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The Secretary General's New Initiative

Seminar on

“The teaching of history in multicultural societies and border areas”

Khabarovsk, Russian Federation,
Monday 21 – Wednesday 23 September 1998

Report

Strasbourg

Seminar on

**“The teaching of history in multicultural societies and
border areas”**

Khabarovsk, Russian Federation,
Monday 21 – Wednesday 23 September 1998

Report by

Professor Gita STEINER-KHAMSI
General Rapporteur
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I. INTRODUCTION

The Seminar on "The teaching of history in multicultural societies and border areas" was held in Khabarovsk, from 21 - 23 September 1998.

The Seminar was jointly prepared and organised by the Council of Europe, the Ministry of General and Professional Education of the Russian Federation, and Khabarovsk State Pedagogical University. The Seminar was initiated by Olga STRELOVA, Khabarovsk State Pedagogical University, who had previously attended other national seminars in the Russian Federation.

In his opening address, Valentin ROMANOV, Rector of the Khabarovsk State Pedagogical University, identified the specific challenges that history education is facing in the border area of the Khabarovsk region. History education needs to reflect on:

- i. the opening of borders and frontiers to the adjacent countries: Japan, Korea, China and the United States of America;
- ii. the presence of an indigenous or native population;
- iii. the peaceful co-existence of minorities comprising approximately 90 nationalities or ethnic groups from four major language groups.

Alexander LEVINTAL, Deputy Head of the Administration of the Khabarovsk Region, highlighted the high density of universities in the Far East which is indicative of the region's plan to maintain its role as an intellectual centre for the Russian Far East. Despite political tensions with adjacent countries over territorial claims, the Administration of the Khabarovsk Region is pursuing a policy of mutual respect and understanding in the region.

Lidia SOFRINA, Deputy Head of the Parliament of the Khabarovsk Region, referred to the 140th Annual Celebration of the City of Khabarovsk and the upcoming 60th Annual Celebration of the Khabarovsk Region, and reminded the participants that the multi-national composition of the city and the region have greatly contributed to the economic and cultural wealth in this part of the country. Coinciding with the 60th Annual Celebration of the Region was the 60th Anniversary of the Khabarovsk State Pedagogical University that has played a major part in organising the Seminar.

Alison CARDWELL, Council of Europe, explained that the seminar is part of a series on history teaching held in different areas of the Russian Federation.

The next national conference at which representatives from the seminars will evaluate their work and exchange their experiences will be held in the spring of 1999 in St. Petersburg. History education has been one of the main topics of the Council of Europe's Education Department since history risks being used for political and ideological purposes. From the outset, the Council of Europe stated unambiguously that the purpose of its work on history textbooks and history teaching was not to use history as propaganda for European unity, but to try to eliminate the traditional mistakes and prejudices and to establish the facts. She mentioned two Council of Europe initiatives that are closely related to the topic of the Seminar. One initiative should generate a Caucasian textbook jointly developed and written by experts and history teachers from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the Russian Federation. Another initiative is the "Black Sea Initiative on History" that will bring together educators and possibly students from the countries around the Black Sea. The Russian Federation has indicated great interest and is actively participating in both initiatives.

II. PRESENTATIONS

Maitland STOBART, consultant, examined, in his presentation, the reasons why special attention should be paid to history teaching in border areas. In particular, he:

- i. reflected on the nature and formation of frontiers;
- ii. reviewed principles that should guide history teaching in border areas;
- iii. provided concrete examples of curricular approaches that could be applied to history education in border areas.

His presentation found great resonance among the participants and generated a lively discussion on the points that he raised and presented in detail. Several of his curricular recommendations were discussed in the working groups, and therefore are also reflected in the recommendation section of this report.

Peter SEIXAS, Professor of History Education at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, presented a few of the Canadian debates on how to include the experiences of First Nations people or Canadian native people in history teaching. One of the major challenges was to overcome the traditional way of history teaching which tended to frame Canadian and European history as a story of progress. In contrast, First Nations people were depicted for a long time as

“primitive” and “in harmony with the land and nature”. As a result of heated debates on this issue, most history teachers and historians have come to realise that history needs to be interpretative. It needs to bring the particular interests and experiences of various groups together. It can show that First Nations people had different perspectives from European immigrants who came to North America.

