

4. HUMANITARIAN ASPECT OF UKRAINE-RUSSIA RELATIONS

The humanitarian sector of cooperation is related with the national and cultural self-identification of citizens and largely shapes the nature and essence of mutual relations between the countries on all levels.

It should be noted that the problems in that sector have become long-standing. Unfavourable trends towards politicisation of the dialogue on humanitarian problems gained strength. Different interpretations of historic events by the parties caused sharp political-diplomatic conflicts. The subject of satisfaction of national-cultural needs of Ukrainians in Russia and Russians in Ukraine remains disputed.

In the foreign policy, the Russian Federation prioritises protection and promotion of the Russian language beyond the country borders, expansion of the “Russian world”, first of all – in the CIS states. Russia, possessing a strong (incomparable to Ukrainian) information potential, continues to exert pressure on Ukraine in order to strengthen the stand of the Russian language, secure its official status. Language problems are politicised, permanent conflicts are provoked (especially during election campaigns in Ukraine), affecting the overall atmosphere of bilateral relations.

Actions of the parties are often inconsistent with the spirit and letter of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership, specifying the key principles of humanitarian cooperation¹. Tension in the humanitarian sector leaves an imprint on the relations among citizens of both countries, complicates contacts in the fields of education, science, culture. Evidently, the topical tasks for Kyiv and Moscow now are: (a) de-politicisation of contacts in the humanitarian sector; (b) formation of productive, mutually coordinated approaches to solution of language problems; (c) professionalism of the dialogue on historic subjects; (d) development and introduction of non-conflict, civilised methods of support for ethnic minorities on the territory of both countries; (e) modernisation and expansion of contacts in the fields of science, education, culture.

This section reviews some problem aspects of bilateral cooperation in the humanitarian sector.

4.1. PROBLEM FACTORS OF HUMANITARIAN COOPERATION

Comparison of the present situation with the results of previous surveys conducted by Razumkov Centre in 2000 and 2006 shows the absence of qualitative changes for the better in the field of humanitarian cooperation over the past nine years². Moreover, new problems were added to those “laid up”. By and large, it may be said that the relations in that sector aggravated against the background of general deterioration of bilateral partnership.

Politicisation of the humanitarian sector of cooperation continues. Ethnic, socio-cultural, linguistic, historic problems have appeared in the political discourse and become subject of different speculations and manipulations. That alarming trend is noted by both Ukrainian and Russian experts. Purely cultural joint projects acquire a negative political echo, provoke conflicts involving academic institutions, public organisations, mass media of both countries. This was proven by the third international festival “Great Russian Word” held in Crimea on June 6-12, 2009, that in fact became a scene of political confrontation, a sharp conflict of media representatives of the two countries, saw harsh statements and diplomatic demarches (address of Moscow’s Mayor Yu.Luzhkov to

the festival participants, ban for the Russian State Duma K.Zatulin to take part in the event, etc.)³. *De facto*, the festival is turning into a tool of political lobbying the Russian interests in Ukraine⁴.

Other examples of politicisation of humanitarian projects included the conflicts concerning the Ukrainian library in Moscow, the Russian Cultural Centre in Lviv, etc.

Aggravation of the general political dialogue affected contacts in the humanitarian sector. Now, the format of “postal polemics” about the protection of rights of Ukrainians in Russia and Russians in Ukraine prevails. Participants of the Round-table “Ukraine-Russia: ways of overcoming crisis in relations” in their presentations stressed that mutually harsh wording on the top level affected contacts in the humanitarian sector⁵.

Bilateral cooperation mechanisms are defunct – the Sub-Committee for humanitarian cooperation last met on June 14, 2007. Since then, relevant sub-commissions have not met either.

