



The President and Fellows of Harvard College

Russians in Ukraine: Problems and Prospects

Author(s): ROMAN SOLCHANYK

Source: *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 22, Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe (1998), pp. 539-553

Published by: [Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41036757>

Accessed: 28/09/2014 20:58

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute and The President and Fellows of Harvard College are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Russians in Ukraine: Problems and Prospects

ROMAN SOLCHANYK

Before independence, it would have been difficult to imagine that there could be a “Russian question” in Ukraine. Ukraine and Belarus were probably the two non-Russian Soviet republics where ethnic Russians felt most at home; in some respects, they were perhaps even more comfortable in Kyiv or Minsk than in Omsk or Tomsk. Indeed, as Roman Szporluk pointed out some years ago, as a function of the special political status that Russians enjoyed throughout the Soviet Union and because of the specific nature of the historically conditioned Ukrainian-Russian relationship—which, from the Russian standpoint, translated into the notion that Ukrainians and Russians are essentially the same *narod*—Russians in Soviet Ukraine could hardly be considered a genuine national minority except in a literal, arithmetic sense.¹ A well-known specialist on ethnicity and a prominent spokesman for Russian causes in Ukraine recently made a similar observation, arguing that during the Soviet period Russian culture in Ukraine was understood to be Soviet culture that was conveyed in the Russian language and that the close ties between Ukrainians and Russians served to blur ethnic differences between the two groups even further.² Stated differently, although Russians were a presence throughout the Soviet Union, it was largely taken for granted that they “belonged” in Ukraine, which in some sense also made them less “Russian” than Russians in Estonia, Georgia, or Uzbekistan.

Szporluk noted that this situation could change if Ukraine were to become independent—that is, that Russians in Ukraine could become an “ordinary” national minority. There are clear indications that such a transformation may be under way. Organized groups representing the Russian community in Ukraine are now troubled by such issues as the decline in the number of Russian-language schools and the perceived marginalization of the Russian intelligentsia and, more broadly, are critical of government policies that affect their interests. Government leaders in Moscow remind their Ukrainian counterparts at official meetings on the highest levels of their concern about safeguarding the rights of Russians and Russian speakers. Respectable Russian newspapers such as *Nezavisimaia gazeta* publish articles bemoaning the “forced ukrainianization” and “ethnocide” of Russians in Ukraine, particularly in Crimea. Some Western scholars have suggested that Ukraine may become, already is, or, in any case, is perceived by Russians as being a “nationalizing state.” In early 1994, a U.S. National Intelligence Estimate was cited as having posited a scenario wherein an internal Ukrainian-Russian ethnic conflict could

result in civil war, the fragmentation of Ukraine along overlapping regional, ethnic, and linguistic lines, and Moscow's intervention to restore peace and tranquillity. That same year, a prominent Washington-based public policy center published a curious document that imagined a Ukrainian-Russian confrontation along the lines of the Serbian-Bosnian, Armenian-Azerbaijani, and Georgian-Abkhazian models; recommended to Washington that the United States should make clear to Ukraine that it will not countenance "violent repression of Russian separatists or denial of their political rights"; and argued that U.S. interests would be better served if certain Russian-speaking areas of Ukraine became independent or were affiliated with Russia.³

All of this suggests, at varying levels of seriousness, that the demise of the Soviet Union and the establishment of an independent Ukraine have created a new situation for the Russian minority. On the one hand, the specifically Soviet political attributes and functions of Russians in Ukraine (as elsewhere in the former USSR) have been rendered largely superfluous. Such typically Soviet concepts as "the national languages," "the national literatures," and "the national republics," which were never applied to the Russian language, Russian literature, and the RSFSR—and which underscored that things Russian had a different status in the Soviet Union—are now anachronisms.⁴ At the same time, it would be unwise to altogether ignore or minimize "vestiges of the Soviet past" and their attraction for both Russians and Ukrainians. A nationwide poll conducted in Ukraine in 1996 showed that more than half of Russian respondents considered their "Fatherland" to be the USSR; the corresponding figure for Ukrainians was almost half as much.⁵ On the other hand, the historical baggage that has defined the Ukrainian-Russian relationship continues to make its influence felt in a myriad of ways. President Leonid Kuchma, for example, told an audience of students and academics in Moscow in early 1998 that "our country [Ukraine] not only was, but remains a powerful source of nourishment for all-Russian [*obshcherossiiskaia*] culture." But he also said that support for the development of Ukrainian culture and language is dictated by "the necessity of compensating for losses suffered as a result of unintended or conscious russification."⁶ In the meantime, most Russians apparently remain convinced that Ukrainians are actually Russians. A poll conducted in Russia in the fall of 1997 revealed that 56 percent of respondents felt that Russians and Ukrainians are one *narod*.⁷ It is against this somewhat ambiguous if not entirely contradictory background that Russians in contemporary Ukraine are attempting to define their post-Soviet role and status.