Sergey SKORINOV, Professor and Department Chair at Khabarovsk State University, emphasised the importance of learning about the history of the native peoples of the Russian Far East. Since most of their history is based on oral history, that is, on myths and legends, historians tended to dismiss their history as mere inventions. For the last few years, however, there has been an increasing interest to study the history of the small nationalities of the Far East. Nevertheless, much needs to be undertaken to combat chauvinism that is nurtured by stereotypes and prejudices towards native peoples. Professor Skorinov suggested developing two different kinds of textbooks on the history of native peoples: one that presents the history of native peoples in depth and is used in native villages; another that is used in Russian schools.

Gita STEINER-KHAMSI, Professor of Comparative and International Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, stressed the need for border area history education to move from an ethno-centric approach to a demo-centric approach. The traditional ethno-centric approach focuses on the process of nation-building and appeals to students who have a shared or imagined common past. However, this traditional approach to history education excludes all those groups in a population that were not part of the nation-building process, or worse, depicts parts of the population as enemies and traitors to the nation-building process. In contrast, the demo-centric approach acknowledges that various groups within a society and different nations experience and interpret historical events differently. Using a contrastive method in which the different, multiple perspectives and interpretations are presented side by side is the key for a pedagogical approach that claims to be demo-centric.

Olga STRELOVA, Professor of History Education at Khabarovsk State Pedagogical University, commented on the fact that most textbooks on Russian history only deal marginally with the territory beyond the Urals. Given the size of Siberia, this imbalance is rather striking. She made a case for an integrative approach to regional history. World history, the history of the Russian State and regional history or the “history of the motherland” need to be interconnected. Instead of merely adding a series of booklets to existing history textbooks on Russian history and world history, Professor STRELOVA suggested using an integrative approach that attempts to explore the regional impact of global and national historical events. She also considered it an urgent task for Russian textbook authors to correct biases and misinformation about the Russian Far East.

III. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

I Objectives of History Education in Border Areas

- i. The participants acknowledged that history education has an important social function in border regions. By exploring the common past of the multicultural society in a border area, history education contributes to social cohesion, generates respect for diversity, and prepares students for active citizenship in a pluralistic society. It also helps students to develop a social identity that is based on civic responsibilities and rights, independent thinking, and civic action.
- ii. It is important to recognise that historical consciousness and knowledge is transmitted in different subject matters and in different educative sites, and, thus, should not be reduced to history lessons in schools. Besides teaching history as a separate subject matter, it is important that history teachers engage in a dialogue and cooperation with geography teachers, teachers of civics, economics, environmental studies, art teachers, and teachers of Russian and foreign language literature to explore together and present historical themes and methods. In addition, history teachers need to be more aware of the fact that they are teaching only one specific version of history. Students are constantly confronted with different, sometimes contrasting, versions of history taught by their families, communities, the media, the museums, the libraries and other educative sites. It is an enriching experience for all students to share the histories that students learn from other educative sites. The existence of multiple educative sites implies that history teachers should pursue more student-centred teaching methods. There are many positive ways of incorporating students' experiences in history education. Students can collect, for example, biographical notes on three or four generations in their families and share these notes in class. These notes will illustrate a few aspects of the history of the last 100 years in the region. Most likely, students can learn from these notes the history of immigration, intermarriage between different nationalities, industrialisation and different life-styles in the Russian Far East.
- iii. History education tends to over-emphasise the history of nation-building, and, therefore, is very much focused on territorial issues, treaties and military interventions. However, especially for border

areas, it is important also to emphasise the cultural and economic aspects of international relations.

- iv. Traditional history education focused on the transmission of knowledge and historical facts. It is important to develop new teaching material and teaching methods that allow teachers to pursue all three learning objectives for history education:
 - acquiring historical *knowledge* including knowledge about methods of historical research;
 - practising *skills*, that is, for example, learning to interpret historical sources or learning to differentiate between different opinions and interpretations of a historical event;
 - promoting *values* such as empathy towards peoples who had been persecuted in the past, respect for different life-styles, or the importance of peaceful co-existence with neighbouring countries.

