

Nikolaus von Twickel

Annual Report on the Events in the “People’s Republics” of Eastern Ukraine 2016

Civic monitoring of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk Region



IMPRINT

DRA e.V.
Badstraße 44
D-13357 Berlin

Tel. +49 (0)30 446 680 0
Fax. +49 (0)30 446 680 10
info@austausch.org
www.austausch.org
www.civicmonitoring.org

Project
"European Support for the Effective Monitoring
of Human Rights in Eastern Ukraine"



The project "European Support for the Effective Monitoring of Human Rights in Eastern Ukraine" is being implemented in partnership with the following non-governmental organizations:



Report Author:
Nikolaus von Twickel

Photos: Title page "Donetsk" by www.flickr.com/photos/timon91/
used under creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/, desaturated from original.

Implemented with support from the Federal Foreign Office of Germany



All opinions included in this report do not necessarily reflect the official position
of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany.

Copyright © DRA 2017
Reproduction of the content is authorized provided the source is acknowledged.

Nikolaus von Twickel

Annual Report on the Events in the 'People's Republics' of Eastern Ukraine 2016

Civic monitoring of certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk Region

Foreword

An important key to understanding the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine lies in the self-proclaimed “People’s Republics”. How do the “authorities” function and what rules the politics in these regions? Who determines the political process and what objectives are pursued? What determines the daily life of their inhabitants? Are the fundamental rights in the “People’s Republics” protected?

Since access to the “People’s Republics” for independent journalists and international observers is blocked, investigative research, appraisal of internet sites and social networks and academic analyses are of paramount importance. With the aim of contributing to a greater transparency regarding the developments in eastern Ukraine, the project “European Support for Civic Monitoring in Eastern Ukraine” presents the following analysis of journalist **Nikolaus von Twickel**.

Nikolaus von Twickel is a Berlin-based freelance journalist.

Between 2007 and 2014 he worked in Moscow, first as a reporter for the Moscow Times, then as the correspondent for dpa International, the English-language service of Deutsche Presse-Agentur.

Between October 2015 and March 2016 he served as a media liaison officer (Media Focal Point) for the OSCE Monitoring Mission in Donetsk.



Contents

Security Situation	6
Politics	7
Economy	9
Outlook	11
Sources	12
Appendix: Chronology of developments in the “People’s Republics” for 2016	13

Summary

At first glance, the situation in eastern Ukraine has hardly changed in the past year. While the negotiations to implement the Minsk Agreement stalled, the battles between government troops and separatists repeatedly flared up. However, the dividing “contact line” remained largely untouched. Territorial gains were made only in the demilitarised buffer zone – with the consequence that the hostile troops moved closer to one another.

Security Situation

Despite the ceasefire, more than 200 soldiers were killed¹ and just under 1,300 were injured on the Ukrainian side alone in fighting between government troops and pro-Russian separatists in the past year. There are no available numbers for the opposing side. Despite this, there was no significant military movement along the approximately 500 kilometre-long “Contact Line”: territorial gains were made exclusively in the buffer zone on both sides of it, the so-called Grey Zone.

Here, in March 2016, Ukrainian forces advanced into an industrial complex south of the town Avdiivka. Ukrainian media reported² afterwards that government troops had to take the area in order to protect Avdiivka from shelling.

In December 2016 it was also Ukrainian troops who pushed forward in the so-called Svitlodarsk Arc northwest of Debaltseve. The spokesperson for the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence, Andriy Lysenko, told³ Deutsche Welle, that the Ukrainian army had advanced up to one and a half kilometres in order to occupy favourable heights.

Advances into the “Grey Zone”, which is not mentioned at all in the Minsk Agreement, had already begun in 2015 around Mariupol, when Ukrainian forces moved into the village of Pavlopil, upon which troops from the “DPR” occupied the village of Kominternove (later renamed Pikusy).

While the opposing sides moved closer to each other, the greatest success to come out of last year’s negotiations was an agreement that actually expands the buffer zone. The so-called disengagement framework agreement was signed⁴ in September 2016 and stipulates that both sides pull back their troops at least two kilometres from the contact line, initially in three locations – Stanytsia Luhanska, Zolote and Petrivske. By the end of the year, this was achieved in two of the three locations. In

In 2016, the “People’s Republics” attempted to consolidate internally, recover economically and reduce their dependence on Russian financial support. They had only rudimentary success – in Donetsk more so, less so in Luhansk. Nevertheless, political and economic developments in both “People’s Republics” overwhelmingly showed in one direction – towards the Russian Federation. This development impedes the implementation of the Minsk Agreement.

Stanytsia Luhanska both⁵ sides⁶ accused each other for not maintaining the required ceasefire.

