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Anti-National Population Policy in the Ukrainian SSR during the 1960s–1970s: The Titular Nation of Ukraine as an Example

Abstract: The article studies the anti-national population policy of the USSR taking as the example the titular nation of Ukraine during the 1960s–1970s. The author investigates inner republican effects of migration (increasing the number of mixed marriages and the displacement of the Ukrainian language by Russian) and studies official statistics – Union censuses in 1959, 1970, and 1979 which allow a comparative analysis of the dynamics of the Ukrainians and territorial distribution in different regions of the republic.

The author has found that in the outlined period the USSR government always created anti-Ukrainian background at all levels, which formed a widespread anti-national population policy of Russification and assimilation of the Ukrainians; there was an artificial formation of national-ethnic structure of the Ukrainian SSR and forcing international convergence to create a “single Soviet people”. Any statement or reference to Ukrainian national problems was regarded as a ground for harassment and persecution by the Soviet authorities and accusation of “Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism”. It has been proved that Ukrainians were the dominant nation almost throughout the USSR in the outlined period. The number of Ukrainians increased exclusively through natural population growth, while the number of representatives of the Russian nation increased as a result of internal migration. The article presents the idea that Ukraine was one of the centers of accumulation of immigration flows in the Soviet Union, and because of this fact the multicultural Ukrainian SSR society, which basically constituted of Ukrainians, gradually turned into a bi-national society, where the Ukrainian majority coexisted with the continuously growing Russian minority. Resettlements were carried out primarily for political reasons and their aim was to deprive the native people of their national characteristics – language, culture, and the like. Demographic, economic, and social processes that were spread under the slogan of “internationalist aid” substantially changed the proportion of native and settled populations in some regions.

Keywords: demographic policy, migration, titular nation, the Ukrainians, population dynamics, territorial location, assimilation, denationalization, Russification

The Soviet government during the 1960s–1970s carried out an anti-national population policy, which was not favorable to the growth of national consciousness of the Ukrainian people and the restoration of traditional family values of the

Ukrainian nation. There was an artificial emigration of Ukrainians outside the place of their residence. Thus, representatives of the titular nation, Ukrainians, migrated to Siberia, Kazakhstan, the Far East, etc. They were mostly replaced by Russians who settled in the Ukrainian towns and villages, especially in the East and South of Ukraine, while there was no proper analysis of contradictions generated by the divergence of interests of different nations.

When Ukraine obtained independence, favorable conditions were created for the free study of the Soviet past of the Ukrainian people considering their history and the preservation of national identity. Therefore, a comprehensive study of the anti-national population policy in the USSR on the example of the titular nation of Ukraine during the 1960s–1970s is extremely important and requires special approach because today it is crucial to recover the gene pool of the Ukrainian nation destroyed by the communist regime, promote the growth of national consciousness of the Ukrainian people, provide state education of the young generation in the spirit of traditional values of the Ukrainian state and nation, and teach the mother tongue, culture, and customs. This will improve the demographic situation in Ukraine, which, unfortunately, is not the best in the world.

The question of the anti-national population policy in the Ukrainian SSR during the second half of the twentieth century is partially covered in the writings of such authors as: A. Voronko¹, J. Hyrych², V. Ivanyshyna³, V. Sklyar⁴, G. Stetsenko⁵, I. Subotina⁶, A. Tyevikova⁷, S. Chorny⁸, and others. The scientists

¹ О. Воронко, *Загальний аналіз особливостей демографічних процесів у Чернігівській області в 50–70-х років ХХ ст. (за даними Всесоюзних переписів населення 1959, 1970, 1979 рр.)*, Сіверянський літопис 2002, no. 6, pp. 59–61.

² Я.М. Гирич, *Демографічна політика та розвиток міських поселень УРСР (60-ті рр. ХХ ст.)*, Шевченківські дні – 2009. Історія: матеріали Міжнар. наук.-практ. конф. молодих учених, Київ 2009, pp. 25–27; idem, *Урбанізація в Україні за даними Всесоюзного перепису населення 15 січня 1959 року*, Грані, Дніпропетровськ 2009, no. 5 (67), pp. 19–24.