II Characteristics of History Education in the Khabarovsk Region

The following three characteristics of the Khabarovsk region were repeatedly mentioned by presenters and participants of the Seminar:

- i. the presence of native peoples or First Nation people;
- ii. the proximity to Asian and North American countries of the Pacific Rim: Korea, Japan, the People's Republic of China, and the United States of America;
- iii. the multi-national composition of the society comprising approximately 90 nationalities and four major language groups.

All three characteristics of the region have a major impact on history teaching that will now be discussed in turn.

1. Presence of First Nation People

Presenters and participants mentioned several examples of how history education could incorporate the history, experiences and the perspectives of native peoples. The inclusion of the perspective of First Nation people is not only important for

social cohesion and peaceful co-existence in the region, but it is also a prerequisite for obtaining a more accurate and comprehensive account of the region's history. Participants proposed the following three initiatives that need to be considered:

- i. biases and prejudices in existing textbooks that suggest in one form or the other, overtly or covertly, that native peoples are pre-modern, "uncivilised" or "primitive" need to be addressed, critically reflected on and removed;
- ii. the assumption that the history of the Russian Far East, in particular the history of civilisation, only started with Russian settlement and with the introduction of script needs to be seriously challenged. To this end, other methods of historiographic research, such as oral history or the history of myths and legends, needs to be studied and included in regional history;
- iii. the history of First Nations people is not only of concern for natives, but it is important that non-natives learn about this history. This applies both to students living in the Far East and to students living in other parts of the Russian Federation.

2. Proximity to Asian and North American Countries

The region of Khabarovsk has a history of strong political, economic and cultural ties with the neighbouring countries: Korea, Japan, China and the USA. At times, these encounters with the neighbouring countries were filled with tension and conflict over territorial claims. The history of the Khabarovsk region with the neighbouring countries needs to document accurately all the major positive and negative encounters. Students need to learn, in particular, three aspects:

- i. encounters *between* the Khabarovsk region *and* the neighbouring countries: this means that the history of economic, political and cultural relations with the neighbouring regions should be part of regional history;

- ii. the history *of* Japan, Korea, China and the USA: participants requested that the current focus on European countries should be supplemented and expanded by including the history of the neighbouring countries. This second aspect affects the ways world history is taught in the Khabarovsk region;
- iii. the history *of* the Khabarovsk region should reflect the impact of international trade, migration, and politics on the region. This third aspect allows students to understand the economic, demographic, political and cultural situation of the Khabarovsk region.

3. *Multinational Composition*

Regional history focusing on the Khabarovsk region enables students to understand important aspects of Russian and Soviet history: the history of Russian settlement, forced relocation during Soviet times and recent immigration from other parts of Russia and neighbouring countries.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION ON THE CURRICULAR LEVEL

Several presenters and participants pointed out that it would be short-sighted merely to add the history of the Khabarovsk region to existing curricula and textbooks. Instead of using an add-on approach, several presenters and participants suggested an integrative and systematic approach to teaching the history of the Khabarovsk region.

The Federal Component

Based on the existing educational standards for history education formulated by the Ministry of General and Professional Education of the Russian Federation, the following recommendations were made that affect the *federal component* of history education:

- i. it was generally acknowledged that the history of Russian border regions is not sufficiently reflected in the history teaching of the country. In fact, it is striking how little Russian students learn about the history of the country beyond the Urals. The existing educational standards and textbooks on the federal level need to be modified and supplemented with the history of Russian border regions. Russian students in other parts of the country are learning far too little about the history of Russian border regions;

- ii. Russian students, both in the border region and in other parts of the country, learn, during their classes on world history, far more about the European neighbours than about their Asian neighbours. Students would obtain a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of global events, e.g. World War II, if they also learnt about historical events in the Asian region;
- iii. the current educational standards for history education provide, in principle, space and time for including regional aspects in the teaching of world history or in the history of Russia. So far, it depended on the initiative of individual teachers in the Khabarovsk region to discuss regional events when presenting world history or Russian history. There is a great need to have more research carried out on regional history and to develop textbooks and teaching aids that teachers in the Far East could use when teaching world history or Russian history. There is, for example, a lack of teaching materials to present regional events shortly before, during, and after World War II.