Apart from the disengagement agreement, there was barely progress at the negotiations, neither in the Trilateral Contact Group (Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE, with representatives of the “DPR” and “LPR” present), nor in the Normandy format (France, Germany, Russia and Ukraine).

Under Germany’s chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the negotiations initially concentrated⁷ on conducting local elections in line with the Minsk Agreement. As it became clear that this won’t succeed because of numerous disagreements, it was decided⁸ at the Berlin Summit of 19 October to first draw up a road map which lays down the chronological order of the agreement’s implementation.

By the end of the year however, no agreement on such a road map had been reached. Instead, Russia accused Ukraine⁹ of wanting to include new demands in the road map, which weren’t in the Minsk Agreement – for example, an armed international mission that would guarantee security in the separatist regions. Ukraine argues, that in order to implement the Minsk Agreement, “new elements” like an armed international force are necessary to guarantee a minimum level of security.

Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin restated in December¹⁰ Ukraine’s position that local elections, as regulated in the Minsk “Package of Measures” from February 2015, must take place under Ukrainian law with Ukrainian parties and voters (including those who have fled the “People’s Republics”).

1 http://censor.net.ua/news/422771/za_minuvshiyi_god_boevye_poteri_v_ato_sostavili_211_chelovek_ne_boevye_poteri_256_chelovek_minoborony

2 <http://112.ua/ato/turchinov-ne-isklyuchaet-masshtabnyh-nastupatelnyh-operacij-boevikov-na-donbasse-303390.html>

3 <http://www.dw.com/de/kein-frieden-in-der-ostukraine-in-sicht/a-36919953>

4 <http://www.osce.org/cio/266266>

5 <http://podrobnosti.ua/2146575-boeviki-snova-sorvali-razvedenie-sil-v-stanitse-luganskoj.html>

6 <http://miaistok.su/kyev-ne-dayot-ukazaniy-na-otvedenie-sil-u-stanitsy-luganskoj/>

7 <http://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/?fa=62939>

8 <https://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2016/10/2016-10-19-treffen-normandie-format.html>

9 <http://cpkr.ru/comments/minskiy-process-v-ozhidanii-snyatiya-s-pauzy>

10 <http://interfax.com.ua/news/interview/390451.html>

Politics

In the Luhansk “People’s Republic”, 2016 was hardly calmer than the year before: while in 2015 prominent field commanders were assassinated, the past year saw politicians either being ousted or being declared enemies of the state.

In September, the former “Prime Minister” of the “LPR”, Gennady Tsytkalov, and a high-ranking member of the military, Vitaly Kiselyov, were arrested and accused of having planned a coup against the leader of the “LPR”, Igor Plotnitsky. Tsytkalov died shortly afterwards with officials claiming that he hanged himself in his cell.

The former head of parliament, Alexey Karyakin, who was the third person implicated in the coup attempt, said from exile in Russia that Plotnitsky’s bodyguards killed Tsytkalov. According to Karyakin, the “coup” is just a pretence by Plotnitsky to get rid of his opponents. Similar suspicions were expressed in August after an alleged assassination attempt on Plotnitsky (see Newsletter No. 1¹¹ and No. 3¹²).

Despite or maybe because of these purges, Plotnitsky was subsequently exposed to strong criticism from Russia. In November the Kremlin-friendly Moscow tabloid “Komsomolskaya Pravda” ran an article¹³ with serious corruption allegations against Plotnitsky. Later the newspaper accused him¹⁴ of having close ties to the Pentecostal movement and of supporting members of that church (see also Newsletter No. 8¹⁵).

Also troubling for Plotnitsky was the sudden re-emergence of Valery Bolotov – potentially a serious rival. The first head of the “LPR” had not appeared in public since he was replaced, allegedly because of an injury, in August 2014. In autumn of 2016 he gave several¹⁶ interviews¹⁷, in which he accused Plotnitsky of having monopolised power and betrayed the rebels’ original ideals.

At the end of the year, the internal power struggle in the “LPR” came to the fore again: when Plotnitsky praised the decision of the “LPR Parliament” to condemn the work of “Prime Minister” Sergei Kozlov, leading “LPR” media

outlets left this event unreported (see Newsletter No. 13¹⁸).

First-generation separatists like Bolotov, Karyakin and Tsytkalov completely reject the Minsk Agreement and want to see eastern Ukraine united with Russia sooner rather than later.

In the Donetsk “People’s Republic” such early separatist leaders were also ousted from office, but with less furore. In February 2016 “foreign minister” Alexander Kofman was removed unceremoniously, followed by “election commission” head Roman Lyagin. That string of purges had begun in September 2015, when the “chairman of parliament” Andrei Purgin was removed. In autumn 2016, Purgin founded a movement called “Yug Rossii” (“The South of Russia”), which aims to unite large parts of Ukraine with Russia.

