The Problem Of Ethnic Tolerance In The Modern Information Space

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Summary: *The article analyses the problems of ethnic tolerance in the Ukrainian information space. In particular, the author pays attention to multiethnic territories situated on cross-border.*
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The category of tolerance has become used scientifically only recently. However, the term is used broadly in different meanings and has a series of definitions in modern science. The way we understand tolerance today has been greatly influenced by European philosophers of the past. Among them, we should mention Voltaire, who criticised fanaticism and supported tolerance. As a result, the Declaration of the rights of Man and of the Citizen appeared in France. In turn, this document has become the precursor of modern declarations of human rights the result of which became the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

However, different national cultures understand tolerance differently in the modern world. In Ukraine and other East-Slavic states, for instance, tolerance has consolidated the meaning of being patient towards others' opinion and deeds. It is often connected with Christian dogmas of patience and obedience propagandised by the Orthodox Church.

The modern *Dictionary of foreign words* gives the definition of tolerance as follows: indulgence towards somebody, something [1, 895]. It is interesting that such a respectable edition as *The concise encyclopaedia of ethnic state science* gives the definitions of "ethnophobia" [2,694], "ethnic syndrome" [2, 55], "ethnic nostalgia" [2, 468], "ethnocide" [2, 694], "exceptionalism" [2, 780], and "chauvinism" [2, 818], but does not give the definition of the category of "ethnic tolerance".

The majority of scientists explain tolerance as respect and recognition of equality, rejection of domination and violence, recognition of the multidimensionality and diversity of human culture. Tolerance suggests the readiness to accept others as they are. It is the ability to communicate on the basis of mutual consent. At the same time, it does not presuppose the state of indifference, conformance or acting against one's will. In this context, the question of specificity of ethnic conflicts is essential and is directly connected with the phenomenon of ethnicity. Whether these conflicts are inherent to "the ethnic diversity of humanity or are they strictly functional" [3, 423]. Researchers claim that ethnicity is more often the expressive means of conflicts, rather than their essence. "So the Moldovans say, that they are not in conflict either with the Russians or the Ukrainians: there is a post-Soviet regime in Transnistria. Many consider the Chechen conflict to be not of interethnic nature but a criminal redistribution of property" [3, 423]. Taking into consideration the circumstances of the modern world, scientists of our northern neighbours actively track these processes [3, 4, 5]. It is important to understand the essence of ethnic tolerance in the conditions of the multidimensional and multi-vector human and ethnic relationships of the modern world. It presupposes one's own positive ethnic identity and respect towards other ethnic groups at the same time.

Scientists claim that "the behaviour of those people who belong to other cultures is not unpredictable; it can be studied and predicted. For this reason, one needs to be specially prepared for intercultural communication" [5, 264]. It should be noted that such attempts have been made in the multiethnic Crimea lately [6]. However, to our mind, it is not only the different teaching means and methods that play a vital role in the formation of constructive intercultural communication but also means of mass communication as well. The latter are among the most important communicational and influential canals.

As experience shows, "the formation of the rights of non-native ethnic groups in each country depends on the peculiarities of the legal system of the country, its form of government, state and administrative structure, historical traditions etc." [7, 267].

According to the All-Ukrainian census (December 5, 2001), 130 nationalities reside in Ukraine. Among these, the most populous is the Ukrainian ethnos – 37.5 million people (total 77.8%), the Russians comprise the second largest group – 8.3 million people (17.3%), the third place, previously occupied by the Jews, now is the Belarusians' – 275.8 thousand people, the fourth largest group – the Moldovan national minority, the fifth – the

Crimean Tatars. Much attention has been paid lately to the dynamical changes in the national structure of Ukraine's population during different historical periods [8].

The legislative process of the formation of the ethnopolitical development of our state is distinguished by clarity and flexibility. Two crucial events have taken place since the declaration of independence of Ukraine. On the one hand, Ukrainian has obtained the status of a national language. On the other – the adaptation of national legislation is in process to certain international legal documents in the sphere of interethnic relations and protection of the rights of national minorities. We are pleased to note that the majority of obligations concerning political, social, cultural, and language rights of national minorities are already fulfilled in the current legislation: The Constitution of Ukraine, Laws of Ukraine "On national minorities in Ukraine", "On education" etc. The fact is nationally recognised. Thus, Ukraine has chosen the path of becoming a political nation as a society. The choice was based on the statehood of people who gave the country's name and other ethnic groups residing on the territory of Ukraine. The primary aim of Ukraine's ethnopolitics is to create optimal conditions within the state for harmonic and perspective development for every component of the ethnonational structure of the Ukrainian society: Ukrainians, national minorities and natives.

