

Viktor Dokashenko

**NATIONAL STRUCTURE OF DONBAS IN THE FOCUS
OF THE HYBRID WAR IN UKRAINE**

The undeclared war, that has been raging for the second year in Ukraine, now, long before its end, again and again forces us to go back to its roots. There is a rather popular point of view about conscious Ukrainian people, who made their choice in favor of Europe, and about an “irresponsible” and subsidized Donbas, who did not take this idea properly. It appears with an enviable persistence in some media and statements of some politicians, and can hardly be taken as well-grounded. In this article we do not intend to refute these or similar maxims. Perhaps, there is no need to do it as they don’t answer the main question: why? Why did Donbas, with its enormous intellectual and economic potential, fall a victim of the cunning plans of our yesterday’s “strategic partners”. They could hardly be implemented but for the internal reasons, which have become a convenient excuse to transform the industrial Donbas in an arena of combat.

So what were the reasons of the war? We think that it was a complex of intertwined economic, political, mental, national and even domestic reasons. Each of them should be studied separately by political scientists, demographers, sociologists, and representatives of many other sciences. In the range of this discourse it is interesting to analyze the situation from the point of view of the aggressor’s choosing the areas to implement the plans. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to identify the factors, which predisposed to both aggression and quasi-public experiments in the national structure of Donbas. For its implementation I will analyze the dynamics of the quantitative growth of ethnic Russians for a quite

long chronological period, as well as examine the level of use of the Russian language by the local population. From our point of view, the national composition of the population and predominant use of the Russian language were those factors that determined the further destiny of this region. First of all, they gave the pretext for the Russian Federation to transform Donbas into a firing ground of Ukraine's destruction.

This region has traditionally played a leading role in the economic life of the Russian Empire and later in the USSR. Practically since its inception the region has turned into a centre of economic development, this fact caused its colonization by people of different nationalities and, first of all, by the Russians. At the same time a considerable part of peoples known in the Russian Empire as "non-Russians", used the Russian language as the means of interethnic communication. The new empire with its slogans about proletarian internationalism and all kinds of "jumps" into a "bright future" increased the importance of Donbas, turning it into an "all-Union stakehold".

Independent Ukraine got Donbas with a well-developed but outmoded industrial infrastructure, a bouquet of social and environmental problems, and an extremely varied national composition of the population. Therefore, from the point of view of thorny economic, social, ecological, and even linguistic problems, let alone Donbas' importance in the structure of Ukrainian economy, the region requires a special treatment and, moreover, a carefully considered policy.

It is no accident, that among a great number of aspects of this problem, we have emphasized the issue of formation of the national structure in the region. This issue is closely related with a lot of questions, such as the establishment of the Ukrainian language in the region, the nature of the formation of inter-ethnic relations, fostering a sense of patriotism among the younger generation, and many others.

In the most general statement of the question we study the peculiarities of formation and consolidation of the Ukrainian nation in the post-Soviet time. Especially as because from time to time some politicians artificially forced some tension around the Russian component in the national structure of Donbas. Fortunately, in a peaceful everyday life the vast majority of people, belonging to various nationalities of Donbas, didn't feel any discrimination.

Historiography of the problem is represented by a wide spectrum of scientific findings. We will dare to stop on their short characteristic as they express methodological approaches to the treatment of national problems in modern Ukraine. The works by L.P. Nagornaya have a conceptual significance for consideration of the given problem, as they are devoted to the problems of socio-cultural and regional identity.¹ The fundamental research by V.O. Romantsov submits the analysis

¹ Л.П. Нагорна, *Регіональна ідентичність: український контекст*, ІПіЕНД імені І.Ф. Кураса НАН України, Київ 2008, pp. 405.

of dynamics of growth of the population in Ukraine and its language over a long historical period.²

However, it should be noted, that a number of studies are characterized by pronounced political overtones. This approach, in particular, is seen in the works by Giroaki Couromia “Freedom and Terror in Donbas. “Ukrainian-Russian borderlands, 1870–1990-ies”, which, though being one of the most cited studies in the field of national issues of Donbass, can be applied to it only politically. In this work, we think, some issues lack proper underlying reasoning. But the publication is full of unsubstantiated conclusions. For example, the author did not even think it necessary to explain his rather dubious maxim about the aggravation of anti-Semitism in the society at the period of its industrial development.³

Unfortunately, some studies are characterized by a politically biased rhetoric, accompanied by overt hostility to one of the largest minorities living in the republic rather than giving a thorough analysis of the national problems in Ukraine.