However, 2016 also saw the first assassination of a prominent “DPR” representative. Field commander Arseny Pavlov, known as “Motorola”, was killed by a bomb in October. The fact that the explosion happened in Pavlov’s well-guarded home in Donetsk led Ukrainian observers to believe that Russian agents were to blame (see also Newsletter No. 5¹⁹).

The motive for “Motorola’s” murder remains unclear however, because unlike some of the Luhansk field commanders killed in 2015, Pavlov had not publicly criticised the “DPR” leadership. The Kyiv political scientist Volodymyr Fesenko linked the assassination with the Normandy format summit that took place just three days later on 19th October in Berlin. Fesenko said in an interview for this report that the attack on Pavlov, for which the separatists blamed Ukraine, was possibly meant to weaken Kyiv’s position in the negotiations.

While the Donetsk “People’s Republic” looked more stable than the neighbouring Luhansk “People’s Republic”, open criticism of those in power proved to be risky in both places.

In the “LPR”, at least two bloggers – Eduard Nedelyayev and Gennady Benitsky – were arrested because of posts on social networks (see Newsletter No. 13²⁰).

In the “DPR” on 27th January, a wave of repressions began after the Donetsk Lenin statue was lightly damaged in an overnight explosion. Subsequently alleged regime critics were arrested, including the religious studies scholar Igor Kozlovsky²¹ as well as members of the volunteer aid

11 <http://www.civicmonitoring.org/entwicklungen-in-dnr-und-lnr-19-25-sept-2016-newsletter-nr-1/>

12 <http://www.civicmonitoring.org/entwicklungen-in-dnr-und-lnr-04-10-okt-2016-newsletter-nr-3/>

13 <http://www.kp.ru/daily/26608/3625106/>

14 <http://www.kp.ru/daily/26622/3640371/>

15 <http://www.civicmonitoring.org/entwicklungen-in-dnr-und-lnr-15-21-nov-2016-newsletter-nr-8/>

16 <http://sovross.ru/articles/1479/28231>

17 <http://www.rosbalt.ru/world/2016/12/08/1574039.html>

18 <http://www.civicmonitoring.org/entwicklungen-in-dnr-und-lnr-20-dez-26-dez-2016-newsletter-nr-13/>

19 <http://www.civicmonitoring.org/entwicklungen-in-dnr-und-lnr-18-okt-01-nov-2016-newsletter-nr-5/>

20 <http://www.civicmonitoring.org/entwicklungen-in-dnr-und-lnr-20-dez-26-dez-2016-newsletter-nr-13/>

21 <https://tvrain.ru/articles/zhena-402745/>

organisation “Otvetsvennie Grazhdane²²” (“Responsible Citizens”). While Koslovsky is believed to be still in jail, the aid organisation members were deported from the “People’s Republic” within a month²³.

By contrast, the most prominent critic within the “DPR”, Alexander Khodakovsky, remained largely untouched. The former commander of the armed formation “Vostok” resigned in February²⁴ from his office as secretary of the “Security Council” but continued his weekly video show²⁵, in which he answers viewers’ questions regarding the state of the republic.

Khodakovsky, who led a special unit of the Ukrainian secret service before the conflict broke out, is often linked to businessman Rinat Akhmetov, a Donetsk native, and once said himself²⁶, that he is for protecting the industrial assets of Akhmetov, who fled to Kyiv.

Overall, it can be safely assumed that the true political decision makers of both the “DPR” and the “LPR” are in Moscow.

An indication for this are the “primaries”, which were held on 2. October in both Donetsk and Luhansk (see Newsletter No. 2²⁷). Both the conduct and the results of these preliminary elections were largely identical in both “People’s Republics” – the winners were the ruling parties’ candidates. The voting rules strongly resembled those of the “primaries” of Russia’s ruling party “United Russia”, which for some years has used such primaries as a PR-vehicle²⁸.

Both “LPR” and “DPR” described the primaries as test runs for the local elections foreseen in the Minsk Agreement. However, those elections were postponed indefinitely in October because Ukraine and Russia could not agree on common terms (see Newsletter No. 5²⁹).

At the beginning of the year, Ukrainian media³⁰ and government officials speculated that Russia would remove

the leaders of the separatists and unite both “People’s Republics”. The reports were linked to a meeting between senior US diplomat Victoria Nuland and Vladislav Surkov, the Kremlin’s point man on Donbass, on 15. January in Kaliningrad.

