

THE TERM “RUSSIA” AND ITS INTERPRETATION AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR

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States do not arise by the wave of a “magic wand” or by the will of one person (the so-called “Vladimir Lenin`s Ukraine”), but, as Ukrainian researcher Ivan Lysyak-Rudnytsky notes, through complex processes within a huge collective of people who want to be a state and who are called nation [3, p. 59]. In this regard, we may add that state formation (state-building) is a complex and lengthy process that should be accompanied by certain qualifications. The list of such qualifications was proposed during the Seventh International Conference of American States, which took place in Montevideo, Uruguay. During this official meeting, the Convention on Rights and Duties of States was signed on December 26, 1933. The first article of this convention contains four qualifications of a state as a person of international law: a permanent population; a defined territory; government; and capacity to enter into relations with the other states [1]. Among all the qualifications, we would like to focus on two, population and territory.

The Russian-Ukrainian war, in addition to direct hostilities, is accompanied by various slogans from the Russian authorities, which, in their view, should serve as a justification for armed aggression against Ukraine. Among many, we would like to point out: “returning of the original Russian lands”. We consider it necessary to analyse this assertion and to discover its real significance.

First of all, let us focus on the definition of Russian lands (not the lands of “Rossia” (Rossiya), but the lands of Russia (Rus`)). To do so, we must discover who the Russians are and how they differ from the “Rossians” (Rossiyani). Etymological dictionaries, both Ukrainian and Russian, will help us to do so. According to the etymology, the word “Russian” is derived from the word “Rus”, which is, “inhabitant of the Ancient Rus” (Kyivan Rus`) [4, p. 145–146; 6, p. 489]. Instead, “Rossian” (Rossiyanin) is the defining term of the “Rossia” (Rossiya) nation, that is the nation that created “Rossia” (Rossiya). That is the fundamental difference between the two terms. It is worth noting that, unlike the Ukrainian and Russian languages, foreign languages, especially English, do not distinguish between a “Rossia” (Rossiya) and a Russia, but refer to these two different names in the same way – “Russia”. This problem, in our view, needs special attention from Ukrainian researchers in order to eliminate the

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misinterpretation and incorrect usage of this word in the global circle of relationships.

The “privatisation” of the ethnically defining term “Russian” allowed the “Rossian” (Rossiya) government (of the Russian Empire and the modern Russian Federation) to launch a further, more global “privatisation” – the seizure of neighbouring territories and the “Rossification” of their populations. In this regard, it seems quite interesting that the rulers of the Russian Empire and the Russian Federation have the same view on the emergence of the “Rossian” (Rossiyani), Ukrainian and Belarusian nationalities. In this case, we are talking about the concept of the “triune Russian nationality”, which states that all three nationalities are nothing but one nationality – Russians (and for some reason “Rossia” (Rossiya) should unite them and only as part of its state and not otherwise). Instead, in the 20th century, with the Bolsheviks` rise to power, this concept was gradually replaced by the view of the existence of three separate nationalities: Ukrainian, “Rossian/Rossiyani” (Russian) and Belarusian [2, p. 156]. The content of this concept is explained in detail by the Ukrainian historian Nataliia Yusova in her monograph called “The Genesis of the Concept of the Old Russian Nation in the Historical Science of the USSR (1930s – first half of the 1940s)”. According to this concept, the Soviet scientific community interpreted the “Russian nation” of ancient Kyivan Rus` as a certain intermediate ethnic community, different from previous and future ethnic formations of the Eastern Slavs, as a common ancestor of Ukrainians, Belarusians and “Rossians” (Rossiyani). Nataliia Yusova adds that the “Russian nationality” was formed as a result of the “merger of East Slavic tribes” that formed a single ancient Russian state of Rus`. The beginning of the Ukrainian, “Rossian” (Rossiyani) and Belarusian nationalities, according to her, is the time of the collapse of the Rus`, when “for external and/or internal reasons it broke up. As a result of these processes, three new Eastern Slavic nationalities have emerged over time” [7, p. 12].

