

COALLAND

Faces of Donetsk



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Coalland – Faces of Donetsk

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Foreword

by Nickolai Denisov, ENVSEC regional desk officer for Eastern Europe, Geneva

As a doctoral student in Moscow, I did not see much of my university advisor. One of Russia's first environmental ministers and the deputy prime-minister of the Soviet Union after the 1991 coup d'état, he suddenly had to deal with a mountain of problems with the decaying union. Among the first were angry miners from Donbas banging their helmets in the centre of Moscow. As in many other places, miners were seen as the vanguard of political aspirations – and the reflection of growing desperation in the industrial badlands.

Readers interested in history may remember Alexey Stakhanov and Nikita Krushev, who both started their careers in Donetsk. Football fans witnessed the spectacular appearance of Shakhtar Donetsk in the 2009 UEFA Cup Final. Today the coal-producing and industrial region of Donetsk is Ukraine's major centre of gravity, supplying the country with industrial output, tax revenue, pollution, and its

business and political elite. In the region itself the environment remains both a bottleneck and a solution for improving people's lives: not an unimportant concern given Donetsk's special place on Ukraine's agenda.

In this publication we have tried to collect data, thoughts and impressions from several years of cooperation between the Environment and Security initiative and the people and authorities of Donetsk. Through this cooperation we wanted to bring solutions, which have worked in other parts of Europe, ranging from the Mining for Closure approach to providing citizens and decision-makers with understandable and timely information. We are also determined to make this information clear and visible through maps, photographs, art and journalism.

Not least, we want to reveal Donetsk in all its diversity, with different faces, seen from the inside and the outside, beyond just coal and football.



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This report was produced within the framework of *Assessment and Capacity-Building for Managing Environment and Security Risks in Donbas and Salihorsk regions*, a UNEP-led ENVSEC project implemented in Ukraine and Belarus to address environmental risk from hazardous activities, and improve environmental management and awareness. Project activities included technical assessments, training and analysis of mining sites, but also workshops and training sessions for journalists to build up their communication skills on environmental topics relevant to their region. This publication presents the findings and results of both parts of the project. It offers an introduction to the issues facing the Donetsk region, mainly focusing on environmental challenges. The text is complemented by media stories written by journalists from Belarus and Ukraine

who participated in the media training organized by ENVSEC. The articles featured here were produced during the workshops and have been published in various media across the region.

In addition, this report presents the findings of the ENVSEC risk assessment analysis, *Risk Assessment Considerations in the Donetsk Basin – Mine Closure and Spoil Dumps*, highlighting the need for solid risk assessment and the potential sources of risk associated with mining activities in Donetsk. Based on these findings, an action plan is proposed suggesting how these issues can be addressed by decision-makers and practitioners alike.

This publication uses original photographs by Alban Kakulya taken in Donetsk in May 2010.

Donetsk at first sight

Close to the centre of Donetsk stands a huge steelworks, Donetsk Metallurgical Plant, known locally as Donet-skstal. In a brave attempt to make this industrial behemoth less of an outrage to the senses the plant's owners have built a small pleasure garden at the entrance, complete with a pond on which live two swans. The swans' plumage is black. The local humorists enjoy telling credulous visitors that the birds were snowy white when they arrived, but quickly changed colour as the dust and pollution of the plant enveloped them. In fact they are Australian black swans, designed that way by nature. But everyone agrees it would be a shame to spoil a good story.

The city of Donetsk has a long pedigree. It began life as a Cossack village late in the 17th century, and by 1820 small-scale coal mining had started. The city proper was originally called Yuzovka, after John Hughes, the Welshman who is credited with founding it in 1869. In time more skilled workers and technicians arrived from Britain to expand the mines and build a steel mill.



The Soviet Union later developed the steel industry enormously. In the second world war the city (then known as Stalino) suffered grievously, the

population falling from 507,000 to 175,000 as the Nazi invaders came close to destroying it entirely. Collective responsibility in those grim

years meant that for every German soldier killed 100 inhabitants were put to death, and one for every policeman killed.



The death of Stalin and the gradual move towards less totalitarian rule from Moscow saw yet another name-change, this time to Donetsk (Nikita Khrushchev was a local boy). Peace brought gradual improvements for the miners, the industrial elite of Donbas* (the coal-mining region round Donetsk, along the Donets river). They became one of the highest-paid categories in the USSR. When the 1990s dawned they were influential actors in the social turmoil which was engulfing the dying Soviet Union, travelling to Moscow to bang their safety helmets on the pavement outside the Kremlin as a vivid way

of driving home their demands for a better life: health care, accommodation, recreation and leisure facilities, pensions – and of course more pay. The more the miners were owed in back pay, the oftener they gathered in Red Square. Nor was Moscow their only target, as Oleg Varfolomeyev wrote in 2002:*

“Miners’ marches on Kyiv have almost become a tradition of the Ukrainian summer. They block the main streets, sit down in front of the government building, bang their helmets and plastic bottles on the pavement, get promised their wages, and then return home. After some time, wage arrears begin to accumulate anew.”

*Donets Basin, also known as Donbas or Donbass (Ukrainian: Донецький басейн, usually abbreviated to Донбас; translit. Donetskiiy basin or Donbas; Russian: Донецкий бассейн, likewise usually shortened to Донбасс; translit. Donetskiiy basin or Donbas), is a historical, economic and cultural region of eastern Ukraine. It combines three oblasts (provinces) in the east of the country: the easternmost part of the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast around the city of Pavlohrad (the so-called “Western Donbas”), the northern and central parts of Donetsk Oblast (the southern part is Pryazovia) and the southern part of Luhansk Oblast (the northern part is Slobozhanshyna). The city of Donetsk is considered the unofficial capital of Donbas. Source: Wikipedia

The miners of Donbas had earned their laurels the hard way, and few harder than Alexey Stakhanov, the eponymous Stakhanovist. He worked in a coal mine in the Donbas town of Kadiyivka, and on 31 August 1935 was reported to have mined a record 102 tonnes in 5 hours and 45 minutes, 14 times

*Transitions Online 5 December 2002

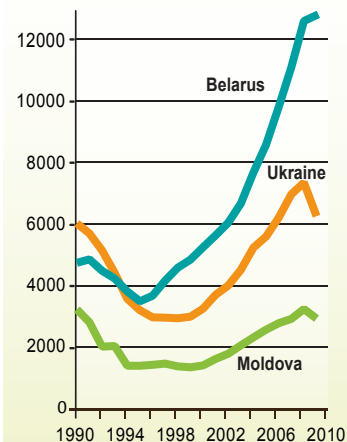


more than his assigned quota. On 19 September Stakhanov is credited with setting a new record by mining 227 tonnes in the space of one shift. He was hailed in the mass media as a model for others and was featured on the cover of Time magazine. Kadiyivka, understandably, is now called Stakhanov.

Ukraine became independent in 1991, and the bubble burst. Conditions rapidly deteriorated as post-Soviet industrial output fell. But the social infrastructure and the very survival of Donbas still depend on its heavy industry, handicapped by technology and attitudes inherited from the Soviet era as its traditional markets collapsed. Donetsk still lives by steel and coal, as no visitor could doubt. Once settled in your hotel, if

Gross National Income (GNI)

per capita
in current US dollars



Note: Purchasing Power Parity method.
Source: World Bank. Development Indicators database
Produced by Zoi Environment Network, January 2011

hammer, and its beloved soccer

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