Before taking a closer look at this process and the issues that it has brought to the surface, it may be useful to recall some basic data about Ukraine's Russian population and to briefly survey official Kyiv's approach to nationality and interethnic matters. The 1989 census recorded 11.4 million Russians in Ukraine, representing 22.1 percent of the overall population. Although the proportion of Russians in Latvia, Estonia, and Kazakhstan is higher, in absolute terms Ukraine has the largest Russian community in the so-called Near or New

Abroad. At the end of the 1980s, about 45 percent of all Russians outside of the RSFSR were in Ukraine. At that juncture, slightly more than 42 percent of Ukraine's Russian population had been born there. In terms of regional distribution, almost 70 percent of Russians live in the eastern oblasts of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, and in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. There are substantial numbers of Russians in the southern oblasts of Mykolaïv, Odesa, and Kherson. Crimea is the only administrative subdivision of the country with a Russian majority, which was 67 percent in 1989. That figure has certainly decreased over the past decade because of the return of the Crimean Tatars from their places of exile in Central Asia. It should be noted that Soviet censuses are thought to have yielded inflated numbers for Russians because of, among other things, the perceived advantages of Russian nationality.⁸ Critics of the government's policies now fear that the next census will record the reverse process—namely, Russians choosing to become Ukrainians.⁹

The prevailing view among outside observers, including international monitoring groups, is that, with few exceptions, interethnic harmony has been the rule in Ukraine—something that cannot be said of most of the other former Soviet republics. The two regions that do not entirely fit this description are western Ukraine and Crimea. In the former, Russians and other national minorities complain that ultranationalist Ukrainian groups foster ethnic hatred and that local authorities fail to take appropriate action in such cases; in the latter, Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars claim that they are discriminated against by the local Russians. Overall, however, it would be difficult to find fault with the assessment offered by the chief rabbi of Kyiv and Ukraine—namely, that “Ukraine has the best human rights record in the former Soviet Union.”¹⁰ Much of the credit for this state of affairs belongs to the country's leadership, which has been consistent in its perception of the Ukrainian nation as a territorial and political concept rather than an ethnic one. Virtually all of Ukraine's numerous political parties share this view. Ultranationalist political groups are few, small, and have little if any impact on national politics. The marginalization of such groups was illustrated during the 1998 parliamentary elections, when the two parties propagating “Ukraine for Ukrainians!” received 0.2 percent of the national party list vote. Equal rights for all national groups are guaranteed by several documents and laws adopted by the parliament, beginning with the preindependence declaration of state sovereignty (July 1990), the Declaration of the Rights of Nationalities of Ukraine (November 1991), and the Law on National Minorities in Ukraine (June 1992).¹¹

Language issues must be examined in somewhat more detail because, among other things, they have been the focus of much controversy and heated debate. The Law on Languages in the Ukrainian SSR, which was adopted in the fall of 1989, gives Ukrainian the exclusive status of the state language, a provision that is also embodied in the 1996 Constitution. The language law, as it is more commonly known, also legalized the concept of “languages of inter-

nationality communication,” and these were identified as “Ukrainian, Russian, and other languages.” This was a modification of long-standing Soviet ideological jargon that was used to characterize the special status and “internationalizing” functions of the Russian language. The lawmakers did not specify what was to be understood by this designation, which, moreover, can also be found in the constitution. More importantly, even a casual reading of the law leads to the conclusion that on a practical level the status of Ukrainian as the sole state language is rendered largely meaningless by the fact that Russian and indeed all other languages used in Ukraine are granted broad prerogatives in the public sector, and especially insofar as “places compactly inhabited by citizens of other [non-Ukrainian] nationalities” are concerned. Public officials are expected to know Ukrainian, Russian, and, if necessary, another language. Laws and other normative acts of “the highest organs of state power” are published in Ukrainian and Russian. At lower levels, including the national ministries, official documents may be issued in other languages. The language of instruction throughout the educational system is Ukrainian, but another language may be substituted in accordance with the national composition of a given locality or region. Parents have the right to freely choose the language of instruction for their children. Ukrainian and Russian are obligatory subjects in all general education schools. The law provided for generous timelines of up to 10 years for the implementation of certain of its provisions, specifically those concerning the educational system. No mechanism was established to enforce the law.¹² It is probably quite true that the law had “relatively little impact” in the years immediately after its passage.¹³ More precisely, the 1989 language law is still largely irrelevant. What changed is that Ukraine became independent in December 1991, which raised many questions—including questions about the role, status, and future of the Russian language.