Thus, the foreign researcher of Ukrainian lineage V. Kubiewicz connects the numerical increase of the Russians on the territory of present Ukrainian lands solely with the domination of the Bolshevik regime.⁴

The economic and social attractiveness of Ukrainian lands at the stage of the rapid economic development is not taken into account; that is, the objective component of the national formation of the region is totally excluded from the analysis.

In this regard, in contrast to the above, the arguments of the modern Ukrainian researcher Y.O. Nikolayets seem more solid. In the introduction to his work, he is absolutely right when focuses on the complexity and ambiguity of the ethnic structure formation of the region, where “the interests of many public entities, and the interests of certain social and ethnic groups, brought about primarily by the economic and social problems” are closely intertwined.⁵

The study by N.G. Malyarchuk “The Russians in Donbas (the 1920s–1930s)” gives, in our view, an objective retrospective of the settlement process in Donbas. The author explicitly connects the relocation of the Russians and their subsequent quantitative predominance in the region (compared with other ethnic minorities) with the beginning of the industrial settlement process.⁶

² В.О. Романцов, *Населення України і його рідна мова за часів радянської влади та незалежності (XX – початок XXI століття)*, Вид-во імені Олени Теліги, Київ 2008, рр. 184.

³ Куромія Гироаки, *Свобода и терор в Донбассе. Украинско-российское пограничье в 1870–1990-е годы*. (Пер. с англ. Г. Херян, В. Агеев; Предесл. Г.Немыри), Изд-во Соломии Павлычко «Основа», Київ 2002, р. 477.

⁴ В. Кубієвич, *Національний склад населення Совецької України у світлі совецьких переписів с 17.12.1926 по 1959 г. Відбиток зі збірника присвяченого пам'яті З. Кузели, Записки НТШ*”, т. LXIX, Париж 1962, р. 16.

⁵ Ю.А. Николаец, *Поселенська структура населення Донбасу (етнополітичний аспект динамики)*. Монографія, ПЕНД імені І.Ф.Кураса НАН України, Київ 2012, р. 5.

⁶ М.Г. Малярчук, *Росіяни в Донбасі (20–30 рр. XX века)*. Монографія, П.П.Чернецкий, Донецьк 2011, р. 41.

The study of the Lviv historian I.Y. Terlyuk devoted to the same problem, though in a somewhat different dimension, chronological and territorial boundaries (West Ukrainian lands) is of specific interest too. Paying tribute to the thoroughness of the analysis, conducted by the author and illustrated by a large number of statistical material, we admit lack of objectiveness when treating the issue. This applies equally to the explanation of the reasons for the quantitative growth of the Russians in the western Ukrainian region and the increase in the number of Russian-speaking population by reducing Ukrainian-speaking one.⁷

In our opinion, besides the subjective factor, to which it is possible to attribute the national policy of the totalitarian state, and which is reasonably emphasized by the author, there was an objective factor as well, a civilizing one, which was typical not only for the Soviet space, but was inherent in other, non-socialist countries of the world.

Apart from the subjective factor, which includes the national policy of the totalitarian state, which is not without reason emphasized by the author, there acted an objective factor, civilizational, characteristic not only of the Soviet period, but also of other, non-socialist countries in the world. Therefore, reducing the problem only to the peculiarities of the national policy of totalitarianism is the simplest explanation, which can be found in the study. The simplest and, in our opinion, the least convincing. This approach does not reveal the essence of the national processes. It focuses researchers on the study of the external, most accessible, visible markers. Excluding the objective side of the process only complicates the scientific solution of the problem.

Thus, a preliminary analysis of the scientific literature suggests quite a broad historiography of the problem, but at the same time it demonstrates lack of definite scientific views as to its resolution. The latest gives us the reason for tracing the dynamics of the process of Russian settlement of the territory of Donbas from 1959 to 2001. It is the quantitative aspect of the issue and its dynamics which can underlie the resolution of many other problems related to the study of the language, culture and education, which are the subject of many research studies.