However, by the end of the year, both “People’s Republics” and their leaders remained untouched. On the other hand, experts believe that Russia – not least because of its huge economic influence (see next chapter) – remains in a position to change the personnel and structure of the “People’s Republics” at any time.

For Moscow, the continued existence of the “LPR” and “DPR” actually has advantages. In December, the Russian political scientist and former Kremlin official Alexey Chesnakov argued³¹ that having two republics is more useful because it complicates negotiations for Ukraine.

31 <http://novosti.dn.ua/news/264943-l-dnr-obyasnyly-pochemu-poka-ne-budut-obedyntyatsya>

22 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ogdonbass/>

23 <http://dan-news.info/official/soobshhenie-mgb-dnr-o-reshenii-peredat-ukrainskoj-storone-zaderzhannuyu-glavu-oo-otvetstvennye-grazhdane.html>

24 <http://patriot-donetsk.ru/3609-pokoya-ne-zhdite.html>

25 <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyKCusmu8Hz7eurEkZJop0A/videos>

26 <http://www.forbes.ru/sobytiya/vlast/284617-sekretar-sovbeza-dnr-strelkov-reshal-zadachu-po-vtyagivaniyu-rossii-v-voinu>

27 <http://www.civicmonitoring.org/entwicklungen-in-den-dnr-und-lnr-26-sept-04-okt-2016-newsletter-nr-2/>

28 <https://themoscowtimes.com/articles/why-russian-primaries-are-little-more-than-a-pr-stunt-52969>

29 <http://www.civicmonitoring.org/entwicklungen-in-dnr-und-lnr-18-okt-01-nov-2016-newsletter-nr-5/>

30 <http://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/articles/2016/01/25/7096616/>

Economy

The leaders of both “People’s Republics” declared at the end of the year that the economic prospects are rosy. “DPR” head Alexander Zakharchenko proudly declared³² in December that the economy in 2016 had grown by 52% - adding however³³, that this was not overall growth, but the return to pre-war potential.

No such figures from Luhansk were made known, but “LPR”-leader Igor Plotnitsky announced in his New Year’s address³⁴ that 2017 would be the “Year of Economic Reforms”, during which the “shadow economy” would be eliminated.

Ukrainian and Western observers doubt that either “People’s Republic” is economically sustainable in its present form. The separatists control barely a third of their respective Ukrainian regions - Donetsk and Luhansk. The supply chain gaps resulting from the severing of economic relations with the rest of Ukraine and the departure of much of the population – most of all the educated middle class – make a quick recovery unlikely.

It is considered an open secret that both “People’s Republics”, who introduced the Russian rouble in early 2015, are overwhelmingly financed by Moscow. The well-known separatist commander Alexander Khodakovsky has put³⁵ the Russian proportion of the budget at 70%. Ukrainian and Western observers estimated at the beginning of 2016 that Russia was spending just under 80 million euros per month on wage and pension payments in both regions (see Newsletter No. 3³⁶).

Due to an inflated bureaucracy and the large number of pensioners, the “People’s Republics” have to spend more on state social payments than other economies. The “LPR” alone boasts³⁷ 17 ministries and another 17 government agencies, not including the extensive armed forces (“People’s Militia”). The “DPR” has even 21 ministries³⁸. According to Ukrainian estimates³⁹, the proportion of pensioners among the population in both “People’s Republics” is above 30%.

In November, the Secretary of Ukraine’s Security Council, Oleksandr Turchynov, estimated Russia’s total annual expenditure on the separatists at just over 6 billion US dollars (5.65 billion euros, around 471 million euros monthly). According to Turchynov⁴⁰, military spending makes up about half of this sum.

In October and November there were indications that money was tight in both “DPR” and “LPR” – wages and pensions were paid not at all or just partly (see Newsletter No. 7⁴¹). In December, the payment arrears were apparently covered both in Donetsk⁴² and Luhansk⁴³. The exact cause of the budget shortages was unclear. While the separatists spoke of “technical problems”, Ukrainian commentators agreed that Moscow had cut off the money supply. It remained open whether this was for political or economic reasons.

In the face of these conditions, the separatists focused their economic policy on improving their own revenues.

In the “DPR”, there was speculation⁴⁴ in summer surrounding a nationalisation law. The newly created “Ministry for Industry” headed by Alexey Granovsky, who in 2014 had already been “Minister for Energy”, was believed to be responsible for carrying this out.

The main target of the compulsory expropriations was meant to be businesses⁴⁵ who still paid taxes to Ukraine. Zakharchenko announced in May that the “DPR” had nothing against rich entrepreneurs, rather only those industrialists who had too much political influence. “The dismantling of the oligarch economy is one of our priorities,” he said⁴⁶.