Tension in the “language issue” does not go down. The Russian side on the political-diplomatic level regularly raises the subject of oppression of rights of the Russian-speaking population, exclusion of Russian-language media from the Ukrainian information space,

¹ Article 12 of the Treaty provides that the parties “ensure protection of ethnic, cultural, language and religious originality of national minorities on their territory... will promote creation of equal opportunities and conditions for study of the Ukrainian language in the Russian Federation and the Russian language in Ukraine”. See: Russia-Ukraine relations 1990-1997. – Moscow, 1998, p.53.

² See: Ukraine and Russia: present state and prospects of mutual relations. Razumkov Centre Analytical Report. – “Politia”, 2001, No.1, pp.92-97; Problems and prospects of Ukraine-Russian cooperation. Razumkov Centre Analytical Report. – “National Security & Defence”, 2006, No.5, pp.22-27.

³ Kiseleva N. Yury Luzhkov: “Russophobia is imposed in Ukraine as a national idea”. – “Krymskoe Vremya”, June 11, 2009, p.7.

⁴ The festival is conducted with support from the Russian Governmental Commission for Compatriot Affairs.

⁵ Hereinafter – references to presentations by participants of the Round-table “Ukraine-Russia: ways of overcoming crisis in relations” published in this magazine.



forcible Ukrainisation of the national education system in Ukraine. Official Kyiv insists on equal rights for national minorities in both countries, viewing Russian statements as interference in internal affairs. The language problem is extremely politicised, actively used as a means of external pressure and a tool of home political struggle, first of all – during election campaigns.

Approaches to interpretation of some historic events are conceptually different. First of all, it refers to the assessments of the activity of OUN-UPA, the Holodomor of 1932-1933⁶. Those subjects have become a stumbling bloc in the Ukraine-Russia relations, caused a wave of mutual accusations and criticism. A conflict situation arose in connection with the President of Ukraine Decree on celebration of the 350th anniversary of the Battle of Konotop, denounced by Russia's Foreign Ministry⁷. The expert and academic community debate the historic role of Hetman Mazepa, etc.

Participants of the above-mentioned Round-table noted the danger of mythologisation and politicisation of separate historic facts leading to escalation of conflicts in relations, so-called "wars of memory".

As we noted, heads of states exchanges harsh statements related with the events associated with the 75th anniversary of Holodomor in Ukraine. The conflict involved executive bodies of both countries, parliaments, public organisations. The discussion drew the Russian Orthodox Church that supported the position of the "Russian leadership"⁸. In April 2008, the State Duma of the Russian Federation made a statement stressing that "that tragedy does not have and can not have internationally established signs of genocide and should not be a subject of present-day political speculations"⁹.

The subject of the Holodomor found a wide international echo¹⁰. A sharp conflict between Ukrainian and Russian sides arose in October 2008, in connection with the inclusion of the relevant issue in the agenda of the UN General Assembly session¹¹.

There is a deficit of contacts among the artistic intelligentsia, scholars, representatives of expert communities. The dialogue goes on mainly in a critical mode, in the form of exchange of rebukes and accusations. Some Russian experts, public figures, artists took a very critical stand towards Ukraine. In turn, members of the National Council for Culture and Spirituality under the President of Ukraine negatively assessed the trend of statements of the Russian side¹².

In April 2008, participants of the Conference of Academies of Sciences of Higher School of Ukraine adopted an Appeal to their Russian colleagues. It says that "the anti-Ukrainian hysteria unleashed by the Russian

ruling elites already affects the atmosphere of trust and friendship between our peoples. Scientific and innovative projects necessary for the two countries are curtailed"¹³.

In turn, a statement of the Association of Ukrainians of Russia and the Federal National-Cultural Autonomy of Ukrainians in Russia said that "...politicisation of the whole set of issues dealing with the Ukrainian humanitarian sector is observed in Russia. Since 2004, an information war has actually been waged against Ukraine, involving cleansing of the Ukrainian humanitarian space"¹⁴. Unfortunately, the format of contacts on the expert level has been shrinking in the recent years. Joint scientific research projects are occasional and irregular. One of the few exceptions is presented by the activity of the Joint Ukrainian-Russian Commission of Historians that issued a series of publications about the history of the two countries.