³ В. Іванишина, *Динаміка демографічних процесів на Чернігівщині в 60-і рр. ХХ ст. (за даними Всесоюзних переписів населення 1959, 1970 рр.)*, Сіверянський літопис 2003, no. 1, pp. 106–109.

⁴ В.М. Скляр, *Зміни національного складу та мовної структури населення України за 1959–1989 рр.*: дис. канд. іст. наук: 09.00.12, Київський національний університет імені Т.Г. Шевченка, Київ 2001.

⁵ Г.С. Стеценко, *Демографічна статистика*, Київ 2005.

⁶ І.В. Суботина, *Соціально-демографічні процеси в Україні у другій половині ХХ – на початку ХХІ ст.*: дис. кандидата іст. наук: 07.00.01, Чернігівський державний педагогічний університет імені Т.Г. Шевченка, Чернігів 2008.

⁷ О.В. Тевікова, *Повсякденне життя громадян УРСР: соціальні та культурні аспекти (1953–1964 роки)*: дис. кандидата іст. наук: 07.00.01, Полтавський національний педагогічний університет імені В. Г. Короленка, Полтава 2010.

⁸ С. Чорний, *Національний склад населення України в ХХ сторіччі: довідник*, Київ 2001.

focused only on separate aspects of the subject, including density, areal distribution, and dynamics of gender and age structure of the population of the USSR, the demographic consequences of urbanization, population, location of the ethnic groups, class structure of the Soviet Ukraine, and state regulation of migration processes in the USSR. However, in the scientific literature the topic remains understudied. This enables us to continue working in this promising area.

Consequently, the focus of this article is placed on the anti-national population policy research in the USSR with the example of the titular nation of Ukraine during the 1960s–1970s, showing the artificial formation of the national-ethnic composition of the Ukrainian SSR, finding the consequences of inner migration processes in the delineated period, and the study of official statistics – Union censuses in 1959, 1970, and 1979, which give us the opportunity to conduct a comparative analysis of population dynamics and areal distribution of Ukrainians in different regions of the republic.

In the late 1950s the growing number of Ukrainians almost ceased to “grow”. The main reasons that led to this extremely negative demographic situation include: the Famine of 1932–1933 (*Golodomor*), Stalin’s repressions, the scope of which is particularly striking when it comes to the fate of Ukrainians, the Second World War, the post-war famine effect of the “demographic death” (during famine and war millions of young Ukrainians, who did not give birth to offspring, were killed), migration and deportation, etc. In all European countries censuses were held in one to three years after the war, unlike in the Soviet Union, where they intended to neutralize the real population losses in the war years, and the first All-Union post-war census was held in 1959.

Since the All-Union census in 1926 to the All-Union census in 1959 the number of Ukrainians for 33 years has increased only by 1.5 million with the dynamics of growth of 4,1%, well below the 47,3% growth of the Ukrainian population in 1926⁹. By the 1960s, the number of Ukrainians had increased by more than 3 million people, but during the 1970s the increase was much lower – 1.2 million people¹⁰. This is primarily due to the aggravation of the demographic situation in the USSR and a sharp decrease in the natural population growth in general. Another reason for this rapid growth is the number of representatives of other nationalities, especially Russians and Belarusians. From 1959 to 1970 the share of Ukrainians has increased by 9,7%, while Russians and Belarusians – by 28,7% and 32,6%

⁹ В. Панченко, “Нас могло бути більше: геноцид України мовою цифр”, День 16.10.2003, <http://www.day.kiev.ua/uk/article/podrobici/nas-moglo-buti-bilshhe>.

¹⁰ І.В. Суботіна, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

respectively¹¹. It should be also noted that during the 1960s–1970s the number of representatives of the titular nation of Ukraine increased only through natural growth of the population, while Russians and Belarusians – as a result of migration. Russians assimilated the Soviet population as a whole, and, consequently, there was a consistent increase in the proportion of Russians with a simultaneous decrease in the share of Ukrainians in the republic. In the years 1959–1969 the intensity of emigration of Russians to Ukraine amounted to 1.1 million people¹².