The Regional Component

The participants made the following suggestions that relate to the *regional component* of history education that need to be implemented in regional history taught in the schools of the Khabarovsk region:

- i. the participants presented two sets of historical resource books dealing with the region. These books were written by regional historians. In order to have them distributed to departments of history in universities and state pedagogical universities of the region, they need to be subsidised by the regional and federal education authorities;
- ii. there is a complete lack of textbooks and teaching aids at school level. The following three initiatives were proposed:
 - 1. development of a textbook series for different grade levels for secondary schools dealing with the history of the eight regions and two national territories of the Russian Far East. This textbook series should be used for the regional component of the curriculum;
 - 2. development of a textbook and teaching aids that deal with the regional impact of Russian history and world history. This

particular textbook, in turn, would be used when teaching Russian history or world history;

3. a commission of history teachers and regional historians needs to be formed to examine existing history textbooks used in secondary schools for Russian history and world history. The tasks of this commission could include:
 - the correction of inaccurate or incomplete information about the Russian Far East;
 - the provision of additional information on the Russian Far East and on Asian countries that is currently missing;
 - removing biases and prejudices regarding the nationalities of the Russian Far East, especially regarding native peoples or First Nation people.

This third initiative needs to be seen as a contribution to educating students and teachers in other parts of Russia about the history of the Russian Far East. Such initiatives would also be useful for border areas in other parts of the Russian Federation. Experts from other border areas need to provide input to correct and add information on border areas in textbooks that are used for the federal component.

Rather than delegating these three initiatives to the regional education authorities, the participants proposed forming a Professional Association of History Teachers and Historians of the Russian Far East. Olga STRELOVA was entrusted with the task of starting up and chairing this association. The association should engage in the following activities:

- i. negotiations with the regional and federal education authorities to receive funding for disseminating existing history resource books on the Far East to history departments of state pedagogical universities in the Russian Far East;

- ii. establishing three expert committees consisting of history teachers and professors of history education that develop the following textbooks and teaching aids for secondary schools:
 - a textbook series and teaching aids for secondary schools in the Far East on the eight regions and two national territories of the Far East;
 - a textbook series and teaching aids for secondary schools in the Far East that would supplement existing Russian history and world history textbooks and that would highlight regional historical events;
 - the third expert committee, already mentioned above, could provide suggestions as to how to revise textbooks on Russian history and world history in ways that would include Russian border areas. Preferably, the third expert committee would also include experts from other Russian border areas;
- iii. promote dialogue and exchange among scholars and educators in the Pacific region, ultimately with the aim of developing supplementary textbooks on the history of the Russian Far East and its neighbouring countries. These textbooks would use the method of contrastive analysis, that is, present multiple perspectives for particular historical events. It would illustrate, to students and teachers, how historical events were experienced differently in Russia, Korea, Japan, the USA, and China. An outstanding example of the contrastive method (different perspectives on the Russian-Japanese war) can be found in the textbook developed by experts in the Vladivostok region.

The Association of History Teachers and Historians of the Russian Far East will seek funding from the government as well as from international organisations and donor agencies.

APPENDIX I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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Professor Nina DOUBININA, Department of the Political Sciences, Khabarovsk State Pedagogical University

Dr Sergey SKORINOV, Associate Professor, Khabarovsk State Pedagogical University

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Ms Natalia BENDIK, State Archive of Khabarovsk Region

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Ms Tatiana NOVIKOVA, History teacher, School N 47

Ms Svetlana POSMITNAYA, History teacher, School N 80

Ms Alevtina OSIPOVA, History teacher, School N 62

Ms Lidia BELYH, History teacher in the children rest house “Amourskiy”