Cooperation in the field of education is stalled. Contacts between higher educational establishments of the two countries are irregular and limited. Contractual relations between Ukrainian and Russian educational establishments do not fully meet present-day realities, require revision and modernisation. The scope of student exchanges is below criticism, more than that – there is a trend towards the reduction of the quota of extended grants. In 2005, only 150 grants were extended to Ukrainian students in Russia. However, even that quota was used by 70%¹⁵. For 2008-2009 academic year, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation extended to Ukrainian citizens 30 grants for the complete course of study and 3 – for postgraduate study¹⁶.

Implementation of joint scientific-cultural projects faces difficulties. The conduct of the Year of Ukraine in Russia and of Russia in Ukraine (2003-2004) was largely formal and did not fundamentally approve cultural cooperation of the countries. Interdepartmental documents of cooperation and implementation of joint projects (culture, tourism, archives, etc.) signed in the recent years are not fully implemented. The Decision of the Sub-Committee for Humanitarian Cooperation to arrange Days of Education and Science of Ukraine in the Russian Federation in 2008 and Days of Education and Science of the Russian Federation in Ukraine in 2009 remained on paper, since sources of funding were not specified.

Among the reasons obstructing implementation of such projects, one can mention: (a) tension in the humanitarian dialogue and in bilateral relations in general; (b) low effectiveness of interstate cooperation mechanisms; (c) the customary for both countries principle of "residual funding" of measures in that sector; (d) notable deterioration of the socio-economic situation in Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

⁶ President of Ukraine presented to the Verkhovna Rada for consideration the Bill "On the Holodomor of 1932-1933 in Ukraine", terming the Holodomor as genocide of the Ukrainian people. On November 28, 2008, the Verkhovna Rada passed that Law. That decision met a negative reaction of the Russian side.

⁷ Comment by Russia's Foreign Ministry Information and Press Department in connection with the question of Russian media of plans of celebration of the 350th anniversary of the Battle of Konotop in Ukraine. – Official web site of Russia's Foreign Ministry, <http://www.mid.ru>

⁸ ROC stands against attempts to call Holodomor genocide but called to condemn actions of Bolsheviks that led to it. – Interfax, November 18, 2008.

⁹ State Duma refused to recognise Holodomor as genocide. – "Ekspert-Tsentr" Internet publication, April 2, 2008, <http://www.expert.org.ua>

¹⁰ Relevant statements were passed by UNESCO, OSCE, EU.

¹¹ Russia prevents Ukraine from submission of issue of Holodomor to UN General Assembly for consideration "by pressure and blackmail". – UNIAN, October 24, 2008.

¹² Yushchenko's National Council: more cases of anti-Ukrainian rhetoric in Russia. – "Podrobnosti" Internet publication, June 20, 2008, <http://podrobnosti.ua>

¹³ Ukrainian scholars call upon Russian colleagues to stop "anti-Ukrainian hysteria" in Russia. – UNIAN, April 21, 2009. Conference of Academies of Sciences of Higher School of Ukraine – a public organisation uniting more than 250 leading scholars working at higher educational establishments of Ukraine and other countries of the world, including the Russian Federation.

¹⁴ Russian Federation hinders development of Ukrainian culture and education, Association of Ukrainians of Russia says. – UNIAN, May 6, 2009.

¹⁵ Mainly because of remoteness of offered higher educational establishments, unattractive specialities. See: Draft Concept of Relations between the Russian Federation and Ukraine in Inter-Parliamentary Sector. – Moscow, 2006, p.59.

¹⁶ Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine in that timeframe gave 80 citizens of the Russian Federation an opportunity to study at Ukrainian higher educational establishments and 3 vacancies for postgraduate studies.