The representatives of the Russian nation were the second largest national group in Ukraine and lived mainly in urban areas. Thus, in 1959 the proportion of urban residents among them was 80,8%¹³. The largest numbers of Russians were recorded in Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Crimea, Luhansk, and Kharkiv regions and the city of Kiev. In Crimea at the beginning of the 1960s the Russian population was 3.2 times larger than the Ukrainian one, in the Transcarpathian and Chernivtsi regions they were the third largest national group – after Ukrainians and Hungarians and Ukrainian and Romanians¹⁴. Overall, the increase of Russians in Ukraine in the years 1959–1969 amounted to 56,7% of the total population of the republic¹⁵. Even in Chernihiv, Zhytomyr, and Rivne regions, dominated by Belarus, in Lviv and Volyn – Poles, and Odessa – Moldovans, Russians had more representatives than the ethnic groups mentioned above¹⁶. In 1970, at the time of “developed socialism” in the USSR, Ukrainians numbered 40.7 million people and Russians – 129 million, the trend is clear: if in 1926 the Ukrainian and the Russian population increased almost proportionally (the Ukrainian population growth was marginally larger), from 1959 to 1970 the picture changed dramatically¹⁷. This situation was not the result of objective natural processes, but can be explained by internal and external policies of the Soviet state, which officially stimulated a change of the ratio of the Ukrainian and the Russian population in the country, and this, in turn, confirms the artificial formation of the national composition of Ukraine.

During the 1960s–1970s in all regions of the Eastern Ukrainian SSR region and in the South, particularly in Odessa, Kherson, and Mykolaiv regions, the

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 82.

¹² А.В. Топилин, *Влияние миграции на этнонациональную структуру*, Социс 1992, no. 7, p. 36.

¹³ В.І. Наулко, *Етнічний склад населення Української РСР. Статистико-картографічне дослідження*, Київ 1965.

¹⁴ І.В. Суботіна, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

¹⁵ В.М. Скляр, *op. cit.*, p.75.

¹⁶ І.В. Суботіна, *op. cit.*, p.85.

¹⁷ В. Панченко, *op. cit.*

absolute and relative number of Russians grew at a great pace, but still slower than the Ukrainian population. This situation is the result of inner migration and the large influx of labor to industrial areas of the republic¹⁸. In the certificates of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the main direction of rural workers – from the West to the South¹⁹ – was clearly defined. Considering the fact that more than 90% of the rural residents of Western Ukraine were Ukrainian, we can assume that they dominated among the newly arrived farmers in the southern region of the republic. Thus, according to the official figures of the Union census in 1959 the share of Ukrainians in the Odessa region was 55,8% of the total population of the region²⁰, in 1970 – 54,9%²¹, and in 1979 – 54,7%²². However, migration of residents from Ukrainian villages, especially young people, led to the depopulation and desolation of many Western villages and reduction of natality. Another negative consequence is that the majority of rural youth arriving in the cities quickly adapted to the Russified urban population, thus getting rid of provincial or private Ukrainian features. The perception of the Ukrainian language as a “rustic, uncultured, secondary language” forced many people to use Russian as a language of communication. The Soviet dissident I. Dziuba, analyzing the situation in the country, stated that due to active migration of peasants who spoke “good Ukrainian language”, “had a chance to ukrainize the land”, but “there was left no trace of Ukrainian-speaking environment”²³. Head of the Department of Science and Culture of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine Iu. Kondufor (1958–1968) noticed that most of the students of the Ukrainian branch of Kiev University before entering the University lived in rural regions and spoke only Ukrainian, but during their studies at the University

¹⁸ Центральний державний архів вищих органів влади та управління України, Ф. 4626. Державний комітет Української РСР по праці, Оп. 3. Т. 1. (1955–1967 рр.), Спр. 281. Переписка ЦК КП України и Совета Министров Украинской ССР по вопросам выполнения планов организованного набора рабочих и переселения по УССР за 1961 год. Т.1. (2.01–29.05.1961), Арк. 104.

¹⁹ Центральний державний архів вищих органів влади та управління України, Ф. 4626. Державний комітет Української РСР по праці, Оп. 3. Т. 1. (1955–1967 рр.), Спр. 281. Переписка ЦК КП України и Совета Министров Украинской ССР по вопросам выполнения планов организованного набора рабочих и переселения по УССР за 1961 год. Т.1. (2.01–29.05.1961), Арк. 104.