Ms Larisa SINYAEVA, History teacher, village of Elban, Khabarovsk Region

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APPENDIX II

PROGRAMME OF THE SEMINAR

Monday 21 September 1998

09.30 - 11.00

Plenary Session

Chair: Professor Valentin ROMANOV
Rector of Khabarovsk State Pedagogical University
Khabarovsk

Opening of the Seminar by:

- i. Mr Alexander LEVINTAL, Deputy Head of the Administration of Khabarovsk Region
- ii. Ms Alison CARDWELL, Administrator, Directorate of Education, Culture and Sport, Council of Europe
- iii. Ms Lidia SOFRINA, Deputy Head of the Parliament of Khabarovsk Region
- iv. Mr Arkadiy LIASHENKO
Head of the Higher and Secondary Education Department of Administration of the City of Khabarovsk

11.00 - 11.30

Break

11.30 - 13.00

Plenary Session

Chair: Mr Arkadiy LIASHENKO,
Head of the Higher and Secondary Education Department of Administration of the City of Khabarovsk

Introductory presentation on: "How to teach the history of neighbouring countries in border regions" by Mr Maitland STOBART, Consultant, United Kingdom.

Presentations on:

- i. "How to teach the history of the indigenous population in a multicultural society: the example of Canada" by Professor Peter SEIXAS, University of British Columbia, Vancouver;
- ii. "How the history of the minority populations in the Far East is taught in secondary schools" by Professor Sergey SKORINOV, Head of the Department, State Khabarovsk University, Khabarovsk.

Discussion with all the participants

13.00 - 14.30

Lunch

14.30 - 16.30

Plenary Session

Chair: Dr Ludmila NIKITINA,
Deputy Rector of Khabarovsk State Pedagogical
University, Khabarovsk

Round Table

Presentations on:

- i. "The way in which the geographical and civilisational aspects of a multicultural society should be reflected in curricula and textbooks" by Professor Gita STEINER-KHAMSI, Columbia University, New York;
- ii. "The history curricula and textbooks available in the Far East Region" by Professor Olga STRELOVA, Associate Professor, Khabarovsk State Pedagogical University.

Discussion with all the participants

Introduction to the group work: Mr Maitland STOBART

20.00 Official dinner

Tuesday 22 September 1998

9.30 – 11.00 **Three Parallel Working Group Sessions took place in the State Scientific Library**

- i. Working Group No. 1 discussed how to teach history in border areas.

Chair: Professor Lilia STEPASHKO (Khabarovsk)
Rapporteur: Mr Mikhail SVETACHEV (Khabarovsk)
Resource person: Mr Maitland STOBART

- ii. Working Group No. 2 discussed how to teach the history of the local population (national minorities included) in multicultural societies: the example of the Far East Region

Chair: Dr Ludmila ANDRUHINA (Ekaterinburg)
Rapporteur: Ms Nina DOUBININA (Khabarovsk)
Resource person: Professor Peter SEIXAS

- iii. Working Group No. 3 discussed how the geographical and civilization factors should be taken into account while teaching history in the Far East Region.

Chair: Dr Nina POLITCHKA (Khabarovsk)
Rapporteur: Mr Vladimir PESKOV (Khabarovsk)
Resource person: Dr Gita STEINER-KHAMSI

11.00 – 11.30 Break

11.30 - 13.00 **Continuation of the parallel working groups sessions**

13.00 - 14.30 Lunch

14.30 - 16.00 **Continuation of the parallel working groups sessions**

16.00 - 16.30 Break and end of the parallel working groups sessions

16.30 – 17.30 **The rapporteurs should report to the General Rapporteur and the Secretariat on the conclusions and**

recommendations of their working group. They should prepare their texts in writing and submit a copy to the Secretariat. These texts will be included in the final consolidated report.

18. 00 – 20.00 Cultural Programme

20.00 Dinner

Wednesday 23 September 1998

09.30 - 11.00 **Plenary Session**

Chair: Ms Ludmila OBOUHOVA
Head of the General and Professional Education Department
of Administration of the City of Khabarovsk

- i. Presentation of the conclusions and recommendations of the rapporteurs of the working groups

Discussion with all the participants

- ii. Comments by the three experts invited by the Council of Europe on the discussions held in the working groups in which they took part

- iii. Presentation by the General Rapporteur of the overall conclusions and recommendations of the Seminar.