4.2. LANGUAGE PROBLEM IN BILATERAL RELATIONS

In the “problem agenda” of humanitarian cooperation, one should particularly mention the language issue, being a long-standing irritant in the relations between Kyiv and Moscow.

The Russian Federation exerts influence on Ukraine in the context of implementation of the Russia idea of expansion of the “Russian world” – a common humanitarian space, first of all, in the CIS countries. The National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation through 2020 says that national security in the field of culture in the middle and long run shall be provided, in particular, through “...development of a common humanitarian and information-telecommunication space in the CIS member states and in the neighbouring regions”¹⁷.

Russia actively promotes strengthening of the common humanitarian basis in the Eurasian space using the Commonwealth structures. Slavic universities operate in a number of states, the Forum of Artistic and Scientific Intelligentsia of CIS member states has been active since 2006. World Congresses of Russian press are held regularly¹⁸.

The thesis of expansion of the “Russian world” is present in the new Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, viewing “the multimillion Russian Diaspora – the Russian world – as a partner, including for expansion and strengthening of the space of the Russian language and culture”. The document set the task “to encourage study and spread of the Russian language as an integral part of the world culture and a tool of inter-ethnic communication”¹⁹.

Noteworthy, the “linguistic expansion” of the Russian Federation pursues, among other things, legal establishment of the status of the Russian language in the post-Soviet space. Russian Foreign Minister S.Lavrov said at the II Assembly of the “Russian world” (November 2008): “We provide support for the Russian language, first of all, in the post-Soviet space, take steps for formalisation of the regulatory-legal fundamentals in support for its stand in the former Soviet republics”²⁰.

Support for the Russian culture in Ukraine, protection of rights of compatriots, expansion of the sphere of influence of the Russian language are components of the Russian policy in Ukraine. (Although the language policy evidently lies within the competence of Ukraine and *de jure* is not a subject of bilateral discussion).

Official Kyiv views the subject of “oppression of the Russian-speaking population” as cooked up, not meeting the actual state of affairs, and some statements

of the Russian Federation – as interference in its internal affairs²¹. A statement of Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry Press Service (January 10, 2008) said that the Russian side was trying to “artificially aggravate the language issue in this country. Evidently, that campaign is intended to disorient the international community... to bring an element of instability to inter-ethnic relations in Ukraine”²².

Unfortunately, the language problem has become long-standing, is extremely politicised and presents a source of permanent confrontation on the official level. In the recent years, a number of conflict situations arose that aggravated bilateral relations. The Russian side extremely negatively met the adoption of the Code of Civil Procedure of Ukraine and the Code of Administrative Procedure of Ukraine in September 2005, demanding conduct of legal proceedings only in the official language²³. Russian support for decisions of some local councils to grant Russian the status of a regional language provoked an acute diplomatic conflict. Moscow negatively met the Constitutional Court of Ukraine verdict concerning dubbing of foreign feature films, terming it as “unwillingness of the Ukrainian authorities to fairly fulfil their international commitments”²⁴.

Another rise of tension in the humanitarian sector was caused by the decision of the National Council for Television and Radio Broadcasting of Ukraine (October 2008) to bring transmission of foreign programmes in compliance with national legislation norms. The Russian side made harsh statements about exclusion of Russian-language products from the Ukrainian air²⁵.

Official statements of Russia’s Foreign Ministry concerning Ukraine steadily mention the language problem, in one or another form. The stand of the Russian Federation in the language issue is shared within Ukraine by a number of pro-Russian organisations, now initiating the process of unification (in October 2008, the All-Ukrainian Coordinating Council of Ukrainian Organisations of Russian Compatriots was set up, that united 70 pro-Russian organisations²⁶). The idea of official bilingualism is supported by some political forces. This was said, in particular, by the leader of the Party of Regions V.Yanukovych²⁷. It may be expected that the issue of the Russian language will become subject of all kind of speculations at the forthcoming presidential elections in Ukraine.

