry, but fight," and on the other side, a famous quote by Yevhen Konovalets, "Iron is melted into steel in fire, and a people is transformed into a nation in struggle." Only the Chief Sergeant has the right to touch it (while the school's officers pass the school's battle flag from generation to generation of officers). Inside the lid of the chest is a gold plaque inscribed with the surname, first name, and call sign of the first Chief Sergeant. Over the years, the plaque has been supplemented with the initials of the school's future Chief Sergeant. The introduction of such distinctive rituals is in line with current trends in ensuring combat readiness, creating a unique corporate culture within the unit (*Modern Trends..., 2024*). This hammer is one of a kind and will become a real relic for both the Military School of Commanders and the entire history of the 1st Azov Corps.

Conclusions. The Azov khorunzhyi service has become a fundamentally new phenomenon in the system of ideological and educational support for the Ukrainian army, demonstrating the possibility of forming an effective model of working with personnel that is incompatible with the Soviet legacy (*Shevchenko, 2016*). Its activities are based on a combination of military professionalism, a deep national idea, and respect for the historical continuity of the Ukrainian struggle for statehood (*Osyodlo, 2025: 88*). Through educational institutions, symbols, rituals, and traditions, the Horunzha service not only ensures the moral and psychological stability of soldiers, but also shapes the type of ideological warrior for whom service is a conscious choice and a form of civic responsibility (*Prykhodko, 2021*). In the context of a protracted and existential war with the Russian Federation, the experience of Azov's khorunzhyi service takes on particular significance, as it proves the decisive role of ideology, memory of the fallen, and internal cohesion of the unit in maintaining the combat capability of the army (*Sherzer, Boumendil, 2024: 40*). The proposed model can be considered as an example for wider implementation in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations with the aim of strengthening national resilience, overcoming the colonial legacy, and establishing Ukraine's own military tradition (*Kobzar, Habchuk, Hrytsiuk, 2019*).

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ІСТОРИЯ СТВОРЕННЯ, РОЗВИТКУ ТА ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ ХОРУНЖОЇ СЛУЖБИ 1-ГО КОРПУСУ «АЗОВ» НАЦІОНАЛЬНОЇ ГВАРДІЇ УКРАЇНИ

У статті розглядається становлення, функціонування та еволюція Хорунжої служби 1-го корпусу «Азов» як самобутньої інституції ідеологічної, світоглядної та морально-психологічної підтримки військовослужбовців. У дослідженні обґрунтовується свідома відмова від радянських та пострадянських моделей «виховної роботи», які часто характеризувалися формальною бюрократією та відсутністю чіткої національної ідентичності. Натомість дослідження висвітлює розвиток альтернативної системи цінностей, глибоко вкорінених у традиціях українського національно-визвольного руху, козацькій спадщині та історичному військовому досвіді Армії Української Народної Республіки (УНР) та Української Повстанської Армії (УПА).

Особлива увага приділяється спеціалізованим навчальним закладам, таким як Командирська школа імені полковника Євгена Коновальця та Хорунжа школа імені Миколи Сціборського. У роботі досліджується роль хорунжого у формуванні ідеологічно мотивованого воїна-громадянина. Крім того, у статті аналізується формування унікальної корпоративної військової культури через специфічні символи, сакральні ритуали (такі як День Мертвих) та традиції, такі як «рукостискання зап'ясть» та пам'ятник «мечі в камені». Показано, що ці елементи відіграють вирішальну роль у зміцненні згуртованості підрозділу, бойового духу та психологічної стійкості.

У дослідженні також оцінюється значення Хорунжої служби у протидії ідеологічному впливу РФ та подоланні наслідків тривалої гуманітарної окупації шляхом зміцнення національної ідентичності. Досвід «Азова» під час облоги Маріуполя та оборони «Азовсталі» слугує прикладом ефективності цілісної ідеологічної маркованості системи в екстремальних бойових умовах. У статті робиться висновок, що ця модель, яка успішно поєднує сучасні професійні стандарти НАТО з глибокою національною ідеологічною основою, може слугувати планом реформування морально-психологічного забезпечення у Збройних Силах України та інших силових формуваннях з метою зміцнення національної стійкості та деколонізації військових традицій.

Ключові слова: Національна гвардія України, Хорунжа служба, Азов, війна за незалежність України, ідеологічні маркери, військові традиції, національна ідентичність, морально-психологічна стійкість.

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