²⁰ *Итоги Всесоюзной переписи населения 1959 года*, Москва 1963.

²¹ *Итоги Всесоюзной переписи населения 1970 г.*, Т. Национальный состав населения СССР, Ч.1, Кн. 2, Москва 1972.

²² *Население СССР: По данным Всесоюзной переписи населения 1979 г.*, Москва 1980.

²³ І. Дзюба, *Спогади і роздуми на фінішній прямій*, Рукопис: Український альманах спогадів, щоденників, листів, документів, світлин: у 2 т., Київ 2004, Т. 1. р. 88.

changed their language to Russian and actively used it in everyday life²⁴. In his judgment, the reason for such a regrettable situation was a certain inferiority complex felt by the Ukrainian-speaking students.

It should be also noted that because of the centralized, controlled from the city of Moscow, division of personnel in all Soviet republics, many Ukrainian experts were forced to work outside the country. Great Ukrainian movement contributed to the Resolution of the CM USSR and the CPSU “On the increase of grain production at the expense of the development of virgin and fallow lands” of 27 March 1954 and other decisions that led to organized recruitment and sending Ukrainians to arid zones of the eastern USSR²⁵. Such resettlements were conducted primarily for political reasons and were aimed at making the people lose their national characteristics – language, culture, and so on.

To solve the issues of labor migration the state created a special department – the Department of Organized Recruitment of Workers and Migrations in the Republic of Moldova SSR, and locally – regional departments of employment of workers and relocation in the Executive Committee. Supporting institutions in this process were different companies, institutions, and Komsomol organizations. Ukrainian labor emigration mainly was directed at pioneering and industrial construction. This was accompanied by a large-scale propaganda campaign launched by the media, including the radio, the television, and the press²⁶. Migrants were encouraged by privileges and the ability to earn more. Such prospects especially interested young families that had insufficient or unreliable means of securing family income. However, Ukrainian migration in underdeveloped and industrial regions outside the Ukrainian SSR was associated not only with material needs and difficult economic situation in the country, but also the party of patriotism, faith in ideals, and appeals of the CPSU–CPU to meet the needs of the Soviet people in food production. Overall, during the years 1954–1959 this kind of mass transfers involved nearly 500 thousand Ukrainians²⁷.

²⁴ Центральний державний архів громадських об'єднань України, Ф. 1. ЦК КПУ, Оп. 24, Спр. 5295. Справки секретаря ЦК КПУ отдела науки и культуры ЦК КПУ, постановления, письма обкомов КПУ и других организаций о состоянии учебно-воспитательной работы в высших учебных заведениях, о работе высших учебных заведений (нач. 6 января 1961 г. – ок. 15 августа 1961 г.), Арк. 29.

²⁵ *Директивы КПСС и Советского правительства по хозяйственным вопросам*, Vol. 4: 1953–1957 годы, Москва 1958.

²⁶ *Підняття цілинних земель – наша рідна справа*, Радянська Україна 1954, 21 лютого, р. 2.

²⁷ С. Улановський, *Про так звані «дрібниці» колгоспного побуту*, Соціалістична Харківщина 1954, 20 серпня, р. 3.

Due to the absence of opportunities for preserving the national identity and satisfying national and cultural needs (national schools, the press or professional cultural institutions) all newcomers generations of Ukrainian workers were constantly Russified and their children who were born outside the homeland mostly became “Russians”, while the Ukrainian identity was preserved usually among persons born in Ukraine. Large scale labor migration flows contributed to an artificial Ukrainian leadership of Russians in the ethnic composition of the Ukrainian SSR and reducing the number of Ukrainians and this in its turn suppressed and led to the loss of national identity, belonging, spirituality, rapidly accelerating linguistic and ethnic assimilation of Ukrainians.