We hope that the results will be of interest not only to the representatives of various sciences, but will also help to take effective measures for the development of education and language policy in this important region of Ukraine. The main source base of our study are the results of the All-Union censuses of 1959, 1970, 1979 and 1989 and the first All-Ukrainian census of 2001.

On the basis on these sources we have compiled the table given below. It allows tracing the dynamics of the Russian people settlement of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions in the framework of the other, most numerous nationalities of Donbas.⁸

⁷ І. Терлюк, *Росіяни західних областей України (1944–1996 гг.) (Етносоціологічне дослідження)*, Центр Європи, Львів 1997, pp. 176.

⁸ The table is compiled on the basis: *Итоги Всесоюзной переписи населения 1959 года. Украинская ССР*, Госполитиздат, Москва 1963, pp. 210; *Итоги Всесоюзной переписи насе-*

Table 1. Dynamics of the National Population Structure of Donbas
(Absolute data [million people] and %)

Prefecture and the national structure of the population	Census 1959	Census 1970	Census 1979	Census 1989	Census 2001
Donetsk: total population:	4262,0	4891,9	5160,6	5311	4825,5
including:					
Ukrainians	2368,1/55,6	2596,8/53,0	2622,5/50,8	2693,4/50,7	2744/56,9
Russians	1601,2/37,6	1987,2/40,6	2225,3/43,1	2316,0/43,6	1844,4/38,2
Greeks	93,2/2,2	93,9/1,9	90,5/1,7	83,6/1,6	77,5/1,6
Belarusians	63,3/1,5	77,8/1,6	75,8/1,5	76,9/1,4	44,5/0,9
Tatars	24,5/0,57	26,7/0,54	26,0/0,50	25,5/0,48	19,2/0,4
Lugansk: total population:	2542,2	2750,5	2786,7	2857,0	2540,2
including:					
Ukrainians	1416,3/57,7	1506,5/54,8	1472,7/51,2	1482,2/51,9	1472,3/58,0
Russians	950,0/38,7	1148,3/41,7	1222,0/43,8	1279,0/44,8	991,8/39,0
Greeks	25,8/1,0	36,1/1,3	33,5/1,2	33,5/1,2	20,6/0,8
Belarusians	12,6/0,51	12,8/0,5	12,4/0,4	11,0/0,4	
Tatars					

The table demonstrates a steady population growth in the two Donbas regions up to 2001 inclusive. At the same time we cannot but note a gradual slowdown. If we continue to calculate the table, we will monitor the highest rates of population growth in 1970 Census. Compared with the previous census in 1959 the number of inhabitants of Donetsk region increased by 629.9 thousand people or 14.8%. Lugansk region didn't show such rates. Here the number of residents grew by 208.3 thousand or by 8.2 %.

Among the total population the number of inhabitants of the indigenous nationality in Donetsk region increased by 228.7 thousand (9.6%), and in Lugansk – 90.2 thousand (6.3%). The share of the Ukrainians in 1970 was 53.0 % and 54.8 %, respectively. We will treat the last exponent with more precision as its comparison with the similar data for 1959 shows a decrease in the share of the Ukrainian population in the country. Reducing of the proportion of the Ukrainians for this period amounted in Donetsk region – 2.6 %, and in Lugansk – 2.9 %. The overall Donbas proportion of the Ukrainians decreased by 1.1 %. Thus, 1970 is the year when the

ния 1970 года. Миграция населения. Число и состав семей в СССР/ ЦСУ СССР, Статистика Москва 1974, pp. 455; *Итоги Всесоюзной переписи населения 1979 года*, т. IV: Национальный состав населения СССР, часть 2: Распределение населения отдельных национальностей СССР по полу, возрасту, языку, состоянию в браке и уровню образования; *Национальный состав населения СССР. По данным Всесоюзной переписи населения 1989 г.*, Статистика, Москва 1991, pp. 158; *Итоги Всеукраинской переписи населения 2001 г.*, <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua>.

census recorded a quantitative growth of the Ukrainians in the total population and, at the same time, reducing their share. During this decade, there was also an increase in the number of national minorities. In Donetsk region the number of representatives of the Greek nationality increased by 0.7 million people (0.7%). However their share decreased from 2.2% to 1.9%. We can see an analogous situation with the number of the Tatar population. In quantitative terms we note an increase of 2.2 million people (8.9%). Their share decreased from 0.57 % to 0.54%. The Belarusian minority increased by 14.5 thousand (22.9%), but its share in the total population did not decrease, as in the Greek and Tatar minorities but increased by one percent – from 1.5% to 1.6%.