However, the question of ethnic tolerance is still crucial in the Ukrainian society. It will suffice to mention the elections of 2004. Back then, politicians divided Ukraine into classes artificially. It happened not without the help of the Media. Thus, a problem of opposition between Western and Eastern Ukraine has emerged that is actual today as well. It could be chiefly seen after the snap elections to the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament of Ukraine) in September. Actually, it is a struggle between the so-called political 'elite' of Ukraine rather than between the people. A stereotype is formed in the mind of the Ukrainians about those in the other part of the country via political channels, PR activities and with the help of Mass media. A vivid example of this is the arrival to Uzhhorod of colleague-journalists from Crimea to participate in an international seminar. The latter asked whether they would not be beaten because of their speaking Russian. Stereotypes consolidate their own cultural group and define its boundaries while forming a conditional reality. Such examples are 'stereotype proverbs' and 'stereotype anecdotes': 'An uninvited guest is worse than a Tatar' (Guests, like fish, begin to smell after three days); anecdotes about Moldovans first printed in separate editions. Still in the USSR, an image of a western Ukrainian or 'banderivets' was created in the Russian-speaking eastern Ukrainians' minds. It was believed that the 'banderivets' could not stand anything Russian including the language itself. Unfortunately, this stereotype diminishes rather slowly. The same problem concerns the liberation struggles of the UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army), that celebrated its 65 anniversary in October. The opinion that the warriors of the UPA were traitors is still being imposed by political powers via the media (especially regional TV-channels). Russian channels that broadcast their programmes on the South-East of Ukraine contribute to this process significantly. Stereotypes are integrated into our life as well as the information space, the role and impact of which increases day by day. Information always influences the world, changing its existential, social and individually-conscious models. However, it is hard to destroy stereotypes. Moreover, political mythology has been actively contributing to the creation of stereotypes for the last decades [3, 158; 316].

If analysing the perception of one ethnos by another, we should understand this process in the point of view of existentialism, the diversity of manifestations and national perception. These had formulated during a long period. For instance, we see a gypsy woman approaching a man. We subconsciously presuppose that she is a culprit. If it were a woman of another nationality, would we presuppose the same? Our information space is overwhelmed with negative information about the political and social-economic situation of the state. As a result, if we look at this problem more generally, we can see that our information space creates a prejudice towards Ukrainians abroad.

We can analyse the social and criminal offences reported by the Slovak and Hungarian televisions. Even a sporadic analysis of the crimes on the territories of these countries will give us a high result of suspicions of Ukrainian migrant workers. A stimulus for the emergence of such stereotypes became the racketeering showdowns of the Ukrainian crime bosses abroad: on the territories of Slovakia, Hungary and Poland. In passing we mention that the media of the neighbour countries often show an indecorous interest towards Ukraine today, when the role of the criminal mobs is decreased. The interest comes from the fact that the country shows its natural riches and the poverty of its citizens who must work as hirelings in neighbouring states at the same time. Thus, Tamás Frei, a Hungarian journalists staged a real show with a Ukrainian man at the second nationwide Hungarian channel with relatively high views in 2002. Allegedly, the interviewee was to murder Viktor Orbán, the Hungarian premier minister of that time. Since then, the special term 'pseudo-event' has appeared in the Hungarian journalism [9].

It is generally believed that the political mobilisation of national minorities provides their unity. However, we can observe that it is not always a simple task for the national minorities to act as monolith formations as a result of the political mobilisations. Joining more powerful structures is often accompanied by a fight for the leadership in a newborn company between the members of a unity of national minorities. One could observe such conflicts in the relationship of Jewish national societies via the media recently. Very often, splits

happen in the very middle of the national unities. Such processes are mostly caused because of the intention of some of the national groups to become renown and gain support from the government in the first place.

Many analysts are surprised today by the fact that the political mobilisation of the national minorities (that concerns mostly the Russians now) has been activated in the west of Ukraine. In Lviv, Russian national societies initiated the creation of the Confederation of national and cultural societies of Western Ukraine. National societies of Russians, Jews, Poles and Germans joined the confederation. One can hardly remain interested in what would motivate the national mobilisation of seemingly such different ethnic communities and how great is the influence of the Russian national communities. Moreover, the mentioned minorities have different ideas concerning Ukraine's development (e.g. Russians and Poles). The Confederation of national and cultural societies of Western Ukraine has defined its place in politics clearly enough. It has opposed local governments ignoring the laws of Ukraine that aim to defend the interests of national minorities. In Western Ukraine, it concerns Transcarpathia to a lesser extent because the Russian minority is not particularly active here. The only dynamic society, perhaps, is the *Russian house* („Русский дом"). However, no Russian newspaper is being published in the information space of Transcarpathia. In return, Hungarian cultural-educational societies that have their powerful printing bodies are traditionally active.