Comments by the participants

11.00 - 11.30 Break

11.30 - 12.30 **Closing speeches of the Seminar by:**

- i. Ms Alison CARDWELL, Administrator, Directorate of Education, Culture and Sport, Council of Europe
- ii. Ms Irina STRELKOVA, Deputy Head of the Administration of Khabarovsk Region
- iii. Professor Valentin ROMANOV
Rector of Khabarovsk State Pedagogical University

| | |
|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 12.30 – 13.30 | Lunch |
| 13.30 – 17.30 | Cultural Programme |
| | Departure of the participants |

APPENDIX III

REPORTS OF THE WORKING GROUPS

Group I: “Teaching history in border areas”

This group was made up of 22 people, all of whom took part positively and freely in a discussion of the problems in the programme, making constructive proposals.

14 seminar participants spoke about the common problems raised by the study of the history of relations between bordering countries in school history syllabuses and how effectively these are resolved in the federal curricula and textbooks. It was noted that, when dealing with the topic of “borders”, it was difficult for teachers to disregard the interests and policies of their own state as well as the manner in which such questions were covered in the textbooks of neighbouring countries. Russian teachers cannot ignore the fact that China and Japan have territorial claims vis-à-vis Russia and that these claims are accordingly reflected in their school textbooks and brought to the attention of pupils.

Over the last 10 years a search has been going on in Russia for new approaches to the study of federal and regional problems, including Russo-Chinese and Russo-Japanese relations, but the question arises as to whether historians in neighbouring countries are prepared to tackle these problems in conjunction with their Russian colleagues.

The teachers who spoke expressed great anxiety about the lack of textbooks and readers in the Khabarovsk Region on the history of the area, as well as the sharp reduction in the amount of time allocated to studying world history. This was adversely affecting the study of the history of bordering countries and their relations with Russia. The same teachers also said that they were obliged to do their own searching for the necessary historical material on the subject, and they explained how they organised the teaching process with the pupils themselves.

Ms T Romanchenko, a representative of the Primorye Region, recounted her experience of planning a regional history syllabus, preparing the requisite methodological materials and textbooks and organising the teaching of the history of the Primorye Region in schools.

As to which aspects of the coexistence of neighbouring states should be covered in school history courses at federal and regional level, the speakers believed that the federal programme should reflect the most important aspects of Russia's relations with neighbouring countries (the initiation of mutual relations, the main treaties underlying those relations, including treaties on neighbourhood issues, the most serious conflicts, etc). The remaining problems could be studied at regional level. Mention was made of the need to prepare model versions of federal and regional history syllabuses, so as to ensure a sufficiently high level of teaching everywhere.

As for the approach to be adopted towards border disputes with neighbouring countries in school history courses, all the speakers supported the widespread use of documents reflecting the emergence and settlement of conflicts, and referred to the need to highlight public reactions to this or that foreign-policy event. It was also felt that the main emphasis should be placed on the most significant conflicts, especially those that had been resolved without the use of force. The speakers also pointed to the importance of being as objective and tactful as possible with regard to neighbouring countries that had been parties to these conflicts, as well as to the impropriety of expressing any insulting opinions about them.

Several participants specified the source materials, monographs and textbooks published in regional centres which they considered to be of the greatest value to teachers.

The need to use extracurricular working methods (outings, walking tours, competitions, school museums, etc) was also mentioned.

Several participants underlined the importance of observing the principle of historicism when covering Russia's relations with China and Japan as well as of bearing in mind that, in evaluating past events, it is inappropriate to use contemporary yardsticks. Regard should also be had to the traditional methods of oriental diplomacy, which have been developed over many centuries and which differ from European approaches in many respects. This factor has frequently been the cause of many misunderstandings and even conflicts.

Proposals and recommendations

1. The funds allocated by the Council of Europe for organising the present seminar should be used to publish the seminar proceedings and distribute them to all the Russian Federation "subjects" in the Far East.
2. A proposal should be submitted to the Council of Europe's Directorate of Education, Culture and Sport for the holding of a seminar in the Far East region on

“The training of future higher and secondary education teachers in the teaching of history in a multicultural society and in border areas”.