During this period in Lugansk region the Belarusian and Tatar minorities also increased: 10.3 million (39.9%) and 0.2 million (1.6%), respectively. The share of the Belarusians in the total population increased by 3%, and the Tatars, on the contrary, decreased by one-hundredth. However, the latter can not be taken into account, as this value is within the allowable error.

So, the majority of the national minorities, who lived in Donbas, demonstrate positive dynamics in terms of quantitative growth and in terms of their share in the total population. Slight deviations in the direction of decreasing can hardly be the evidence of the emergence of a threat to each of these minorities.

The Russian minority, according to the quantitative side of the issue and its growth rate was less than the indigenous nation just in its share in the total population. During the time which elapsed from the first post-war census the growth rate of the Russians exceeds that of the quantitative growth of the Ukrainians. In Donbas the Ukrainian population increased quantitatively from 3784.4 to 4103.3 thousand people, that is by 7.8% (9.6% in Donetsk region and 6.4% in Lugansk region), the number of the Russians for this time there grew by 22.9 % (24.1 % in Donetsk and 20.8% in Lugansk regions).

Despite the quantitative growth of the Ukrainian population, its share decreased in Donetsk region from 55.6 % to 53.0 % (2.6%) and from 57.7 % to 54.8 % (2.9 %) in Lugansk region. In general, in Donbas the share of the Ukrainians in the total population decreased from 55.6 % to 54.5 %, that is by 1.1%. Obviously, such difference in the growth rates of the Ukrainians (7.8%) and the Russians (18.6%) in Donbas could hardly bring other results.

The excess of the Russian population growth over the Ukrainian more than twice does not require any comment, but needs clarification of its reasons. First of all, pay attention to the corresponding figures about Ukraine, which, in our opinion, emphasize the peculiarities of formation of the national structure in Donbas in its Russian component.⁹

⁹ *Переписи населения Украинской ССР 1959, 1970, 1979, 1989 гг.; Перший Всеукраїнський перепис населення 2001 р.*, <http://likbez.org.ua>.

Table 2. Changes in the Main National Structure of Ukraine

Prefecture and the national structure of the population	Census 1959	Census 1970	Census 1979	Census 1989	Census 2001
	absolute data (million people) and %				
Ukraine: total population: including:	51, 452	48, 240	49, 609	51, 452	48, 240
Ukrainians	37, 4 1/72,7	35,28/74,9	36,48/73,6	37,4/72,7	37,5/77,8
Russians	11.,35/22,0	9,126/19,4	10, 47/21,1	11,35/22,1	8,43/17,3
others	2,67/5,2	2.,71/5,7	2,64/5,3	2,67/5,2	2,36/4,9

The table shows that as opposed to Donbas, where the rate of increase in the number of persons of the indigenous nationality dropped, in the all-Ukrainian scale the figures remained within the limits of fluctuations, which do not cause any alarm. In the same condition was the Russian minority in Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Essentially, the reduction of the share of Ukrainian citizens of the Russian nationality took place only in the years of independence and amounted to 4.8%, which in absolute data compared to the previous census was just over 2.9 million people.

Returning to the issue of the preferential growth of the Russians in the national structure of Donbas, it should be noted, that it is not as simple as it may seem at first glance. One can, of course, boil it down to the infamous Russification underlying the national policy of the totalitarian state, where there is no dividing line between the objective and subjective components of the problem. However, imputing all the “sins” of the national policy solely to the totalitarianism is unlikely to bring us closer to the truth. Publication volume does not allow us to fully disclose the reasons for this phenomenon.

