

UKRAINIAN MINORITY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: ETHNIC, NATIONAL OR EUROPEAN IDENTITY?

ANZHELIKA KLAYZNER

Since new EU member states, particularly Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) countries – Ukraine's neighbours – reach a new stage of their development the European communities' unification naturally changes their inner structures. These changes are characterized by intensification of civil society formation process and development of democratic basis which are typical for highly developed European states.

Thus, for the future European society and particularly for Central and Eastern European countries – neighbors of Ukraine, the solving of theoretical and practical problems concerning ethnic minorities is of particular importance, especially for minimizing the threats and risks existing in this sphere. According to European standards, minorities' rights require constant elaboration of political decisions and practical instruments, taking into account multicultural aspects of the present day situation and assisting minorities' self-definition. The most important component of these processes has been waves of migration and the growth of local, regional, ethnic, religious movements.

As far as Ukrainian minorities in the CEE countries are concerned the formation of Ukraine as an independent state and its international cooperation in ethnic problems solving gives the possibility to foreign Ukrainians fully realize their minority rights. However, the process of foreign Ukrainians assimilation increasingly develops.

The assimilation of Ukrainian population in the CEE countries is caused by external (dispersal residing, international marriages, segmentation of minority, negative historical stereotypes, economical, educational, mass-media problems, etc.) and internal factors. The latter includes low level of both ethnic self-awareness and group consolidation: needless to say, the formation, stability and change of identity should be regarded as a result of person's decision. As the ties with the core of Ukrainian ethnos are weak the inner motivation for keeping the Ukrainian minority as a single ethnic society weakens. The factors of surroundings, citizenship and orientation on the residence state become dominative. As a result, the minority self-identification is foisted by political and social surroundings.

The results of the recent population censuses in the countries concerned are examples of national identification of Ukrainian minority. The analysis of these censuses, as compared to churches and non-governmental organizations statistical data, shows significant disparity of Ukrainian population amount.

Beneath the examples of some population censuses as well as churches and other statistical and/or non-governmental organizations data are given:

- 1 In the beginning of the 90s the Ukrainians in *Poland* have been concerned to number 300–350 thousands: in 1993 Parliament Research Administration of Republic of Poland stated that there were 250–350 thousands of Ukrainians in the state.¹ In 1997 the Group on Minorities Rights counted even 350–500 thousands of Ukrainians.² At the same time, according to the estimates of the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic churches, the Ukrainian parishioners amount to average several hundreds of thousands.³ However the national population census gave the number of 27,172 thousands of ethnic Ukrainians and 5,6 thousands of Lemkos (ethnographic group of Ukrainians).⁴
- 2 Since the government of the *Slovak Republic* recognized the Rusyns as a separate nationality the assimilation of Ukrainian population in this country increased while the number of Rusyns rose: According to the Slovak Republic national population census data in 1991 Rusyns numbered 17197 persons, Ukrainians – 13281, while in 2001 року в Словаччині Rusyns numbered 24201 persons, Ukrainians – 10814.⁵
- 3 According to the Hungarian population census in 1990, 674 Ukrainians and Rusyns have lived in *Hungary*.⁶ However the Association of Ukrainian Culture to Hungary states Ukrainians in this country to number from 3000 to 6000 persons.⁷ The last national population census data contains 5070 Ukrainians and 1090 Rusyns in the Hungarian Republic.⁸

¹S. Lodzinski. *Poland's Policy towards National Minorities 1989–1993*. – Warsaw, 1994.

²World Directory of Minorities/ By Minority Rights Group. London.

³М.Стріха. Польща: українське “вікно в Європу” чи європейський мур перед Азією? // Критика-Коментарі, 7 листопада 2002 р.// <http://www.krytyka.kiev.ua/>

⁴Ethnic and National Minorities in Poland http://www.mswia.gov.pl/eng_mn_narod_1_list.html.

⁵Population and Housing Census 2001. Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic http://www.statistics.sk/webdata/english/struk_a/census.htm.

⁶Контакти між людьми та питання етнічних меншин у відносинах між Україною та Угорщиною. / Розширення Європейського Союзу: вплив на відносини України з центрально-європейськими сусідами / Інститут регіональних та євро інтеграційних досліджень “ЄвроРегіо Україна”. – К., 2004.

⁷Хортяні Я. Із своєї дороги не зійдемо! // http://www.ukrajinci.hu/kisebbsseg_tabl.htm.

⁸Hungary National and Ethnic Groups http://www.magyarorszag.hu/angol/orszaginfor/orszaginfor/etnikum/nemzetisegek_a.html.

- 4 The Ukrainian minority in *Romania*, in accordance with the last population census in 1992, numbers more than 67 thousands of persons.⁹ At the same time the Union of Ukrainians in Romania consider that the real number is approximately 250 thousands.¹⁰

There are many reasons of such a disparity like way of population census providing, segmentation of Ukrainian minority, although the main reason consists in the following: there is a tendency of concealment the real ethnicity and the unwillingness of Ukrainians to confess in common with the state being far from European model. While the possibility to identify themselves as the citizens of democratic European state and full members of high developed Europe seems to be a great temptation.

From this relational perspective, citizens of CEE states – EU members who at the same time are the ethnic minority representatives (in this case – Ukrainian one) cannot identify themselves with separate local, national or regional identity any longer. There occurs the whole system of several levels of identities:

- Level of ethnic-cultural identity,
- Level of local identity,
- Level of national identity,
- Level of regional identity,

Each national identity abides in continued interaction with other national groups and united European Union in general. Thus, the intertwining of European and national components in collective identities occurs. Moreover, identity no longer defined exclusively in reference to the nation or region but exhibit a variety of co-existing local-regional, ethnic-cultural and supranational communities alongside the national one.

Thus, we become the witnesses of the process of European identity formation. This identity comprises all levels of identities and, in essence, it becomes supranational. As far as foreign Ukrainians are concerned, this process, like anywhere in Europe, is irreversible. However it can be slowed down in the presence of at least two components – *“mother” state’s vigorous economical basis and the willingness of minority itself to preserve its national and cultural originality.*

Membership in the European Union heralds a very difficult dilemma for Ukrainians in the CEE countries. This has to do with the consequences of those countries’ membership for their border regime with Ukraine. Since CEE states

⁹Ethnic Minority Briefs www.divers.ro.

¹⁰Контакти між людьми та питання етнічних меншин у відносинах між Україною та Румунією. / Розширення Європейського Союзу: вплив на відносини України з центрально-європейськими сусідами / Інститут регіональних та євро інтеграційних досліджень “СвроРегіо Україна”. – К., 2004.

joined the EU, they joined its border regime. The Ukrainian diaspora in the countries mentioned has been separated from Ukraine by the eastern border of the European Union and visa regime. In this sense, the diaspora status of Ukrainians in CEE states became even sharper.

Membership in the EU will thus place Ukrainian minority in a very special position. On the one hand, Ukrainians who are citizens of the CEE states will have access to the right to travel and work freely within the EU, and the opportunity to resolve complicated questions of personal identity within the attractive framework of European integration. On the other hand, the very availability of these solutions further separates Ukrainians in the CEE – members of the EU from Ukrainians in Ukraine. The question will then become whether or not the Ukrainian diaspora can encourage their states to prevent the separation of Ukraine from the main current of European political life. *Whether Ukrainians on the other side of Ukraine see Europe as a means to escape Ukrainian questions, or as a way to repose them, is thus the question for the future.*