The 1992 Law on National Minorities of Ukraine reiterates some of the key postulates of the language law, guarantees all national minorities national-cultural autonomy, and specifies that native-language instruction, or the study of the native language in state institutions or through national cultural societies, is guaranteed by the state. The constitution also addresses language issues. In addition to state status, the state “guarantees the all around development and functioning of the Ukrainian language in all spheres of social life throughout the entire territory of Ukraine.” As for “Russian and other languages of national minorities in Ukraine,” their “free development, utilization, and protection” are also guaranteed. Russians, therefore, are clearly understood to be a national minority. The state also “facilitates learning the languages of inter-nationality communication.”

The main complaint of Russian rights activists is that the use of the Russian language in the educational system is being circumscribed in violation of the law. The argument can be simple and straightforward: officials at the national and local levels issue instructions and orders and institute practices that are in violation of the language law and the constitution. On a more sophisticated

level, critics point out that the legislation, decrees, and other official documents emanating from Kyiv that impinge on language issues are often vague and abstract enough so that officials can basically do or not do whatever moves them at the moment. In the fall of 1992, for example, the Ministry of Education ordered that the language status of schools be brought into optimal accordance with the national composition of every region, specifically in the first grade. This had clear implications for schools in eastern and southern Ukraine, where there were few Ukrainian-language schools but where the majority of the population is Ukrainian. The question arises, therefore, as to the guaranteed right of parents to freely choose the language of instruction. The following year, it was decided that, in principle, entrance examinations to institutions of higher learning would be conducted in Ukrainian; incoming students who had less than five years of Ukrainian-language study in the general education schools were exempted. Ukrainian-language instruction would also be introduced during the first academic year.¹⁴ The language law, however, allowed for instruction in non-Ukrainian languages together with Ukrainian in areas with a non-Ukrainian majority. In June 1999, in the midst of the presidential election campaign, Kuchma sent an instruction to the minister of education proposing changes that would allow entrance examinations to institutions of higher learning to be conducted in Russian as well as Ukrainian. A corresponding letter was sent out by the ministry to administrators of the higher schools that “recommend[ed] introducing a supplement to the regulations governing admissions that would provide for the possibility of taking entrance examinations in the Russian language.”¹⁵ In western Ukraine, the recommendation is being ignored. The administration of the Lviv State Institute of Physical Culture, for example, declared that even if 10 such instructions were issued, they would not be implemented because Ukrainian is the state language.¹⁶ Clearly, there is plenty of room here for interpretation and discussion. What the Russians would like to see is a clear delineation of their language rights.¹⁷

The fact that language issues figure prominently in discussions about the “Russian question,” and not only in Ukraine, should come as no surprise. Irrespective of whether the Soviet Union fits the description of a “classic” empire and the related question of whether Russians in the Soviet Union can be described as an imperial nation, the fact remains that the Soviet leadership pursued and implemented policies that promoted the Russian language. For Russians in the non-Russian republics, what this meant was that the language question was essentially a nonissue. Russian was the language of the Communist Party, the language of “progress,” and much else. Russian-language schools, Russian-language media, Russian-language movies and theaters, and almost anything else in Russian was easily available and accessible, particularly in Ukraine and even more so in Belarus. That is no longer the case to the extent that it was earlier, particularly in the educational sphere.

In the 1990–1991 school year, the proportion of schoolchildren taught in Russian in Ukraine’s general education schools was 51.3 percent; in urban

areas the figure was 68 percent.¹⁸ After independence, the overall proportions decreased in every successive year, dropping to 34 percent in 1998–1999,¹⁹ with a corresponding increase in the proportion of schoolchildren taught in Ukrainian (see Table 1). This figure is still greater than both the share of Russians listed in the 1989 census (22.1 percent) and the proportion of the

Table 1. Language of Instruction in General Education Schools (percentage of schoolchildren)

	<i>Russian</i>	<i>Ukrainian</i>
1991/92	50.0	49.3
1992/93	47.8	51.4
1993/94	44.9	54.3
1994/95	43.0	57.0
1995/96	41.0	58.0
1996/97	39.0	60.0
1997/98	36.0	63.0
1998/99	34.0	65.0