3. A proposal should be made to the Russian Ministry of General and Professional Education on restoring the study of world history in Russian schools to the scale that existed prior to the introduction of the new curricula.

4. The need should be recognised of preparing a textbook for schools in the Far East region on the history of the formation of the borders between Russia and its neighbours (the USA, Japan, China and Korea). It should be recommended that the Council of the Khabarovsk Municipal Association of History Teachers (O.Yu. Strelava) write to the Administration of the Khabarovsk Region on the need to produce such a textbook and to allocate the appropriate funds for this purpose.

5. The need should be recognised of creating in the Far East State Scientific Library a common information centre on the problems of regional history where it would be compulsory to deposit copies of academic and educational works on the history of the Far East published in the various regions.

6. Thanks should be expressed to the Council of Europe’s Directorate of Education, Culture and Sport for organising and conducting the present fruitful seminar in Khabarovsk on the teaching in schools of a highly topical aspect of history.

M.I. Svetachev

Group II: “Teaching the history of the indigenous peoples (national minorities) in a multicultural society (using the example of the Far East region)”

Group II was notable for its representative nature. It was composed of talented teachers from schools in Khabarovsk and the villages of Gvasyugo, Kalma, Sikacho-Alyan and Naykhin, staff of the N.I. Grodekov Local History Museum in Khabarovsk, lecturers from the Khabarovsk State Teacher Training University and representatives of the regional administration. As a result, the current methodological and procedural problems of teaching history in a multicultural society and in border areas, as convincingly presented by the Council of Europe specialists in plenary session, were analysed in greater depth by the group with due care and interest, especially as these questions are closely linked to the preoccupations of school education in the Khabarovsk Region. Our region constitutes a good example of a multinational society, where eight ethnic groups belonging to the indigenous or aboriginal peoples of Priamurye live side by side with a Slav population and representatives of dozens of nationalities. These are the Nanaytsy, Nivkhi, Ulchi, Udegeytsy, Evenki, Eveny, Orochi and Negidaltsi groups, who account for some 2% of the Khabarovsk Region's total population.

The absorbing, well-informed and friendly discussion that took place covered a wide range of technical and methodological problems associated with planning academic syllabuses, preparing textbooks, devising teaching methods, etc. We will mention only some of them.

Unfortunately, the methodological basis of Russian historiography was, for a fairly long time, such that it led to indigenous groups being treated simply as backward entities under the control of central and local power structures. As a result, the process of creating mutual relations with the aboriginal peoples was severely hindered. Historical science was also seriously impaired. Russian historiography is now moving towards a new methodology which recognises that each national group has its intrinsic value, makes its own contribution to the history of mankind and participates in historical and cultural processes. This conception is reflected in an article of the Russian Constitution, which for the first time provides numerous indigenous peoples with rights in accordance with the generally accepted principles and standards of international law and treaties.

Having agreed that the system of history teaching was still developing, the seminar participants focused their attention particularly on the relationship between the federal and the regional component of such teaching, their content and their interaction. The idea of federal history being treated as “political” history and regional history as “ethnic” history was mooted, but was objected to. It was suggested that the federal level should reflect processes common to all minority groups in Russia’s population, while the emphasis at regional level should be on the distinctive features of local groups, their internal links, interaction and mutual

enhancement. The regional component of history teaching is intended not only to enrich pupils' knowledge, but also to instil in them tolerant, respectful and considerate attitudes towards ethnic groups and, in certain cases, to enable them to identify with a particular ethnic group.

In a discussion of a suitable form for contemporary regional history textbooks, attention was drawn to the need to avoid tendentious approaches to controversial historical problems and to give pupils the opportunity to make up their own minds.

The seminar revealed the useful role of museums in teaching history to school pupils and in stimulating their interest in the cultural values of the indigenous peoples of the Priamurye. The N. I. Grodekov Local History Museum in Khabarovsk, the oldest in the Far East, is involved in this activity, as are many museums in almost all villages, housing unique archaeological and ethnographic exhibits.