However, by the end of the year there was no indication for the adoption of a nationalisation law, let alone for the implementation of its proposals.

Ukraine voiced fierce resistance against any forced expropriations. The spokesperson for ex-President Leonid Kuchma, who represents the Kyiv government at the

32 <http://dan-news.info/ekonomika/rost-ekonomiki-v-dnr-v-2016-godu-prevysil-50-zaxarchenko.html>

33 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g0hMxOTLU9w>

34 <http://lug-info.com/news/one/novogodnee-obraschenie-glavy-luganskoi-narodnoi-respubliki-igorya-plotnitskogo-20384>

35 <http://www.rosbalt.ru/ukraina/2015/09/09/1438465.html>

36 <http://www.civicmonitoring.org/entwiclungen-in-dnr-und-lnr-04-10-okt-2016-newsletter-nr-3/>

37 <http://sovminlnr.su/ministerstva.html>

38 <http://dnr-online.ru/doneckaya-narodnaya-respublika/>

39 <http://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/articles/2016/01/25/7096616/>

40 http://www.ostro.org/general/society/news/514170/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=divr.it

41 <http://www.civicmonitoring.org/entwiclungen-in-dnr-und-lnr-8-14-nov-2016-newsletter-nr-7/>

42 <https://minfindnr.ru/dekabrskie-pensii-profinansirovany-v-polnom-obeme-press-sluzhba-minfina-dnr/>

43 <http://lug-info.com/news/one/minfin-lnr-v-tekuschem-godu-profinansiroval-vse-zaplanirovannye-stati-19943>

44 https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2016/07/15_a_9692195.shtml

45 <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2016/08/14/dnr-gotovit-zakon-o-konfiskacii-vsekh-predpriyatij-kotorye-platyat-ukraine.html>

46 <http://dnr-online.ru/demontazh-oligarxicheskoy-ekonomiki-odin-iz-osnovnyx-nashix-prioritetov-glava-dnr-aleksandr-zaxarchenko/>

Minsk negotiations, stated⁴⁷ that expropriations would be considered a dismantling of the Minsk Agreement.

At the same time, economic connections between the separatists and Ukraine were revealed – mainly in the form of coal deliveries. Already in February, “Ukrainskaya Pravda” reported⁴⁸ that coal imports, declared as being from South Africa, had really originated in the “DPR” and “LPR”.

In September, “LPR”-leader Plotnitsky⁴⁹ announced that coal was being sold to Ukraine. His Donetsk colleague, Zakharchenko, said in November⁵⁰, that without coal deliveries from the “DPR”, Ukraine would not survive the winter.

On behalf of the Ukrainian government, the Minister for the Temporarily Occupied Territories, Vadym Chernysh, confirmed⁵¹ on 1. November that Ukraine imported coal from the regions not under its control. Electricity was provided in return, Chernysh said in an interview on Hromadske Radio.

The Energy Ministry in Kyiv later announced⁵² that Ukrainian firms had bought 7.2 million tons of coal in the separatist territories in the first 10 months of 2016. The ministry did not state the value of this quantity, but experts put its worth at 11 billion hryvna (around 385 million euros).

What is not calculable is the illegal trade (smuggling) between the “People’s Republics” and Ukraine. Hryhoriy Tuka, the former governor of the Luhansk region and the current Deputy Minister for the Temporarily Occupied Regions, confirmed⁵³ the reports of large-scale smuggling. He even argued that a peace settlement remains elusive because so many Ukrainian law-enforcement officials profit from this economically and therefore are not interested in changes.

In October, an investigation⁵⁴ published by the Moscow-based Novaya Gazeta newspaper found that leading separatists and Ukrainian oligarchs are profiting from the informal economy in the “DPR” and “LPR”.

47 <https://www.facebook.com/darka.olifer/posts/1011961185590650?pnref=story>

48 <http://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/articles/2016/02/3/7097702/>

49 <http://www.ostro.org/video/509056/>

50 <http://dan-news.info/ukraine/ukraina-ne-vyzhivet-etoj-zimoy-bez-uglya-dnr-zaxarchenko.html>

51 <https://hromadskeradio.org/programs/kyiv-donbas/vosstanovlenye-donbassa-problema-ne-tolko-vsey-ukrayny-no-y-evropy-chernysh>

52 <http://www.ostro.org/general/economics/news/514074/>

53 <http://www.ostro.org/general/politics/news/500102/>

54 <https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2016/10/24/70277-vlast-vzyala-kontrabanda>

Outlook

The longer the “People’s Republics” remain in their current isolation, the wider the gap between them and the rest of the country will become. This, in turn, makes reintegration into Ukraine harder.