So, out of the whole list of possibilities we select only the aspect of migration directed from the Soviet republics to Ukraine in general and to Donbas in particular. That is why from a long list of problems we highlight only the aspect of migration, directed from the Union republics to Donbas. As the basis for the calculation were used the materials of the population census of 1970.

The census enlisted among the migrants those who lived in the area less than two years. Thus, for two years by 1970 52844 persons migrated to Donetsk region from other republics, and 76445 – to the territory of Lugansk. All of them came from the Russian Federation, the Byelorussian SSR, the Kazakh SSR and other Soviet republics. Totally 129 285 people came over the suggested period. At a first glance, the figure is not impressive, as it makes only 1.72 % of the total population of the region. But on closer examination the impression changes.

If we consider that more than 10 years passed since the previous census, and take into account the biennial census of qualification, the number of arrivals from

the above listed republics could be increased in 5 times. In this case the number of people, who had come for permanent residence to Donbas by 1970, did not make up 129 thousand people but about 650 thousand people, it made 8.6% of its total population. At the same time, an increase in the number of persons of Ukrainian nationality during the same period amounted to 319 thousand people.

Certainly, there was a reverse flow, but it is unlikely it was greater than the one going to Donbas and Ukraine in general. Furthermore, it is obvious that this potential outflow was more than offset by childbirths in Russian families who arrived from the RSFSR and other Soviet republics. These findings are of fundamental importance for our study, as they indicate the scale of migration to Donbas.

If we continue to calculate the increase of the number of the Ukrainian and Russian population in Donbas using the above table, we will get the following results: numerical increase of the Ukrainians in the 1970 census, compared to 1959, was 7.8%. In 1979, compared to 1970, was 0.2%, in 1989, compared to 1979, 1.9%. At the same time, the growth in the number of people, who considered themselves to be ethnic Russians, amounted to 18.6%, 9.0%, 4.3%, respectively. Thus, the average increase in the number of the Ukrainians for the entire period was 3.3%, and the Russians – 10.6%.

These calculations require rethinking of some stereotypes. First of all, obviously, the linguistic meaning of the notion “russification” should be clarified. As a rule, this notion refers to the Soviet period of Ukrainian history, and it means a forced imposition of the Russian language often for account of the national language’s supplanting. We do not fundamentally object to this interpretation, but still consider it incomplete, because it includes only the exogenous part of the problem, brought by the power. But there is the other half of the problem – the endogenous one, originating directly from an individual. This part takes into account the impact of both external and internal motives. Therefore, the endogenous factor seems more significant. In the given case this may relate to the language. Being under the influence of certain motives, a citizen can choose the language suitable for him. Can this choice be made to the prejudice of the national identity? It bids fair, since a language is a part of it.

The objective side of the issue requires clarification of the complex of reasons for such a high level of migration to Ukraine by the Russians and other nationalities for whom the Russian language became a means of international communication. Obviously, first it is necessary to examine the economic potential of the regions from which they moved to Donbas. The very list of Donbas “donor areas”, which is given in the census, can lead us to the assumption that the Russians and Russian-speaking people came here from other republics in search of jobs, decent wages and more or less tolerable food supply, that is, the benefits they lacked in their home areas. Probably we should recall that Donbas entered into the category of food supply, which was nearly the same as for the capital cities. Our conclusion could be proven by the fact that, for example, a sharp de-

terioration in the economic situation in the 1990s led to a significant outflow of the Russians.

Thus, during the entire postwar period the migration of the Russians and Russian-speaking population to Donbas could be easily observed. This tendency could not remain unnoticed by the Ukrainian authorities, and therefore it had to be in the sphere of their attention. The authorities couldn't fail to become alerted because of a rather high percentage of the Russians in Donetsk and Lugansk regions, they made 38.2% and 39.0%, respectively. Having added to these figures the predominant use of the Russian language in the regions, the situation became even more alarming. But in the 1950s–1990s the Ukrainian authorities, being under the pressure of the Party's postulate on the convergence of nations and peoples in the period of Communism building, did not consider that tendency to be a threat to the society.

