



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
High Commissioner on National Minorities**

The Hague, 12 January 2001

Dear Mr. Minister,

In the beginning of last year the government of Ukraine requested me to investigate the situation of Ukrainian language education in your country. When I discussed this with your government, it offered to facilitate such an investigation. Earlier, your government had requested me to investigate the situation of Russian language education in Ukraine. The government of Ukraine also declared itself willing to facilitate such an investigation.

In the summer of last year I have studied the situation of Ukrainian language education in your country, assisted by two experts, Prof. Bowring from the United Kingdom and Mr. Zhekov from Bulgaria. My conclusions are based on visits to Moscow, St. Petersburg and Tyumen, where conversations took place with local and regional authorities and with representatives of Ukrainian organisations. In Moscow extensive consultations took place with governmental authorities. While in Moscow, I also received representatives of Ukrainian organisations in Krasnodar, Ekatarinburg and Moscow Oblast. I want to thank your government for its co-operation.

H.E. Mr. Igor Ivanov
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Moscow

Earlier in the summer, I have conducted similar studies in Ukraine, again assisted by Prof. Bowring and Mr. Zhekov. I visited, Kharkiv, Lviv, Odessa and Simferopol, and met there with the local and regional authorities and with representatives of the Russian community. In Kiev, I had extensive conversations with governmental authorities on several occasions.

Both my letter to you and to the Ukrainian Foreign Minister, Mr. Anatoly M. Zlenko, contain a number of recommendations. As soon as I have received replies to these letters, I will see to it that your government will be informed about our correspondence with the Ukrainian government, while the Ukrainian government will be informed about our exchange of letters. As is the practice, the Permanent Council of the OSCE will be subsequently informed as well.

Findings

According to the census of 1989, 4.362.000 Ukrainians were living in Russia. In addition there are many people living in Russia whose grandparents or great grandparents came from Ukraine but who no longer consider themselves to be Ukrainians.

Nearly half of the Ukrainians are dispersed all over the country. There are however a number of oblasts and cities where there are large concentrations of Ukrainians as the table below shows.

| Krai, Oblast, City | Number (in thousands) |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Tyumen Oblast | 260.2 |
| Moscow | 247.3 |
| Krasnodarskiy Krai | 195.9 |
| Moscow Oblast | 185.4 |
| Primorskiy Krai | 185.1 |
| Rostov Oblast | 178.8 |
| Leningrad Oblast | 150.9 |
| Voronezh Oblast | 122.6 |
| Saint Petersburg | 125.0 |
| Krasnoyarskiy Krai | 118.8 |
| Habarovski Krai | 112.6 |
| Chelyabinsk Oblast | 109.6 |
| Murmansk Oblast | 105.1 |
| Omsk Oblast | 104.2 |
| Oremburg Oblast | 102.0 |
| Saratov Oblast | 101.8 |
| Other parts of Russia | 1957.6 |

Russian legislation provides important guarantees regarding the linguistic and educational rights of the ethnic groups living in Russia. Article 68 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation, after stating that Russian is the state language of the Russian Federation, continues “The Russian Federation shall guarantee to all of its people the right to preserve their native language and the creation of conditions for its study and development”.

Still valid is the law of the Russian Soviet Socialist Federal Republic of 25 October 1991 on the languages of the peoples of the RSFSR. Article 3 provides i.a. that the State recognises the equal rights of the languages of the peoples of the RSFSR and their preservation and development.

Article 6 of the law of the Russian Federation of 10 July 1992 on Education provides that the citizens of the Russian Federation have the right to receive basic general education on to his/her native language, and also to instruction in that language within the limits of the possibilities of the education system. The right to education as to the language is guaranteed by the creation of the necessary number of institutions, classes, groups and conditions for their functioning. Article 33 makes detailed provision for the establishment of schools by private associations or groups.

It is also relevant to mention that on 21 August 1998 Russia ratified the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe for the protection of national minorities. In this respect it has also to be mentioned that article 15 of the Russian Constitution provides that treaties to which the Russian Federation is party shall be an integral part of its legal system.

The same article lays down the principle that in case an international treaty to which Russia is party has other rules than a Russian law, the treaty will prevail.

Of special significance is the law on National-Cultural Autonomies of 17 June 1996. It provides those ethnic groups which do not have their own territorial formation the option to create National-Cultural Autonomies. The law clearly sees these NCA's as important instruments for ensuring the various ethnic groups their linguistic and educational rights. For instance article 9 of the law provides i.a. that federal organs of creative power, and organs of executive power of the subjects of the Russian Federation co-operate with the NCA's in the publication of books, the distribution of periodical press, the organisation of TV programmes, the creation of means of mass information in Russian and in national (ethnic group) language. Article 10 of the law provides for the right to receive basis general education in the national (ethnic group) language, and the choice of the language of instruction and education.

Taken together, the various laws do meet relevant international standards regarding linguistic and educational rights of national minorities.

On the basis of information received from the Russian authorities it can be concluded that the linguistic and educational situation of the Ukrainian minority in Russia can be summarised as follows:

The Ukrainian language is being taught as a subject in more than 95 schools of Bashkortostan, in cities of St. Petersburg, Vorkuta, Krasnodar, Murmansk, Penza, Tomsk, Novy Urengoy.

As an additional course the Ukrainian language is offered in at least 2 schools of Belgorodskaya Region (town of Shebekino) and in 6 schools of Komi Republic. A network of Sunday schools where Ukrainian language is taught is functioning in the cities of Ufa, Nizhnekamsk, Kazan, Omsk, St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Vladivostok, Syktyvkar, Sochi, Surgut, Nizhnevartovsk, Tobolsk and others.