The language problems should be viewed in the general context of effective and full satisfaction of cultural-national needs of Ukrainians in Russia and Russians in Ukraine on the basis of bilateral agreements, with account of the existing European and world standards, including the European Charter for Regional or Minority languages²⁸. The language problem should not be a tool of political pressure, subject of manipulations and means of political confrontation at home.

¹⁷ National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation through 2020. – Web site of Security Council of the Russian Federation, <http://www.scrf.gov.ru/documents/99.html>

¹⁸ Now, the Russian language and Russian culture are promoted abroad by 50 Russian centres of science and culture and 26 representative offices of “Roszarubezhtsentr”.

¹⁹ Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation. – Official web site of Russia’s Foreign Ministry, <http://www.mid.ru>

²⁰ Protection and promotion of the Russian language is a priority task of Russia’s Foreign Ministry – Lavrov. – UNIAN, November 3, 2008.

²¹ The Constitution of Ukraine guarantees free development, use and protection of the Russian language, other languages of national minorities.

²² Statement of Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry Press Service of January 10, 2008. – Official web site of Ukraine’s Foreign Ministry, <http://www.mfa.gov.ua>

²³ The comment of the Information and Press Department of Russia’s Foreign Ministry of September 6, 2005, noted that “transfer of Ukrainian legal proceedings solely to the official language suppresses rights of almost 20 million Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine... That decision seems to be in the tideway of improper campaign around the Russian language in Ukraine...”. – Official web site of Russia’s Foreign Ministry.

²⁴ Decision of Kyiv to dub feature films, including Russian, in the Ukrainian language, reveals neglect of international commitments by Ukraine – Russia’s Foreign Ministry. – Interfax, January 10, 2008.

²⁵ Russian Foreign Ministry concerned about Russian channels cut off in Ukraine – Karasin. – UNIAN, October 31, 2008.

²⁶ Lavrov hails creation of All-Ukrainian Coordinating Council of Ukrainian Organisations of Russian Compatriots. – UNIAN, October 31, 2008.

²⁷ Yanukovych promises to make Russian the second official language if Party of Regions gets majority in Parliament. – Interfax-Ukraine, October 16, 2008.

²⁸ In this connection, one should note that the Law “On Ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority languages” entered into force in Ukraine on January 1, 2006. However, similar standards do not apply to Ukrainians in Russia. The Russian Federation, having signed the Charter in 2001, never ratified it.



4.3. SATISFACTION OF NATIONAL-CULTURAL NEEDS OF RUSSIANS IN UKRAINE AND UKRAINIANS IN RUSSIA

The bilateral dialogue in the humanitarian sector inevitably concentrates on the problem of satisfaction of national-cultural needs of Ukrainians in Russia and Russians in Ukraine. The subject of conditions for education in the native language for national Diasporas is very hot.

Ukraine has a broad system of Russian-language general educational establishments. It should be admitted, however, that in 2006-2009, their number was decreasing. In that timeframe, the number of state schools teaching in the Russian language declined from 1,411 to 1,199, schools teaching in the Ukrainian and Russian languages – from 2,109 to 1,628. Now, nearly 789 thousand pupils learn at state secondary schools in the Russian language²⁹.

Nevertheless, the situation in the field of education in the Russian language is far from catastrophic, as presented by some representatives of the Russian side. One should keep in mind that ethnic Russians make some 17% of Ukraine's citizens. Respectively, in 2008-2009 academic year, 17.6% of schoolchildren were studying in the Russian language. Despite all difficulties and problems, Ukraine preserved and runs an integral system of education in the Russian language. Russian-language schools dominate in regions of compact settlement of the Russian-speaking population. For instance, in the AR of Crimea, 159,359 schoolchildren study in the Russian language, 12,860 – in the Ukrainian; in Donetsk region, their ratio is 206,704 to 138,982, in Luhansk region – 103,155 to 80,558³⁰.

