

Russia is Doomed: Catastrophic Post-Cold War Demographic Situation

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The words that are in the heading are not a fruit of the author's imagination, but it is a quite substantiated prediction based on specific figures and facts, which are a subject of discussion right in Russia today. It is a matter of catastrophic demographic situation.

Ethnic Russian population of the Russian Federation is rapidly decreasing. Entire cities and villages are ceasing to exist due to the lack of population in them. According to official figures of National Forum, «Present and Future of Russia's Population», which took place in Moscow last month, 11,000 villages and 290 cities have disappeared from the map of the Russian Federation. 13,000 villages are still on the map, but they remained with no inhabitants in them. Two villages are disappearing in Russia each day, which in one year is equal to a small province.

Deputy Minister of Health and Social Development of Russia, Vladimir Starodubtsev, said that Russia's population has decreased by 9 million over the last 10 years. Moreover, depopulation affected virtually entire Russia. Even according to understated figures, the number of the Russian population is decreasing 700 to 800 thousand each year (other reports show that the figure is 1.2 million a year). Since 1992 death rate among Russians exceeded birth rate and the difference has only been increasing ever since then.

Male death rate in Russia is one of the highest in the world. At the same time 30% of the dead are men of working years. Average life of men is 13 years less than that among women (women - 72 years, men - 58.8 years). Main reasons are alcoholism, oncology (cancer), traumas and poisonings. Deaths from abuse of alcohol in Russia skyrocketed 3.5 times over the past 5 years. Suicide rate exceeds Central European figures 2.5 times among males and 1.5 times among females. In Russia there are twice as many deaths in traffic accidents as there are in European states.

Russian youth ages 15 to 19 started dying 40 % more often. Out of today's generation of 16-year-olds, only 54 % will live until they reach their retirement age.

In 1998 for the first time the number of retirees in Russia exceeded the number of children and juveniles under 16 by 110,000. For January 1, 2004, this number has grown to 4.2 million. Right now the number of children under 14 is 2.5 times lower than the number of retirees (10.6 and 27.2 million accordingly). According to the predictions that have been made, starting the year 2006 the number of retirees will be growing even more actively and by 2016 it will comprise 25% of the entire Russian population.

According to the census of the Russian Federation, the number of ethnic Russians was 104

million out of 144.2 million of the overall population in Russia. Considering the fact that demographic figures in Russia have always been considered to be a national security issue, then proceeding from Soviet/Russian practice of demographic overstatements, you can say for sure that the number of 104 ethnic Russians is set too high and it's already been quite a while since the real number of ethnic Russians sank under the psychological mark of 100 million.

The signs of apparent worsening of demographic situation for Russians have been seen right in Moscow as well. This week Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper («Young Communist Truth») published the figures of ethnic structure of the population of the Russian capital. Senior research officer of Center for Geopolitical Research of Institute of Geography under Russian Academy of Sciences, Olga Vendina, whose research is based on the records from civil status registries in all districts of Moscow over the years of 1993 - 2003, 'ethnically tinged' neighborhoods have already been formed in Moscow. In these parts of the city Russian population is constantly decreasing, while the percentage of residents of other ethnic backgrounds is systematically increasing. Furthermore, it is in Moscow's historical center, where birthrate among non-Russian population is considerably higher than birthrate among Russians, who are being naturally ousted to the capital's outskirts.

The largest ethnic diasporas in Moscow, whose numbers are constantly growing due to sharp increase of newborns throughout the last 10 years are Azeris, Tatars, Armenians and Ukrainians. At the same time each 5th Russian woman marries a man from the Caucasus.

But that's not all. About a year ago Novye Izvestiya ('New Tidings') newspaper published some figures about ethnical structure of Russia, compiled by Jewish University of Jerusalem based on the 2002 census.

According to that sensational document, in 2002 the number of Chinese population in Russia reached almost 3.5 million, and thus the Chinese have now taken the fourth place in Russia's population, following Russians (104 million), Tatars (7.2 million), and Ukrainians (5.1 million). 15 years ago there were only 5 thousand Chinese living in Russia.

According to the predictions made by the experts, by the year 2013 every fourth person in Russia will be a Chinese.

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