There are already indicators that large parts of the population of the “LPR” and “DPR” do not wish to return to Ukraine. The Donetsk separatist commander Alexander Khodakovsky said in September⁵⁵, that according to his own opinion polls, the proportion of “DPR” inhabitants who want to join Russia had grown from 50 to 70 percent between January and August.

Khodakovsky did not provide details of the poll, so its reliability cannot be verified. But other polls point in a similar direction: In a survey⁵⁶ published in June 2016 by the Ifak Institute⁵⁷ for the Kyiv think tank “Fabryka Dumky Donbas”, 48 per cent of those interviewed (by telephone) in the “DPR” were in favour of a political union with Russia. In the parts of the Donetsk region controlled by the government, this figure was still 22 per cent.

Fabryka Dumky director Dmytro Tkachenko later added⁵⁸, that in an unpublished part of the poll, 18 percent of those interviewed in the “People’s Republic” stated that they felt like citizens of the “DPR”.

Telephone opinion polls in territories such as the “People’s Republics” or in Russian-annexed Crimea should, however, taken with caution, since those interviewed may not tell the truth out of fear that the phone conversation might be wiretapped by local government agencies.

Tkachenko, who is also an adviser to the Ukrainian Ministry of Information⁵⁹, argues that the large support for Russia will quickly go down, after Ukraine regains control over the territories. “The “DPR” identity will disappear, when the weapons and the (Russian) propaganda go away,” he said in an interview for this report.

However, the experience from 2016 shows, that a restoration of Kyiv’s control won’t be easy. The fact, that neither Moscow, nor Kyiv are prepared to compromise is certainly the main reason why at the start of 2017, there is still no political solution to the conflict in Donbas in sight. In Ukraine, making concessions to the separatists is widely seen as politically impossible. The bloody protests against changes in the constitution in front of the Kyiv Parliament in August 2015 also showed that opponents of a compromise do not shy away from violence.

The best strategy for Russia arguably consists of taking no political steps while blaming the Ukrainian side for the lack of movement. Moscow has good reason to hope for a change in Western policy towards Russia in 2017. The beginning of Donald Trump’s presidency in the USA, the presidential elections in France in April as well as the German parliamentary elections in September of this year might well result in an easing of Western sanctions.

As long as the foreign policy of Kyiv’s allies does not change, a continuation of the current situation – military stagnation with minimal movement in the negotiations – is likely.

55 <http://www.ostro.org/general/society/news/508576/>

56 http://euromaidanpress.com/wpcontent/uploads/2016/08/Report_on_results_of_a_research_on_the_Donetsk_region_eng.pdf

57 <http://www.ifak.com>

58 <http://www.ostro.org/general/society/news/503891/>

59 <http://mip.gov.ua/en/content/radniki.html>

Sources

People Interviewed

Volodymyr Fessenko: Director of the Penta-Institute, Kyiv <http://penta.org.ua/about/experts/155>

Dmytro Tkachenko: Head of the Think Tank "Fabryka Dumky Donbas" <http://donbasthinktank.org>

Alexei Matsuka: Founder and Editor-in-Chief of "Novosti Donbassa"

As well as numerous other contacts from the government and civil society who gave background information.

Ukrainian Media

"Novosti Donbassa" <http://novosti.dn.ua> One of the most balanced Ukrainian news websites, originally from Donetsk

"Ostro" <http://www.ostro.org> Also a new website originally from Donetsk

"Ukrainskaja Prawda" <http://www.pravda.com.ua>

Hromadske Radio <https://hromadskeradio.org>

Apostrophe <http://apostrophe.ua>

Media from the "DPR"

"News agency" (Website) "Donetskoe Agentstvo Nowostei" (DAN) <http://dan-news.info> "DAN" is a 100 per cent state company, which works reliably but only publishes a highly restrictive range of news in uncritical style

Website of the "Ministry of Information" <http://dnr-online.ru> Calls itself the official site of the "People's Republic" and publishes a large number of news items daily from the "government".

Website of Alexander Zakharchenko <http://av-zakharchenko.su> Contains official texts, videos and links to the social media channels of the "DPR" head

Website of Alexander Khodakovsky <http://patriot-donetsk.ru>

"DNR News" <http://dnr-news.com> A non-state run news service that sometimes contains topics avoided by official media.

Media from the "LPR"

Luganski Informatsionni Tsentri (LIZ) <http://lug-info.com> The equivalent of "DAN" in Donetsk, 100 percent government-run, uncritical journalism.

