

The Imperial Academy of Sciences of Petrograd, and the Ukrainian Language

When a revolution broke out in Russia in 1904, and when under the blows of this revolution and of many military defeats the very foundations of the Russian State were trembling, the Russian Government made up its mind to change its savage policies and to ameliorate the existing conditions. The Ukrainian people also was a little affected by this change in Russian policies. A Russian committee of ministers, while considering the restrictions placed upon publication in the Ukrainian language, advised the ministers of education and the ministers of the interior to investigate these restrictions and, after obtaining the views on this subject of the Governor of Kiev, of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, and of the Universities of Kiev and Kharkov, to submit their opinions and conclusions to the committee of ministers. All the institutions whose opinion was sought in this matter recommended the immediate removal of the restrictions on the Ukrainian language. In particular, the Academy of Sciences of Petrograd prepared a lengthy memorial on this question. The memorial, bearing the seal of the Academy of Sciences, was presented to the ministers.

The Academy of Sciences chose a special commission of the most eminent professors and specialists of Russia to prepare this memorial. The members of the commission:—Korsh, Famintsin, Zolensky, Fortunatov, Shakhmatov, Danilevsky, and Oldenburg—were all Muscovites, with the exception of Zolensky. Shakhmatov, who was famous throughout Europe as a specialist in philology and old-Russian literature, was commissioned to prepare the most important and detailed report on the subject.

The salient feature of the report of the Academy of Sciences of Petrograd is the declaration that the Ukrainian people is a distinct nation which has its own language and literature and its own historical traditions, and is entitled to an unrestricted national development. The memorial does not contain even a trace of the opinion that the Ukrainian language is a dialect of the Russian language. It clearly regards the Russian people and the Ukrainian people and the Russian language and the Ukrainian language as equally distinct national entities, and does not mention any all-Russian people or language.

The memorial shows conclusively that *the all-Russian language does not and never did exist*, and that the so-called all-Russian literary language is the language only of the Muscovites or Russians and is completely foreign to the Ukrainian people.

This memorial of the Academy of Sciences of Petrograd was printed in 1905; and of the very few copies extant, one is possessed by the Public Library of New York City. In 1905, chiefly on account of this memorial the Russian Government repealed the law of 1876 which prohibited all publication in the Ukrainian language.