Sources: Ministerstvo statystyky Ukraïny, *Narodne hospodarstvo Ukraïny u 1993 rotsi. Statystychnyi shchorichnyk* (Kyiv, 1994), p. 384; Ministerstvo statystyky Ukraïny, *Statystychnyi shchorichnyk Ukraïny za 1995 rik* (Kyiv, 1996), p. 446; Derzhavnyi komitet statystyky Ukraïny, *Statystychnyi shchorichnyk Ukraïny za 1996 rik* (Kyiv, 1997), p. 457; and Derzhavnyi komitet statystyky Ukraïny, *Statystychnyi shchorichnyk Ukraïny za 1998 rik* (Kyiv, 1999), p. 429.

total population that declared Russian as their native language (32.8 percent). Interestingly, the census results for native language largely correspond to the data from opinion polls. In 1994–1998, the proportion of respondents who declared Russian as their native language ranged from 34.7 percent to 36.5 percent. Another way of looking at language affiliation is to gauge its use in the family setting. The polls show that between 32.4 percent and 34.5 percent converse exclusively in Russian; another 26.8 percent to 34.5 percent use both Russian and Ukrainian depending upon circumstances.²⁰ From this standpoint as well, there would appear to be no grounds for serious concern about the language of instruction in schools. A rather different situation emerges when the “language of convenience”—which is defined as the language that respondents feel more comfortable with during survey interviews—is used to determine language preference. According to one source, Russian is the language of convenience for about 55 percent of the population in Ukraine; another source gives the lower figure of 43 percent.²¹ These considerably higher figures—which are said to be the most reliable indicator of what might be termed the “comfort zone” for Russians and Russian speakers and that are obviously out of line with language trends in Ukraine’s schools—form much of the basis for discussions about Ukraine as a “nationalizing state.” At the same time, there is

a rather puzzling aspect of this problem. In a 1994 survey, 43.5 percent of Ukrainians opted for Russian as their language of convenience; in 1999, that figure rose to 50.9 percent.²² The question that arises is: If the Russian language in Ukraine is under threat, declining in prestige, losing its viability, and the like, why are larger numbers of Ukrainians finding it increasingly more “convenient”?

Thus far, our discussion has focused on developments at the national level. But Ukraine is a country with regional distinctions. There are clear differences in the ethnic composition, language preferences, and political orientations of the eastern, central, and western parts of the country. The language of instruction in schools is no exception. In the eastern oblasts and in Crimea—areas with the largest numbers of Russians and Russian speakers—schoolchildren continue to be taught primarily in Russian. There has been virtually no change in Crimea, and in the Donbas Russian-language enrollments have dropped by nearly 7 percent. There has been a very significant decrease of almost 28 percent in Dnipropetrovsk (see Table 2). Overall, the Russian language continues to prevail in those regions where it has traditionally been dominant.

Table 2. Russian-Language Instruction in General Education Schools in the East and in Crimea (percentage of schoolchildren)

	1991/92	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99
Crimea	99.9	99.9	99.7	99.7	99.5	99.4	99.7	98.1
Donetsk	96.7	96.1	95.1	95.0	94.0	93.0	91.0	90.0
Luhansk	93.3	92.7	91.6	91.0	90.8	90.0	89.0	87.0
Zaporizhzhia	77.3	75.1	72.5	70.0	69.0	67.0	64.0	62.0
Dnipropetrovsk	68.9	67.4	63.4	58.0	54.0	50.0	45.0	41.0
Kharkiv	72.0	69.4	66.9	65.0	63.0	61.0	57.0	53.0

Sources: Ibid.

In short, the policy inaugurated by the Ministry of Education in 1992 has fallen short of its intended goals.

The trends that are current in the general education schools are also evident in Ukraine’s preschool institutions and in the universities and other institutions of higher learning. In 1991, 48.8 percent of preschoolers were taught in Russian; in 1998, the corresponding figure was 25.3 percent.²³ The most far-reaching changes have occurred at the university level and its equivalents. By the end of the 1980s, higher education in Ukraine was almost entirely in the Russian language. In the 1989–1990 academic year, the proportion of students taught in Russian was 93 percent; the following academic year it was 84 percent.²⁴ Had it not been for the universities in western Ukraine and to a lesser

extent Kyiv State University, instruction in Ukraine's higher schools would have been nearly all in Russian.²⁵ By the 1998–1999 academic year, however, the proportion of students taught in Russian had dropped to between 28 percent and 34 percent, depending upon the level of accreditation.²⁶ As with the general education schools, the prevalence of Russian or Ukrainian in the pre-school and higher education establishments differs significantly from region to region. In Crimea, the proportion of university and higher school students taught in Russian in 1998–1999 was 100 percent; in the Donbas it ranged from 77 percent to 89 percent.