Transcarpathia is a transboundary region. Its culture, literature and press have acquired the ethnic traits of the neighbouring nations. Having been under the control of other states for centuries, the Transcarpathian Ukrainians as the dominating nation have succeeded to save their language and culture. According to researchers, for all this time, 'the national movement was the main driving force of the land; the fight for statehood with an orientation at the western powers' [10, 142].

Transcarpathia can be an example of peaceful coexistence of different nationalities. Ethnic-tolerant attitude can contribute to this to a great extent. Here, we mean the usage of the media as well.

Different editorial offices function at the Transcarpathian state broadcasting company together with the Ukrainian one: the Hungarian, the Romanian, the Slovak and the German. Ukrainian newspapers actively highlight the problems of other ethnic groups' of the land. Let us take the last editions of some regional newspapers as an example. Thus, the *News of Transcarpathia* („Новини Закарпаття") newspapers' Saturday edition (13.10.2007) gives us three articles dedicated to the Slovak-Ukrainian relations: "A new automobile border checkpoint will be created at 'Solomonovo-Chierna'", "Slovakia is going to pay pensions to Ukrainians residing on its territory" and "There is no lack of dialogues between Ukraine and Slovakia" (an interview with S. I. Mitryayeva, the head of the regional branch of the National institute of strategic researches in Uzhhorod). The *Tribune* („Трибуна", 13.10.2007) newspaper tells about the traditional meeting of the press and Yudita Yevchak, the head of the department of national minorities of the Regional State Administration of Transcarpathia. In particular, the official mentioned that 121 secondary schools, a gymnasium and a lyceum function in the region this year, where education is held in the languages of the national minorities. Education is in the language of national minorities in 84 out of 518 nursery schools: in 71 – in Hungarian, in 2 – in Romanian, in 1 – in Russian, in 9 – in Ukrainian and Hungarian, in 1 – in Ukrainian and German. There is an article 'The weddings of the Romani people are accompanied by tambourines and accordions' written by M. Papish. It was published in the *Fest* („Фест") newspaper (October, 11 - 17 2007) and it tells about the marriage between a Romani woman and a Hungarian man. In particular, the journalist notes that although Yelizaveta Illeysh, the bride's mother has born 13 children, she did not receive the title "Mother Heroine". However, she has given birth to her children in the same way as other Ukrainian women who have received the honorary title.

According to the last consensus, 1 million 247 thousand people reside in the Transcarpathian region, out of whom 101.1 thousand (78,4%) are Ukrainians. On the other hand, different national groups have been coexisting in Transcarpathia: Hungarians, Romanians, Germans, Slovaks etc. Hungarians, being the eighth most populous ethnic group in Ukraine (0.3% of the state's total population), are the second biggest in Transcarpathia – 151.5 thousand peoples (4.0% of the region's total population). The Russians, being the second most populous nation in Ukraine, comprise the fourth biggest nation with a population of 31 thousand (2.4%). The Romanians – the fourth biggest group in Transcarpathia – 12.4 thousand (1.0%) make up only the ninth largest group (0.26%) in Ukraine. Other ethnic groups in Transcarpathia are minuscule: Gypsies – 7.4 thousand (0.6%), Jews – 7 thousand (0.6%), Slovaks – 3.5 thousand (0.3%) and Germans – 2.4 thousand (0.2%).

Local broadcasting companies keep in view the vernacular composition of the region. Daily programmes are broadcasted in Ukrainian. Weekly ones are broadcasted in Hungarian, Romanian, Slovakian and German. However, the choice of the genres of non-Ukrainian materials of the Transcarpathian state broadcasting company needs diversifying. At the same time, the Transcarpathian broadcasting company has already held the eighth international festival of folk art of national minorities entitled My homeland.

The number of the media of the national minorities in Transcarpathia has sharply increased after the 'ethnic renaissance'. Until 1991, there were three Hungarian newspapers ('Beregi hirlap' (*Bereg newspaper*), 'Nagyszőlős-vidéki hirek' (*News of the Vynohradiv district*), 'Ungvári-vidéki hírek' (*News of the Uzhhorod district*)) and a Moldavian one that has become Romanian later on ('Prietenia' (*Friendship*). These were strictly

regulated. The editions were published at the cost of the state as the duplicates of the Ukrainian ones or vice-versa. The mentioned regional newspapers were published in the compact residing places of Hungarians (Berehovo, Vynohradiv, Uzhhorod districts) and Romanians (Tyachiv district). They had been trying to alternate the latter into Moldovans for the whole Soviet period.