While doing the research on the anti-national population policy in the Ukrainian SSR during the 1960s–1970s one needs to pay attention to the language issue included in the All-Union census questionnaires of the outlined period. According to the official census in 1959, the Russian language was called a native language by 10.3 million people (including 6.9 mln Russians and 2 mln Ukrainians), and in 1970 this figure reached 13.4 mln people (8.9 mln Russians and 3 mln Ukrainians)²⁸. Unfortunately, the Ukrainian language was native only to the Poles, because during both censuses 68% of the nation called Ukrainian their native language, while the other nationalities tended to be Russified²⁹. This is not surprising because the Russian language for many centuries was the state language, not subjected to harassment and was considered “promising”, which is why it has not been the object of denationalization. The wish to speak Russian was caused primarily by its priority position: most books, journals, newspapers, and scientific literature were published in Russian. Learning Russian was more profitable and promising, it was easier to enter higher education institutions, perform military service, work in office, and make a career. This led to the spread of using the Russian language in everyday life and an increase in the number of Russian-speaking Ukrainians. The Ukrainian language dominated in Vinnytsia, Zhytomyr, Kirovohrad, Poltava, Sumy, Chernihiv, and Khmelnytsky regions, where it was spoken by 80% of the population (mainly in the rural regions)³⁰. The Western Ukraine was mostly the Ukrainian-speaking part of the country. However, it is difficult to make accurate conclusions about the Ukrainian national identity of this period. In the census of 1959 citizens of the USSR determined their native language by answering the questions formulated as follows: “What language do you think is your mother lan-

²⁸ В. Романцов, *Населення України і його рідна мова за часів радянської влади та незалежності (XX – початок XXI століття)*, Київ 2008.

²⁹ Ibidem, op. cit., p. 38.

³⁰ О.В. Тевікова, op. cit., p. 148.

guage?” but not, for example, “Which language do you know better?” or “What language do you use in everyday life?”, that is, those who call Ukrainian their native language, in real life could use it rarely or not at all³¹.

One should pay attention to the fact that an increase of mixed marriages played a great role in the process of the socio-demographic “splitting” of the Ukrainian people in the USSR. If in the beginning of the 20th century only 3% of Ukrainians entered into mixed marriages, while in 1970 – about 20%³², and in the beginning of the 1960s in Ukraine 15,9% of the total number of marriages were mixed marriages³³. They have become a successful method of changing the language and Ukrainian national structure, because children born in mixed marriages preferred a more “prestigious” ethnicity, choosing the nationality of a parent who had higher social, cultural or ethnic status in the society and in most cases considered themselves Russians or Russian-speaking Ukrainians. This situation contributed to assimilation and denationalization of the younger generation of Ukrainians and threatened the national future.

So, considering the above, one can make the conclusion that the Soviet leadership under the slogan of “prosperity and rapprochement between nations in the USSR”, “formation of a new historical community” – the “Soviet people” carried out the policy of denationalization of Ukrainians. During the 1960s–1970s the USSR multicultural society based on Ukrainians, as a result of strong migration of Russians, gradually turned into two-nation society where the majority of Ukrainians coexisted with the continuously growing Russian minority. Migration processes continuing for a long time slowly but steadily changed the social structure of Ukraine.

The number of representatives of the Russian nation (as absolute and relative), continuously increased; the proportion of Russians in 1959 accounted for 16,9% of the total population of the USSR, while in 1970 this figure increased to 19,3%. Compared to other nations, Russians became a significant factor in assimilation and Russification of Ukraine’s indigenous population and artificial formation of the national and ethnic composition.

The national policy of the Soviet ruling elite and power managed inner migration processes actually caused a process of depopulation of the Ukrainian nation. The main reasons that caused population losses of the Ukrainian ethnic group in the studied period include: the mass exodus of Ukrainians for the development of

³¹ Ibidem, op. cit., p. 148.

³² В.И. Наулко, *Развитие межэтнических связей на Украине: историко-этнографический очерк*, Київ 1975.

³³ О.В. Тевікова, op. cit., p. 61.

virgin lands in Kazakhstan, construction of large industrial facilities in the Russian Far East, the growing number of mixed marriages, purposeful settlement of Russians in all regions of the USSR, the displacement of the Ukrainian language by Russian, and emigration of Ukrainians abroad caused by political and religious motives. Thus, the anti-national population policy of the USSR during the 1960s–1970s caused assimilation of a significant part of the Ukrainian population and weakened its national and self-identity.