In the areas of press, publishing, and radio and television, the Russian language has strengthened its position. Between 1990 and 1998, the proportion of the annual print run of journals in Ukrainian decreased from 90.4 percent to 17.5 percent; the corresponding figures for the single-issue print run of newspapers were 68 percent and 39.6 percent. Obviously, the Russian-language press accounts for virtually all of the balance. Between 1995 and 1997, the number of Russian-language journals increased from 101 to 118 and the number of newspapers from 721 to 796. The data for books and brochures appear at first glance to favor the Ukrainian language. In 1997, Ukrainian-language titles accounted for 49.8 percent of the total and Russian-language titles for 37.5 percent. It turns out, however, that nearly half of the Ukrainian titles were textbooks. In 1998, Russian-language broadcasts accounted for 9 percent and 20.6 percent of state radio and television air time, respectively. But almost two-thirds of total radio and television air time was in Russian.²⁷ The most popular newscast in Ukraine is the *Vremia* program of ORT (Russian Public Television), which is available by satellite and cable and is also carried by Inter, a private channel.²⁸ Inter, which is partly owned by ORT and broadcasts in Russian, has captured the largest share of prime time television viewing (32.9 percent) in Ukraine and can reach 70 percent of viewers countrywide. Studio 1+1, a private company that broadcasts in Ukrainian on the state UT-2 channel and can reach 73 percent of viewers, is a close second with 29.2 percent of prime time.²⁹ Inter and Studio 1+1 were created in 1996 and 1995, respectively, and it will be interesting to see how they fare in the commercial marketplace.

Language issues may be controversial, but apparently not for the overwhelming majority of Ukraine's citizens, irrespective of nationality. In the grand scheme of things, few people are concerned about the status of the Russian language. In November 1998, 4 percent were troubled by this issue; in early 1999, it was 2 percent. When asked what sets people apart in Ukraine, 2 percent said language issues and 4 percent identified nationality.³⁰ Outside of Crimea, there are no specifically Russian political parties in Ukraine. The few parties that campaign primarily on Russian issues are marginalized to about the same extent as Ukrainian ethnic ultranationalists. In the 1998 parliamentary elections, the SLOn—Social-Liberal Union, whose program categorically rejected what were described as attempts to legalize “the political division of a

single [Russian-Ukrainian] people” and supported official status for the Russian language, received 0.9 percent of the national party list vote. The Union Party, which, among other things, advocated recognizing Russians in Ukraine as a “state-forming” nation and the Russian language as the second state language, garnered 0.7 percent of the vote. Finally, the Party of Regional Revival of Ukraine, whose name reflects its main focus but which also promised “legal priorities” for the Russian language, managed 0.9 percent.

There appears to be a fair amount of consensus that the Russian community continues to remain rather comfortable in Ukraine.³¹ Russians do not sense that they are being discriminated against, are not leaving the country, and do not seem to be particularly interested in Moscow’s protection. Crimea—which at one time was thought to have the potential for becoming a Ukrainian Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, or Transdnister—is no exception. There was certainly a Crimean problem in Ukraine, which has since faded, but there was never a Russian problem in Crimea. Nonetheless, the conventional wisdom in Moscow seems to be that the Russian minority in Ukraine requires its attention—specifically, that the Russian language and culture are under siege. For several years, one of the main stumbling blocks in the negotiations on the bilateral friendship treaty was Moscow’s insistence that Kyiv agree to dual Russian-Ukrainian citizenship. That issue was eventually removed from the treaty negotiations, but it remains on Russia’s wish list.³² On the eve of his visit to Kyiv in May 1997 to sign the Black Sea Fleet agreements, former Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin publicly expressed his concern about “the line, which is increasingly manifesting itself in Ukraine towards restriction and actually ousting of the Russian language and culture from the state and intellectual life of the society.”³³ A top aide to Yeltsin told journalists in Kyiv a few days later that restrictions on the rights of Russian speakers to Russian-language education and information would be on the agenda of the presidential summit that ultimately resulted in the signing of the friendship treaty. The Russian State Duma delayed ratification of the treaty for more than a year; according to one Russian lawmaker, his colleagues objected first and foremost to the “artificial restrictions” on the Russian language, Russian schools, and television broadcasting in Russian, and insisted that these be taken into account by the Ukrainian side.³⁴ When the treaty was approved by the State Duma in December 1998, it was accompanied by a separate statement addressed to the Ukrainian president, parliament, and government that referred to restrictions on the rights of Russian speakers in Ukraine as an issue that needed to be resolved by Kyiv.³⁵ Two months earlier, the State Duma had adopted a similar document protesting that the Crimean constitution granted Ukrainian the exclusive status of the state language on the territory of the peninsula.³⁶ Georgii Tikhonov, who headed the State Duma Committee on CIS Affairs and Ties with Compatriots, has argued that Kyiv’s policies amount to a “total pogrom against Russian culture” in Ukraine.³⁷