For the community known as the “Soviet people”, which was actively promoted by the Party, indeed, there was no threat, but for the Ukrainian nation it was rather real. However, in 2001 the first all-Ukrainian population census showed enough optimistic data. 67.5% of the population considered the Ukrainian language to be native. Taking into account the multinational character of the state, the result of the census was rather good. But in Donetsk and Lugansk regions the situation was critical. In these regions the Ukrainian language was admitted as a native one by 24.1% and 30.0% of citizens, respectively.

The situation was even more threatening in the prism of influence of the national minority's language, albeit the most numerous one, on the citizens of Ukrainian nationality. The extent of this influence can't but surprise. It is proved by the following table.¹⁰

Table 3. The Russian Language in the Choice of the Native Language by the Ukrainians in Donbas

Distribution of the population according to the place of residence	Total population (absolute data and %)	Including the Ukrainians (absolute data and %)	Including those, who recognized the Ukrainian language as native (absolute data and %)	Including those, who recognized the Russian language as native (absolute data and %)
Donetsk region				
<i>city / town</i>	4363,6/90,1	2391,5/54,8	852,6/35,6	1536,6/64,2
<i>village</i>	480,2/9,9	352,6/73,4	276,8/78,5	75,6/21,4
Lugansk region				
<i>city / town</i>	2190,8/86,0	1213,0/55,4	520,2/42,9	690,5/56,9
<i>village</i>	355,4/13,9	259,3/73,0	222,4/85,8	36,9/14,2

¹⁰ Based on the data: Державний комітет статистики, *Всеукраїнський перепис населення 2001 г. Розподіл населення за національністю та мовою. Все населення, обидві статі. Донецька та Луганська області*, <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua>.

We have intentionally divided this impact into two directions: in a city / town and in a village. Both regions are approximately equal. The share of the Ukrainians is approximately the same here. From among these citizens only 35.6% of urban residents in Donetsk region recognized the Ukrainian language as the native one and 42.9% – in Lugansk region. In rural areas there were 78.5% and 85.8%, respectively. These figures can indicate a very low level of national identification of the Ukrainians in Donbas. If we consider a language as an important factor of self-identification of a nation, the situation is as follows. The Russian language was recognized as native by 64.2% of city / town dwellers of Ukrainian nationality in Donetsk region and 56.9% – in Lugansk region. The villagers – 21.4% and 14.2%, respectively. Remind, that it was the first decade of Ukrainian independence, when the Law “On the Languages in the Ukrainian SSR” had already been adopted. Article 2 of that Law provided “a comprehensive development and functioning of the Ukrainian language in all the spheres of public life”.¹¹

If we consider the national structure of Donbas and its language component in the focus of the hybrid war, it is impossible not to recognize that the estimations of its initiators were absolutely accurate. The region with a low national identity and populated by citizens who have close relationship with the citizens of the aggressor country was more than a convenient object of invasion. It is doubtful that it was a great discovery for someone.

Referring to the authority of our colleagues-philologists, we should note, that they do not exclude the formation of language alliances: “If the languages have different origins, but a historical process sent the native speakers to the same cultural and geographic area, sooner or later they form the so-called language union...”¹²

In our view these are the basic premises of invasion and creation of the quasi-states on the territory of Donetsk and Lugansk regions, arising from the peculiarities of their national structure. It is the national structure, similar in composition to the country-aggressor, and the same languages of communication have made Donbas susceptible to aggression more than any other region of the country. Outside of our attention were left the activities of the Ukrainian authorities directed at leveling of the above mentioned prerequisites. By the account they failed to prevent the aggression, it is rather difficult to call those activities a success. Moreover, according to the data of sociologists (December, 2014) 23.3% of residents in Donetsk region supported the “DNR”.¹³ Though it is the topic for the next article, it should be noted, that this figure is the refrain for the Ukrainian authorities.

¹¹ Закон Української Радянської Соціалістичної республіки “Про мови в Українській РСР”. Вводиться в дію Постановою Верховної ради № 8313 від 28.10.1989 р., <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/8312-11>.

¹² Г. Старостин, *Как создается единая классификация языков мира?*, <https://culturelandshaft.wordpress.com/великий-и-могучий/как-создается-единая-классификация-я>.

¹³ *Такой разный Юго-Восток*, opros2014.zn.ua.