In the recent years, educational and methodological programmes for Russian-language classes have been developed. 31 Ukrainian higher educational establishments turn out specialists in the Russian language and literature. According to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the shares of students studying at higher educational establishments in the Ukrainian and Russian languages made respectively 82.1% and 17.7%³¹.

The situation in Russia is different. Ukrainians (some 3 million) are the third largest ethnic group in Russia (Russians – 80%, Tatars – 4%, Ukrainians – 2%), but there are no Ukrainian-language state secondary schools, including in regions of compact settlement of Ukrainians³². Ukrainian is only studied as a subject in several schools in the Russian Federation. According to the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, there are only 8 secondary schools with a Ukrainian cultural component in Russia³³. Secondary school No.124 in Moscow runs the Ukrainian Educational Centre where

Ukrainian language is studied optionally. The Ukrainian language is also studied in hobby groups and Sunday schools in regions with support from Ukrainian public associations.

The problem of teacher training, provision with scientific and methodological materials, training aids remains pressing. Strong protests of Ukrainian organisations in Russia were prompted by a comment of an official representative of Russia's Foreign Ministry A.Nesterenko (April 28, 2009), who explained absence of schools with the Ukrainian language of teaching by the absence of demand, due to the "kinship of East Slavic languages and cultures, a common history (Kyiv Rus, Moscow state, Russian Empire, USSR) and the common Orthodox Christian faith"³⁴.

In the recent years, some Russian higher and academic educational establishments have commenced study of Ukrainian as a foreign language³⁵. In October 2008, the second in Russia Centre of Ukrainian Studies was opened in Rostov-on-Don on the basis of the Southern Federal University³⁶.

Evidently, solution of problems in the field of education requires a balanced, tolerant and, the most importantly, depoliticised approach to effective guarantee of national-cultural rights of the Diasporas.

There are notable differences in the levels of satisfaction of cultural-information needs of Ukrainians in the Russian Federation and Russians in Ukraine. The problem of satisfaction of information needs of Ukrainians in Russia is pressing, balanced, impartial information about the events in Ukraine is deficient. Some participants of the Round-table "Ukraine-Russia: ways of overcoming crisis in relations" noted the biased, critical coverage of the situation in Ukraine by the Russian media.

There is no system of Ukrainian-language media as such in Russia. There are no all-Russian printed publications, TV and radio channels. Some Ukrainian associations (Krasnodar, Tyumen, Samara) supported by local administrations issue Ukrainian-language bulletins (e.g., "Voice of Ukraine in Western Siberia"). However, those publications cannot make up for the deficit of information. Reception of TV and radio programmes from Ukraine is limited. A system of regional Internet sites ("Zelyonyi Klin", "Gorod na Volge", "Kobza", "Soglasie", etc.) is still in the making. The Russian federal authorities do not financially support information and cultural needs of the Ukrainian Diaspora.

Nearly 100 Ukrainian public organisations are now active in Russia. On the federal level, interests of the Ukrainian Diaspora are advocated by the Association of

²⁹ Another 11,690 children learn at Russian-language private educational establishments. See: General educational establishments of Ukraine at the beginning of 2008-2009 academic year. Statistic Bulletin. – State Statistic Committee of Ukraine, Kyiv, 2009, p.59.

³⁰ In Sevastopol, 736 schoolchildren study in the Ukrainian language, 29,010 – in Russian. – Ibid.

³¹ Makhun S. Ukraine embraced by "language balance", or Challenges of tolerance. – "Dzerkalo Tyzhnya", March 31, 2007, <http://www.zn.ua>

³² Ukrainians mainly live in Moscow (253 600), Tyumen region (211,400), Moscow region (147,800), Krasnodar province (131,800), Rostov region (118 500), Primorsky province (94 100), Saint Petersburg (87,100), Voronezh region (73,700), Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Area (123,238). See: Official answer of representative of Russia's Foreign Ministry A.Nesterenko to a media question about humanitarian rights of Ukrainians living in Russia. – Official web site of the Russian Embassy in Ukraine, <http://www.embrus.org.ua>

³³ Komi Republic – 2 schools, Bashkortastan – 5, Tomsk – 1.