Tikhonov's assertions are quite obviously nonsense. What is important, however, is that his views proceed from a frame of reference for Russian-Ukrainian relations—in the broadest sense of the term—that is shared by most of Russia's political class. It is a frame of reference that does not accommodate the notion of Russians in Ukraine as an "ordinary" national minority. Instead, he and other Russian officials have argued that Russians are a "state-forming" nation, a concept that also has its supporters in Ukraine. It is not entirely clear what that means. Another variation on this theme is that Russians in Ukraine should be recognized as a "partner nation,"³⁸ the implications of which also are less than obvious. There is every indication that a similar discourse is increasingly informing the agenda of Russian rights activists in Ukraine. The 1998 conference on the "Dialogue of Ukrainian and Russian Cultures in Ukraine" adopted recommendations that, among other things, referred to the "juridically unjustified forced and illegal acceleration of eliminating the Russian language and culture from the educational sphere, official information, and state-political life, and the artificial demolition of the historical affinity of the Ukrainian-Russian linguistic and artistic cultures."³⁹ The First Congress of Russians of Ukraine, which was convened in May 1999, accused the government of "establishing a policy directed at the massive expulsion of the Russian ethno-cultural factor from all aspects of society."⁴⁰

There is every indication that the language question will continue to stir emotions—both within Ukraine and in relations between Kyiv and Moscow. In mid-December 1999, Ukraine's Constitutional Court issued a ruling stating that Ukrainian is the "obligatory language of instruction in all state educational institutions of the country." The use and study of languages of the national minorities, including Russian, is said to require authorization. The Ukrainian language was also declared obligatory "on the entire territory of Ukraine in implementing the authority of the organs of state power and the organs of local self-administration and in other spheres of public life."⁴¹ The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs reacted with a note to the Ukrainian embassy in Moscow at the end of January 2000 expressing the hope that Ukraine would implement its policies with regard to Russian speakers in the spirit of the Ukrainian-Russian friendship treaty. At the same time, it made public a statement criticizing Kyiv's moves as a violation of Ukraine's constitution. Fuel was added to the fire when the Council on Questions of Language Policy attached to Kuchma's office approved a draft decree of the Cabinet of Ministers "On Additional Measures to Broaden the Functioning of Ukrainian as the State Language." The proposed decree foresees screening state officials at all levels with respect to their knowledge and use of Ukrainian in the performance of their duties; completing the process of bringing language instruction in schools in line with the country's national composition; regulating the language status of private radio and television channels; developing a program of derussification of the sport and tourist industries; overseeing the compliance of theaters with their language status; regulating the tours of foreign entertainment groups in

Ukraine; and the introduction of tax levies on outside publications disseminated in the country.⁴² This prompted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow to issue another statement, which asserted that “certain forces in Ukraine seem determined to create a phenomenon unseen in Europe before—to make the native language of the overwhelming majority of the population [*sic*] an actual outcast, reduce its status to marginal, and possibly even squeeze it out.”⁴³ Russia’s Human Rights Commissioner urged international organizations to increase their monitoring of the situation in Ukraine.⁴⁴ And in Kyiv, Russian rights activists appealed to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to render assistance in the observation of the rights of all citizens of Ukraine regardless of their origin or language.⁴⁵

In one sense, therefore, the Russian question in Ukraine is not very different from any other national minority question. Russians, like most others, are interested in preserving their identity and defending their rights. On the other hand, what distinguishes them from Poles, Hungarians, or Jews is that their former status in Ukraine dictates how they perceive their current situation.⁴⁶ What this suggests is that the process of Russians in Ukraine becoming an “ordinary” national minority is part of the lengthy, complex, and larger process of “normalizing” Russian-Ukrainian relations.

NOTES

I would like to thank Stephen Rapawy, formerly of the U.S. Bureau of the Census, for providing me with the most recent official statistics on language in the educational system and in the media.