A great number of magazines for national minorities are being published by cultural-educational societies of the region, charitable foundations and citizens too. Some of them are: "Kárpátalja" (TOV "Kárpátalja" – in translation "Transcarpathia"), "Bereg-info" (founder-editor Soboslay Stepan Karlovich), "Nyomkereső" ("Tracker", the journal was founded by the Transcarpathian association of Hungarian scouts), "Dôvera" ("Trust", the journal of Slovaks of Ukraine, founder and publisher – Transcarpathian cultural-educational society of Slovak women "Trust"), "Romani Yag" ("Romani bonfire", the newspaper was founded by the Romani Jag Romani cultural-educational society) etc. The national self-consciousness of the ethnic minorities is formed and maintained with the help of these magazines. However, the problems of the cultural-informational rise of these editions are mostly the same – the lack of professional staff: journalists, coders, editors, translators. Due to the lack of finances, the editions of national minorities do not receive enough support from the state. In return, for instance, Hungary not only actively supports Hungarians abroad, most of whom reside in Transcarpathia, but helps its inland national-cultural societies. Thus, the magazine "Hromada" ("Public", editor Yeva Hrihashi) of the Society of Ukrainian culture in Hungary is published with the help of the Hungarian Fund of support of national and ethnic minorities. Ukrainian cultural societies and their publishing bodies are much lesser supported on the state level in Slovakia and Romania.

On the example of the Transcarpathian press, we observe a characteristic change from the concepts of the cosmopolite self-consciousness (that was imposed via the ideas of the socialist internationalism) to the idea of the intelligent coexistence in an open, informative, multiethnic society.

The artistic efforts of the Ukrainian media, including the ethnic as well, must aim at creating a positive image of the state on international levels. That is why we consider the study and analysis of the representation of the Ukrainian and other ethnic cultures in the editions of the minorities of Transcarpathia to be interesting in the context of the informative ethnic tolerance. Meanwhile, a major drawback of the editions of the ethnic minorities, among those of the Hungarians and Romanians as well, lies within the fact that they do not give any pages in Ukrainian. Whereas this would not only increase the circulation of the printed media but improve the representation of the activities of the cultural-educational societies among the Ukrainian population, introduce their national history to a wider range of readers. Thus, the "Kárpát info" a rather powerful Hungarian edition (www. karpatinfo.org.ua; circulation of 6680 samples) not only translates advertisements into Hungarian but gives the schedule of only television channels broadcasted on the territory of Hungary.

"Romani Yag" ("Romani bonfire") is a very interesting Romani edition. It has a colourful national character and is published in three languages: Romanian, Ukrainian and Hungarian. Moreover, short biographical data are given about T. Shevchenko and some of his poems are translated into the Gypsy language in the Romanian editions. In the "Romani Yag" newspaper, we can also come across information about Lesya Ukrainka, Vasil Simonenko, Vasil Stus, Victor Hugo, Lina Konstenko, Mihajlo Kazimirenko, Rasim Sedzhich, Leksa Manush, and epigraphs from their works etc.

In addition, the newspaper gives materials about the communication of the Romani minority with other national minorities of Transcarpathia. One of the regular columns of the "Romani Yag" newspaper is the "National-cultural societies of Transcarpathia" in which the Gypsy readers are introduced to the representatives of other cultures. The "We learn Romani" column contains lessons on elementary knowledge of the Gypsy language. It provides materials not only for the Romani ethnos but also for educational purposes as well as a system of retaining the main attribute of the nation in a foreign language environment.

The editorship of the "Romani Yag" newspaper has successfully made its first steps into the wide information space. The newspaper is being published. The improvement of professional qualities is in process now; the process of achieving the Romani ethnicity as a 'state of soul' and a lifestyle. There is a hope that this will put an end to the status of the Romani ethnos as outsiders and support the creation of an open society. It is doubtless that this process is extremely hard.

Finally, tolerance in the communication of different ethnic groups – the question of relationships between the native ethnos and those residing on the territory of the state with the help of the media – is one of the important conditions of building a society. We live in the period of active globalizing processes. Thus, Ukraine will be able to integrate into Europe only when the nation unites on the basis of the consolidating idea of building a powerful and informative, open society.

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