³⁴ Answer of representative of Russia's Foreign Ministry A.Nesterenko to a media question about humanitarian rights of Ukrainians living in Russia. – Official web site of the Russian Embassy in Ukraine.

³⁵ Ukrainian language and literature are taught at nine higher educational establishments of the Russian Federation – Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Moscow State Linguistic University, Novosibirsk State Pedagogical Institute, etc.

³⁶ The first such centre was created on the basis of the History Department of Moscow State University. See: Centre of Ukrainian Studies inaugurated in Rostov-on-Don. – UNIAN, October 21, 2008.



Ukrainians of Russia and the Federal National-Cultural Autonomy of Ukrainians of Russia³⁷. Ethnic Russians in Ukraine have rather wide possibilities for the exercise of their rights in the field of culture and information³⁸. Ukraine retransmits most of central Russian TV channels (ORT, NTV, TVTs, etc.). As of 2007, there were 4,348 registered printed media published in the Ukrainian language, and 2,772 – in Russian. Another 3,594 printed media are published both in the Ukrainian and Russian languages³⁹.

Cultural needs of ethnic Russians are also satisfied via the library system. Many libraries have departments of literature in the Russian language, their stocks contain over 60 million books, booklets, magazines. In most regions of Ukraine, the library stock is more than 50% made up of books and booklets in the Russian language, and in Crimea and Sevastopol, actually all books in libraries are in the Russian language (respectively, 87.1% and 96.4% of the total stock).

State theatres of Russian drama are active in many Ukrainian cities. 90 theatrical studios and 3 puppet theatres have a Russian-language repertoire. Another 25 theatrical studios perform in two languages – Russian and Ukrainian.

Ethno-cultural interests of the Russian Diaspora in Ukraine are represented by nearly 100 public associations. Four of them have an all-Ukrainian status: Society of Russian Culture “Rus”, National Cultural-Educational Society “Russian Assembly”, public organisations “Russian Movement of Ukraine” and “Russian Community of Ukraine”.

Evidently, a number of problems in the field of satisfaction of national-cultural rights of Ukrainians in Russia and Russians in Ukraine (including some disparity in the satisfaction of cultural-information needs of the Diasporas) require balanced and coordinated efforts of the parties, development of pragmatic and mutually acceptable approaches to the solution of those issues.

4.4. INFORMATION BACKGROUND FOR COOPERATION IN HUMANITARIAN SECTOR

The critical tone of official contacts shapes the generally unfavourable atmosphere of mutual relations, affects cooperation in the humanitarian sector. The parties' dialogue on humanitarian problems is steadily critical, with regular accusative statements, harsh official comments. Exchange of notes between Foreign Ministries and special presidential messages have become a usual thing⁴⁰.

Claims of the Russian side are summed up in a message of the Russian President V.Putin to President V.Yushchenko (December 18, 2007). The document said that “...exactly in that domain (humanitarian – *Ed.*) we, unfortunately, recently have had serious differences”, and unfriendly steps of the Ukrainian side clouded the atmosphere of mutual relations. The message contained the list of accusations of the Ukrainian side: (a) “peculiar” interpretation of events of the common history; (b) “glorification” of military criminals who collaborated with the Nazis; (c) a “war” against historic monuments and graves of Soviet soldiers

in some regions; (d) growing discrimination of the Russian language; (e) activity designed to split the Ukrainian Orthodox church⁴¹.

Those theses were duplicated in a number of subsequent statements of the Russia's Foreign Ministry, replicated by the media and shaped the Russian stand in the humanitarian dialogue with Ukraine.