1. Roman Szporluk, "Russians in Ukraine and Problems of Ukrainian Identity in the USSR," in *Ukraine in the Seventies: Papers and Proceedings of the McMaster Conference on Contemporary Ukraine, October 1974*, ed. Peter J. Potichnyj (Oakville, ON, 1975), pp. 195–96.
2. Nikolai Shul'ga, "Krizis etnicheskogo samoopredeleniia," *Sodruzhestvo NG* 22 December 1999: 12.
3. Robert B. Cullen, *Ukraine, Ukrainian Minorities and United States Policy*, The Atlantic Council of the United States, Occasional Paper Series (Washington, DC, 1994), pp. ix–xiii.
4. Ihor Losiev, "Ukraïns'ke pytannia i rosiis'ka natsional'na samoidentyfikatsiia," *Suchasnist'* 4 (April 1999): 65.
5. Sergei Savoskul, "Russkie v nezavisimoi Ukraine: status, identichnost', perspektivy," in *Ukraina i Rossiia: obshchestva i gosudarstva*, ed. and comp. D. E. Furman (Moscow, 1997), p. 283.
6. For the text of Kuchma's address, see *Uriadovyi kur'ier* 5 March 1998.
7. Interfax, 27 October 1997.
8. See, for example, Iaroslav Dashkevych, "Ukraïna i natsional'ni menshosti," *Derzhavnist'* 1(3) October 1991: 24.
9. N. A. Shul'ga, "Sostoianie russkoi kul'tury v Ukraine: mify i realii," in *Dialog ukrainskoi i russkoi kul'tur v Ukraine. Materialy III-i mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii (12–13 noiabria 1998 goda, g. Kiev)* (Kyiv, 1999), p. 14.
10. *The Washington Post* 28 March 1995.
11. The texts are published in *Natsional'ni vidnosyny v Ukraïni u XX st. Zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv* (Kyiv, 1994), pp. 454ff.
12. For the text, see *Natsional'ni vidnosyny v Ukraïni*, pp. 445–52.
13. Jeff Chinn and Robert Kaiser, *Russians as the New Minority: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States* (Boulder, CO, 1996), p. 155. Discussions have been under way since at least the mid-1990s about the need to amend the language law and bring it into line with existing realities, but this has yet to be acted upon by Parliament.
14. See the interviews with Anatolii Pohribnyi, First Deputy Minister of Education, in *Demokratychna Ukraïna* 27 April 1993 and *Literaturna Ukraïna* 29 July 1993. For a detailed analysis, see Dominique Arel, "The Temptation of the Nationalizing State," in *Political Culture and Civil*

- Society in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu (Armonk, NY, 1995), pp. 174–77; and his “Language Politics in Independent Ukraine: Towards One or Two State Languages?” *Nationalities Papers* 23(3) September 1995: 603–610. See also Jan G. Janmaat, “Language Politics in Education and the Response of the Russians in Ukraine,” *Nationalities Papers* 27(3) September 1999: 475–501.
15. Quoted by Shul’ga, “Krizis etnicheskogo samoopredeleniia.”
 16. *Postup* 29 July 1999.
 17. In addition to the articles by Shul’ga, see E. V. Krasniakov, “Pravo obuchenii na rodnom iazyke i ukrainskoe zakonodatel’stvo,” in *Dialog ukrainskoi i russkoi kul’tur v Ukraine*, pp. 84–91; and Vladimir Alekseev, “Khuzhe bezzakonii. O realizatsii konstitutsionnykh garantii v iazykovoii sfere,” *Sodruzhestvo NG* May 1999: 13.
 18. Ministerstvo statystryky Ukraïny, *Statystrychnyi zbirnyk “Osvita ta kul’tura na Ukraïni”* (Kyiv, 1991), p. 6.
 19. In a statement issued on 12 February 2000, the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that currently 31.7 percent of pupils in state schools are taught in Russian. See <<http://www.mfa.gov.ua/info/s2000/0212.html>>.
 20. N. V. Panina and Ie. I. Holovakha, *Tendentsii rozvytku ukrains’koho suspil’stva (1994–1998 rr.). Sotsiologichni pokaznyky (Tablytsi, iliustratsii, komentar)* (Kyiv, 1999), p. 78.
 21. Dominique Arel and Valeri Khmelko, “The Russian Factor and Territorial Polarization in Ukraine,” *The Harriman Review* (special issue entitled *Peoples, Nations, Identities: The Russian-Ukrainian Encounter* 9(1–2) Spring 1996: 86; M. I. Beletskii and A. K. Tolpygo, “Natsional’no-kul’turnye i ideologicheskie orientatsii naseleniia Ukraïny,” *Politicheskie issledovaniia* 1998 (4): 76.
 22. Cited by Shul’ga, “Krizis etnicheskogo samoopredeleniia.”
 23. Ministerstvo Ukraïny u spravakh natsional’nosti, mihratsii ta kul’tiv, *Informatsiinyi biuleten’* 1(3) September 1995: 40; *Statystrychnyi shchorichnyk Ukraïny za 1998 rik*, p. 424.
 24. *Slovo* May 1992.
 25. For detailed information on the language status of individual universities and other institutions of higher learning, see Ministerstvo osvity Ukraïny, *Statystrychni dani do zasidannia kolehii Ministerstva za pidsumkamy 1994 roku (Vyshchi navchal’ni zaklady)* (Kyiv, 1995).
 26. *Statystrychnyi shchorichnyk Ukraïny za 1998 rik*, pp. 434 and 436. Levels III and IV, which incorporate universities, academies, polytechnics, and institutes have the higher level of accreditation; levels I and II incorporate primarily the professional and technical schools.