"State television" GTRK <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOM-PgCGKaX-KoIMhX8r-Ig>

Website of the government of the "LPR" <http://sovminlnr.su> Unlike in the "DPR", the official website does not publish any general news

Website of Igor Plotnitsky : <https://glava-lnr.su>

Russian Media

Tass news agency <http://tass.ru> State-run, mostly reliable

RIA Nowosti news agency <https://ria.ru> State-run, mostly reliable, since its fusion with "Russia's Voice" in 2013 however, it closely cooperates with propaganda instruments such as Sputnik and RT

Rosbalt.ru <http://www.rosbalt.ru> A relatively independent news site from St. Petersburg

Appendix:

Chronology of developments in the “People’s Republics” for 2016

15 January – Senior US diplomat Victoria Nuland and Kremlin negotiator Vladislav Surkov hold talks about the Ukraine conflict in Kaliningrad.

25-30 January – Ukrainian media⁶⁰ and politicians⁶¹ speculate that separatist leaders Zakharchenko and Plotnitsky might be removed from office.

27 January – An explosion damages the Lenin statue in Donetsk, which “DPR” leadership blame on Ukrainian agents. A wave of arrests and deportations follows, most affected is the local activist group “Responsible Citizens”⁶².

22 February – Zakharchenko dismisses⁶³ Foreign Minister Alexander Kofman, names Natalia Nikonorova as successor.

24 February – Ukrainian forces announce that the “DPR” has retreated from Shyrokyne (a village on the conflict line in the south of the Donetsk region)

7 March – Ukrainian troops move⁶⁴ into a former industrial area (“Promzona”) near Avdiivka (a town 6km north of Donetsk) – resulting in long battles in the region between Yasynuvata and Avdiivka.

16 March - Dmitri Kargayev, an adviser of the head of the “LPR”, Plotnitsky, is shot dead⁶⁵ in Luhansk.

25 March – In the “LPR”, Alexei Karyakin is dismissed as Chairman of the “Parliament” and subsequently flees to Russia. In September, a warrant for his arrest⁶⁶ in the “LPR” was issued because of an alleged coup attempt.

5 April – In the “DPR”, the head of the election authorities, Roman Lyagin, is dismissed⁶⁷, rumours later emerge that he was beaten by Zakharchenko’s people.

27 April – The “Ministry for State Security” in Donetsk announces⁶⁸ that it thwarted a planned assassination attempt of the head of the “DPR”, Zakharchenko.

11 May – At a meeting in Berlin, the Foreign Ministers of the Normandy format (Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia) announce a disengagement framework agreement⁶⁹.

10 June – In Donetsk, a large demonstration takes place⁷⁰ against an armed OSCE police mission.

6 August – The head of the “LPR”, Plotnitsky, is allegedly injured by a bomb explosion in Luhansk⁷¹. Ukrainian media suggest⁷² that this was a staged.

19 August – It is announced⁷³ that “LPR”-leader Plotnitsky has dismissed Health Minister Larissa Airapetyan because of corruption allegations.

1 September – An additional ceasefire⁷⁴ for the start of the school year, agreed in Minsk, comes into force and mostly⁷⁵ holds. A nighttime explosion in Luhansk damages a memorial for fallen “LPR” soldiers.

20 September – The head of the “LPR”, Plotnitsky, announces⁷⁶ that a coup attempt by “internal enemies commissioned by Kyiv” has been thwarted. Three prominent “LPR” representatives are subsequently accused, among them the ex-“Prime Minister” Tsympalov, who later allegedly hangs himself in his cell.

21 September – In Minsk, the Trilateral Contact Group signs⁷⁷ the disengagement agreement. It requires, that the sides retreat from the contact line in three pilot zones (Stanytsia Luhanska, Zolote and Petrivske). By the end of the year, this was implemented in only two zones : Zolote and Petrivske.

2 Oktober – Both “People’s Republics” hold “primaries” in which the candidates of the government parties win by a large margin.

60 <http://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2016/01/25/7096616/>

61 <https://www.facebook.com/zoryan.zoryan/posts/1021185654609048?pnref=story>

62 <http://dnr-online.ru/koordinatordoneckogo-gorodskogo-volonterskogo-centra-rasskazal-o-situacii-svyazannoj-s-nezakonnoj-deyatelnostyu-ryada-volonterskix-grupp-na-territorii-dnr-video/>

63 http://old.dnr-online.ru/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Ukaz_N41_22022016.pdf

64 <http://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/news/2016/04/7/7104751>

65 <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2016/04/23/ekonomicheskie-makhinacii-v-lnr-kto-stoit-za-ubiystvom-kargaeva.html>

66 <http://gplnr.su/vnimanie-rozysk/1676-karyakin-aleksey-vyacheslavovich.html>

67 https://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2016/04/17_a_8179493.shtml

68 http://mgb-dnr.ru/news.php?id=20160429_00&img_num=1

69 http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/DE/Infoservice/Presse/Meldungen/2016/160511_AM_Steinmeier_Normandietreffen.html