Over the recent years, the information background for humanitarian cooperation has been worsening in connection with permanent conflicts. Tension in bilateral relations was caused by the State Duma draft Law “On Russian Card”⁴². Members of the State Duma of the Russian Federation initiated consideration by the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly of alleged violation of rights of Russian-speaking citizens, persecution of Russian dissidents by the Ukrainian authorities⁴³. Conflicts arose in connection with soldier graves in Western Ukraine, the Library of Ukrainian Literature in Moscow, above-mentioned historic events. This list of “hotbeds” in the humanitarian dialogue may be extended.

By and large, the information background for bilateral humanitarian cooperation is unfavourable. Russia pursues a target-minded, coordinated information campaign in humanitarian problems, asserting that Ukraine pursues forcible Ukrainisation, the Russian culture and language are suppressed. The Ukrainian side views such actions of the Russian Federation as interference in internal affairs. Evidently, the main danger is that creation of a negative background for bilateral partnership, including in such sensitive sector as humanitarian, deteriorates the relations between Ukrainian and Russian citizens.

Humanitarian problems in bilateral relations are strongly politicised, giving rise to permanent conflicts involving state structure, public organisations, media of both countries. The situation generally affects the development of bilateral cooperation.

The “language issue” is used to strengthen the Russian influence on home political processes in Ukraine. Differences in assessments of historic events add conflicts to the bilateral dialogue. There is a deficit of contacts between the public, academic and expert circles. The potential of cooperation in that sector is used ineffectively.

Russia, with its much stronger than Ukraine's media system, influences it, to strengthen the pro-Russian stand, expand the “Russian world”, and in the end result – to keep Kyiv within its sphere of interests. Long-standing problems of the dialogue shape a negative background for cooperation in that sensitive for both parties sector, affect relations of citizens of the two countries.

The situation requires employment of non-conflict, civilised methods of solution of accumulated problems. Evidently, the system of humanitarian contacts should be built with account of each other's interests, on the basis of commonly accepted European and world rules – on a parity basis, without pressure, threats and demarches.

³⁷ The most active regional associations include the National-Cultural Centre of Ukrainians of Bashkortostan “Kobzar”, National-Cultural Autonomy of Ukrainians of Tyumen region “One Family”, Karelian Republican Organisation “Kalyna”, Association of Ukrainians of Moscow.

³⁸ For more detail see: Mazuka L. Guarantee of language and cultural rights of ethnic Russians as a factor of social accord in Ukraine. – Ukraine in 2007: annual assessments of socio-political and socio-economic development. – Monograph, Kyiv, NISS, 2007, pp.178-187.

³⁹ According to the Book Chamber of Ukraine, in 2008, annual circulation of books and booklets in the Russian language made 22,535 thousand, or 38.7%. Out of the total 3,966,113 thousand copies of newspapers, 2,647,385 thousand, or 66.8%, were printed in the Russian language.

⁴⁰ One example is presented by the official Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in connection with anti-Russian manifestations in Ukraine (12 December 2007). It stresses that “Russia is deeply concerned with the strengthening of openly nationalist, anti-Russian and Russophobic spirits and manifestations in Ukraine... Certain political forces in Ukraine intentionally encourage such actions and in that way consciously agree to aggravation of Russia-Ukraine relations”. See: Statement of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in connection with anti-Russian manifestations in Ukraine. – Official web site of Russia's Foreign Ministry.

⁴¹ Message of Russian President V.Putin to President of Ukraine V.Yushchenko. – Official web site of the Russian President, <http://president.kremlin.ru>

⁴² Ukraine's President V.Yushchenko described the draft Law “On Russian Card” developed by the State Duma as “search of a more legitimate mechanism to keep citizens of Ukraine in the sphere of Russian influence”. Yushchenko suggests that Russia shows disrespect for Ukraine, distributing passports. – UNIAN, 10 December 2008.

⁴³ State Duma Committee for CIS Affairs suggests that PACE considers the issue of rights of Russians in Ukraine. – UNIAN, December 11, 2008.