27. *Statystychnyi shchorichnyk Ukraïny za 1998 rik*, p. 456; *Nezavisimaia gazeta* 11 June 1999; *Den'* 2 March 1999; Ministerstvo Ukraïny u spravakh natsional'nostei, mihratsii ta kul'tiv, *Informatsiinyi biuletyn'* 1(1) March 1995: 15; and Andrii Popok and Iurii Lagutov, "Ukraïna-Rosiia: Etnopolitychnyi faktor mizhderzhavnykh vidnosyn," *Universum* 1998 (1–12): 18.
28. U.S. Information Agency, Office of Research and Media Reaction, "Vremya Newscast Top Rated in Russia, Ukraine," *Opinion Analysis*, M-21-99, 2 February 1999, p. 1.
29. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *FBIS Media Guide: Ukraine. Kuchma and the Media*, 6 February 1999, p. 13.
30. *Den'* 22 December 1998, 20 March 1999, and 17 October 1998, respectively.
31. See, for example, Evgenii Golovakha, Natalia Panina, and Nikolai Churilov, "Russians in Ukraine," in *The New Russian Diaspora: Russians in the Former Soviet Republics*, ed. Vladimir Shlapentokh, Munir Sendlich, and Emil Payin (Armonk, NY, and London, 1994), pp. 59–71; Paul Kostoe, *Russians in the Former Soviet Republics* (Bloomington, IN, 1995), pp. 166–99; Chinn and Kaiser, *Russians as the New Minority*, pp. 129–62; Savoskul, "Russkie v nezavisimoi Ukraïne," pp. 278–329; and S. S. Savoskul, "Migratsionnoe povedenie russkikh nezavisimoi Ukraïny," in *Russkie v novom zarubezh'e: migratsionnaia situatsiia, pereselenie i adaptatsiia v Rossii*, ed. S. S. Savoskul (Moscow, 1997), pp. 110–53.
32. See the report by the *Jamestown Foundation Monitor* 20 July 1999, on Prime Minister Viktor Stepashin's visit to Kyiv.
33. See the interview with Chernomyrdin in *Interfax-Ukraine*, 27 May 1997.
34. *Interfax*, 22 January 1998.
35. For the text, see *Sobranie zakonodatel'stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii* 2 (11 January 1999): 316–17.
36. For the text, see *Sobranie zakonodatel'stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii* 44 (2 November 1998): 9933–9935. It should be noted that in October 1997 the Crimean parliament, with a third of the deputies abstaining, adopted a resolution making Russian the "official language" of state and administration in Crimea. See Reuters, 15 October 1997, and *Nezavisimaia gazeta* 26 February 1998.
37. *Kievskie vedomosti* 21 July 1998.
38. This was proposed by Valerii Tishkov, director of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences and formerly the minister of nationalities in the Russian government, at a session of the Government Commission on Compatriot Affairs in early 1999. See *Sodruzhestvo NG* April 1999: 10.

39. *Dialog ukrainskoi i russkoi kul'tur v Ukraine*, p. 244.
40. *Financial Times* 25 May 1999.
41. *Den'* 2 February 2000; *Nezavisimaia gazeta* 4 February 2000; and *Izvestiia* 5 February 2000.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Quoted by Interfax, 9 February 2000. See also *Jamestown Foundation Monitor* 11 February 2000.
44. *RFE/RL Newslines* 11 February 2000.
45. UNIAN, 21 February 2000.
46. Oleksandr Maiboroda, *Rosiis'kyi natsionalizm v Ukraïni (1991–1998 rr.)* (Kyiv, 1999), p. 25.