70 <http://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/3354758>

71 <http://glava-lnr.su/content/obrashchenie-glavy-lnr-iv-plotnickogo-k-narodu>

72 <http://www.civicmonitoring.org/entwicklungen-in-dnr-und-lnr-19-25-sept-2016-newsletter-nr-1/>

73 <http://lug-info.com/news/one/glava-lnr-predstavil-io-ministra-zdravookhraneniya-16340>

74 <http://osce.us6.list-manage.com/track/click?u=b11aceda364f8f9afa6cadbbb&id=488dae9acb&e=edee649226>

75 <http://osce.us6.list-manage.com/track/click?u=b11aceda364f8f9afa6cadbbb&id=5aa0702e90&e=edee649226>

76 <http://glava-lnr.su/content/v-respublike-predprinyata-popytka-gosudarstvennogo-perevorota>

77 <http://www.osce.org/cio/266331>

10 Oktober – In Luhansk, a large demonstration against an armed OSCE police mission takes place.

16 Oktober – Prominent “DPR” field commander “Motorola” (Arseny Pavlov) is killed in a bomb explosion in Donetsk. The separatists accuse⁷⁸ Kyiv of the attack.

19 Oktober – At a summit in Berlin of the Normandy format, the leaders of Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia decide⁷⁹ to draft a road map for implementing the Minsk Agreement.

26 Oktober – After a meeting of the Minsk contact group news emerges that both “People’s Republics” have indefinitely postponed local elections, planned for 2. November.

29 November – During a meeting in Minsk the foreign ministers of the Normandy format cannot agree on a road map.

7 December – At an initially secret meeting in Minsk, Ukrainian MP Nadiya Savchenko negotiates with the separatist leaders about the release of prisoners.

15 December – EU leaders agree⁸⁰ to lengthen the sanctions against Russia for another half a year.

16-18 December – Ukrainian troops south of Svitlodarsk⁸¹ in the Donetsk region move closer to the contact line. As a result, intense fighting breaks out between Svitlodarsk and Debaltseve.

20 December – The US extend their sanctions⁸² against Russia.

23 December – The head of the “LPR”, Plotnitsky, defends⁸³ the “Parliament’s” decision to condemn the work of Prime Minister Kozlov.

78 http://mgb-dnr.ru/news.php?id=20161018_00&img_num=0

79 <https://www.bundestkanzlerin.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2016/10/2016-10-19-treffen-normandie-format.html>

80 <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/12/19-sanctions-russia/>

81 <http://www.dw.com/de/kein-frieden-in-der-ostukraine-in-sicht/a-36919953>

82 <http://www.rferl.org/a/russia-more-sanctions-putin-chef-ukraine/28187565.html>

83 <https://glava-lnr.su/content/zayavlenie-igorya-plotnickogo-po-povodu-priznaniya-neudovletvoritelnoy-raboty-predsedatelya>

European Support for the Effective Monitoring of Human Rights in Eastern Ukraine

The report presented here have been produced as part of the project 'European Support for the Effective Monitoring of Human Rights in Eastern Ukraine' conducted by the German-Russian Exchange (DRA e.V.) with support from the Federal Foreign Office of Germany. In the second part of 2016, a weekly digest of developments in the DPL and LPR was carried out, dedicated to tracking the development of the situation in certain districts of Donetsk and Luhansk regions controlled by separatists (SADLR). The report presents a summary of the development and covers the whole year 2016.

The main aim of the project 'European Support for the Effective Monitoring of Human Rights in Eastern Ukraine' is the systematic and consistent documentation of the civilian population's situation and of violations of human and humanitarian rights in eastern Ukraine. An important part of the project is the creation of a network of European human rights organisations participating in the undertaking of international monitoring, which should enable detailed and unbiased spreading of information to a wide public about the situation surrounding the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

The work on the project is founded on the conviction that the documentation of the on-the-ground reality and violations of human rights should lead to the cessation of violence and serve as a signal to the violators of these human rights that they cannot rely on impunity. The European monitoring of human rights violations in eastern Ukraine is a contribution to the peace process and the possibility of reconciliation in the future.

The project is implemented by the following non-governmental organisations: in Ukraine by Vostok-SOS (<http://vostok-sos.org>), Eastern Ukrainian Centre for Civil Initiatives (<http://totalaction.org.ua>), Luhansk Regional Human Rights Centre 'Alternativa', in Poland by Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (www.hfhr.pl) and in Germany by DRA e.V. (www.austausch.org). The report and other information regarding the situation of civilians and human rights in eastern Ukraine are available online at www.civicmonitoring.org.