In Moscow within the State Open Pedagogical University there is a Ukrainian Institute, which is still functioning on a self-sustaining basis. The branch of the Ukrainian Institute has been opened in Ufa on a commercial basis as well. At the Volgograd and Voronezh State Pedagogical Universities an extracurricular Ukrainian language course has been made available on a voluntary basis. A specialization Ukrainian Language and Literature has been introduced at the Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University's Philology Department. The Tumensk State University has enrolled students for the Russian Language and Literature major with the concentration on Ukrainian Language and Literature. During the last year an introduction of Ukrainian Chair has been done.

In Orenburg there is a Saturday school within the regional museum dedicated to Ukrainian language studies. Two schools now offer additional Ukrainian language courses. Five teachers of Ukraine now work at the schools. There are 4 Ukrainian schools in Samara region. In Samara there is a Sunday school based on the secondary Slavic school # 132.

In Tyumen plans for opening of a Ukrainian school for 1000 pupils but have not yet led to concrete results.

The conclusion has to be drawn that, considering the size of the Ukrainian minority in Russia, the number of Ukrainian language courses and of Ukrainian language schools and classes is small. I have been trying to find out which factors have led to this situation. A number of Ukrainian organisations felt that this was due to insufficient attention and co-operation on the part of the Russian authorities. However, in each conversation we have had with Russian

officials in various regions, we were always assured that, provided that it could be proved that 15 to 20 pupils would attend, the necessary steps would be taken, even though this would

cause financial difficulties. Several of them added that in their view insufficient interest on the part of Ukrainian parents proved to be a major difficulty on several occasions when efforts were undertaken to set up Ukrainian language schools.

In my view the problem of transport to and from the schools has been an obstacle which ought not to be underestimated. In large urban areas, pupils would have to travel long distances in order to reach their school, especially because it would be unrealistic to expect that more than one could be created. This has had the effect of reducing the interest of parents in such a project. I believe, therefore, that it would be better to aim at the creation of Ukrainian classes in Russian language schools or the creation of Sunday schools. In this respect it has to be noted that recently a Ukrainian class in a Russian lyceum in Moscow has been set up.

The Ukrainian organisations also complained that lack of financial reserves reduced the role and significance of the National-Cultural Autonomies. The Russian authorities do not deny that this is a restraining factor. This is clearly demonstrated in the following passage in the report of the Russian government to the Council of Europe on the implementation of the Framework Convention on national minorities: "Federal and regional national and cultural autonomies are working on programmes aimed at preserving and further developing languages and cultures, and plan to prepare textbooks incorporating studies of the country of origin, for instance textbooks of the Ukrainian language and history for Ukrainians residing in Russia. Unfortunately, the problems of financing hamper full implementation of these objectives."

Recommendations

Regarding future educational policies, I should like to make the following recommendations to your government.

1. In a number of cities, it would be desirable to explore, without a priori excluding the option of Ukrainian language schools, whether the number of Ukrainian children getting a Ukrainian language education could be increased by setting up Ukrainian language classes in Russian schools. I recommend renewed contacts between Russian authorities and Ukrainian organisations to discuss this.
2. It is desirable to ensure more clarity regarding the rights of parents to request the setting up of a Ukrainian language class in a Russian language school, provided that the parents

of at least 15 to 20 children apply. The board of schools which are attended by pupils with Ukrainian ethnicity would have to be obliged to inform parents annually that such possibilities exist, and would also have to indicate by which date applications will have to

be received. In order to help to overcome the frequently occurring problem of lack of communication between potentially interested parents, school boards might also be obliged to inform parents if one or more parents have taken the initiative to apply for a separate class.

3. Though the Federal Law of 1996 on National-Cultural Autonomies created an innovative instrument for helping the various national minorities in Russia in their educational and linguistic needs and in maintaining and developing their culture, its significance is reduced when insufficient funds are available to achieve these aims, as is the case at present. I therefore recommend that in the next five years there will be an annual increase of funds available for this purpose.
4. Regional radio and TV broadcasts in the Ukrainian language take place in some regions. I recommend that this system be extended to other regions or cities with major concentrations of Ukrainians as well, such as Moscow and St. Petersburg. These broadcasts help to increase the sense of cultural identity and also provide much needed information, for instance regarding the activities of various Ukrainian cultural organisations in different parts of the country.
5. It is desirable that the plan for giving the Ukrainian library in Moscow a separate status will be realised soon. Inter-library exchange with Ukraine deserves state support.
6. I recommend that the Russian Federation becomes a party to the Council of Europe Charter on regional or minority languages.

These were the recommendations I wanted to make to you, Mr. Minister. I am looking forward with great interest to your reply. I take the liberty to send a copy of this letter to the Minister of Education, Mr. V.M. Filipov.

Yours sincerely,

Max van der Stoep
OSCE High Commissioner
on National Minorities

Russian Federation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Moscow, 9 February 2001

Dear Mr. Van der Stoel,

Thank you for your letter. I have carefully studied the conclusions and recommendations, included in it and which I will convey to the respective Russian institutions and organizations. I am confident that your considerations would be of help in the work aimed at further developing the practice of the inter-ethnic relations in our country.

Looking forward to our continued fruitful co-operation

Respectfully *[signed]*

I. Ivanov

H.E. Mr. Max van der Stoel
OSCE HCNM

The Hague