So, when Russian politicians claim that the occupied Ukrainian territories are Russian lands and that they are returning them “home”, they are disingenuous (or, more precisely, liars). As we have discovered, in the broadest sense of the word, Russian lands may be called the lands of all the heirs of Rus` – Ukraine, Belarus and “Rossia” (Rossiya). Changing the flag does not change the essence. However, in the sense that Russian Federation loudly declares “Russian lands”, the imperial nature of today`s Russian Federation may be traced.

Let`s clear up the meaning of the other word in the expression “original Russian lands”. Let`s pay attention to “original”. When you think of the original lands within a state, you think of them as the lands where the state originally emerged. However, if we look at the territory of the Grand Duchy of Moscow (exclusively the first “Rossian” (Rossiya) state formation), we will find no

modern Ukrainian territories there. Even if we take the “Aryan” concept of Russian politicians that Rus` is “Rossia” (Rossiya), there are remarks here as well. Ukrainian historian, Hryhorii Pivtorak, in his book, “The Origin of Ukrainians, Russians, Belarusians and Their Languages” provides an exhaustive list of lands that were ruled by Rus` at different times: “Originally, Kyivan Rus` included only of the lands of Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Pereyaslav, that is, it did not go beyond the boundaries of the proto-Ukrainian ethnolinguistic territory. The political, economic, and cultural centre of the state, Kyiv, was also located on this territory. In the 60s of the 9th century, Kyivan Rus` also united only the Ukrainian tribes – the Polians, the Derevlianians, the Dregovichi of the south, and the Chernihiv part of the Siverianians. In the last quarter of the 9th century, the power of the Prince of Kyiv extended to the Polochans and Smolensk Kryvichs, and after Prince Oleg of Novgorod captured Kyiv in 882, the lands of the Pskov Kryvichs and Ilmen Slovenes were annexed to Kyivan Rus`. Oleg`s successor, Prince Igor, conquered the Ulyches and Tivertsy. During the 10th and early 12th centuries, all the lands of the Eastern Slavs and many non-Slavic tribes were conquered by Kyivan Rus`” [5, pp. 48–49]. Among the list of territories which at various times were under the reign of Rus`, we do not find most of the Left-bank Ukraine. Therefore, there is no longer any question of any primordiality. Instead, most of the Left-bank Ukraine became “Rossia`s” (Rossiya`s) “original lands” only in 1654, when the Pereyaslav Rada was signed. This event was not a reunion of nationalities, but a military alliance (protectorate) to fight the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. According to Ivan Lysyak-Rudnytsky, the myths surrounding the Pereyaslav Rada allowed the Grand Duchy of Moscow, and later the Russian Empire (let`s add to this list the current Russian Federation), to legitimise their claims to the left-bank part of modern Ukraine. The Pereyaslav Rada, adds Ivan Lysyak-Rudnytsky, allowed the Grand Duchy of Moscow (later the Russian Empire) to continue its expansion to the south, thus opening a springboard for the following conquests [3, pp. 121–122]. Using the Grand Duchy of Moscow as a foothold, the Russian Empire annexed Crimea to its empire as a result of the victorious Russo-Turkish War of 1768–1774. Thus, on April 19, 1783, Catherine the Great signed a Manifesto on the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, Taman Island and the entire Kuban side to the “Rossian” (Rossiya) State. Therefore, Crimean Peninsula became the “original land” of “Rossia” (Rossiya) only in 1783.

Thus, we have discovered that in the broadest sense, the word “Russian” refers to the inhabitants of the Ancient Rus`, not to the inhabitants of modern Russian Federation. Therefore, all the heirs of Rus` – Ukrainians, Belarusians and “Rossians” (Rossiyani) – can be called Russians. However, the widespread usage of the word “Russian” instead of “Rossian” (Rossiyani), as well as the

lack of awareness in broad circles that these are different concepts, make it impossible to attempt to use this ethnically defining term correctly. In addition, the unpunished speculation by “Rossians” (Rossiyani) that they are Russians and others are not leads to catastrophic processes. In particular, to territorial claims by the Russian Federation. When, as a result of the misuse of the term, claims are made to neighbouring territories that have never been their “original lands”. In this case, we see Russian Federation`s predatory imperial attempts to capture and enslave neighbouring lands, including Ukraine, which were once part of the Russian Empire. In this way, we can trace the inherited policy of the modern Russian Federation, which was once pursued by the tsarist government towards Ukrainians.

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