During the discussion, the participants supported a proposal to formulate conceptual approaches to history teaching in schools. The seminar documents provide a sound basis for this.

Recommendations were made to the education committee of the Khabarovsk administration regarding the need to draw up a list of possible subjects for the school sector and prepare syllabuses for the federal and regional components of the humanities course.

The discussions revealed a demand for a regional textbook on the history of the Russian Far East, the production of which would require joint efforts by pupils, teachers, the regional administration and the Council of Europe. There proved to be a fairly high degree of readiness for creating a textbook on the history of the Khabarovsk Region with the participation of teachers, museum staff and researchers from the Teacher Training University, who would, inter alia, objectively retrace the contradiction-ridden process of relations between the former Slav population and the various indigenous peoples.

The wide-ranging exchange of views showed that a history teaching system is developing in the region's schools that will allow the integration of the varying conceptions of the culture, traditions and values of the native peoples of Priamurye and indeed of all the peoples living in the region. Approval was given to the efforts of the children's learning centre at the Khabarovsk Local History Museum to disseminate historical knowledge and develop children's interest in the culture of aboriginal peoples, and it was suggested that contacts should be arranged with museums in villages so as to provide them with assistance by producing educational aids.

As the reports presented in plenary session and the concluding documents are of great relevance to the planning of new school syllabuses and textbooks, it would be desirable to publish them as the proceedings of the Khabarovsk seminar held under the auspices of the Council of Europe.

We are deeply grateful to the Council of Europe - in particular, to Alison Cardwell, Administrator in the Education Department - for the excellent organisation of the seminar, which increased all the participants' knowledge of current history teaching methods and informed them of other countries' experience of history teaching in schools. We would like to believe that our co-operation will continue through the holding of further seminars and the execution of joint projects.

Conclusions of Group III: “Taking geographical and civilisation factors into account in planning the content of history teaching in the Far East region”

24 people participated in this working group. All expressed their thanks to the Council of Europe, in the person of Alison Cardwell, Administrator in the Directorate of Education, Culture and Sport, for organising the Khabarovsk international seminar on “The teaching of history in multicultural societies and border areas”. They also thanked Maitland Stobart, Peter Seixas and Gita Steiner-Khamsi for their informative talks at the plenary session, which laid the foundations for further productive group work.

The group expressed its particular gratitude to Tatiana Milko, an administrative assistant, and to Professor Gita Steiner-Khamsi for very actively participating in the discussions and providing valuable information on the Council of Europe, the conclusions of similar seminars in other regions of the Russian Federation and the experience of history studies in other countries, as well as advice on questions arising in the working group.

During its exchange of views and creative discussions, the working group concluded: that the history of the Russian Far East was presented in an extremely superficial manner in federal curricula, frequently in an enumerative form without any proper analysis of the problems covered; that the opening up of the east of Russia was more geopolitical than colonial in character; and that the Russian Far East’s current geostrategic and geopolitical position as well as its role and influence in the Asian-Pacific Region (APR) urgently demanded adequate treatment in history syllabuses at federal level. The history of the APR countries and their growing impact on world affairs should also be properly presented at federal level.

The participants expressed the view that the regional dimension should be subject to more precise criteria of this kind, that it should be rationally linked to the federal dimension, and that teachers should be allowed to adopt a creative approach to the choice of a place, content and time for studying it.

An organisational structure should also be created directing and co-ordinating efforts to plan federal and regional curricula and ensuring that teachers are provided with the requisite teaching materials, aids and supplies.

In this connection, there is a great need for the pooling of information, and the participants urgently requested the Council of Europe to provide assistance in organising information pages on the Internet.

The working group was of the opinion that the seminar organised by the Council of Europe had been productive and would foster the process of reforming history education in schools. It proposed making such seminars a regular occurrence and suggested discussing the following theme at the next one: “Study of the history of Europe in teacher training institutions and schools in the Far East region (a comparative analysis of European and Russian models)”.

The participants recommended that the Council of the Khabarovsk Association of History Teachers (O.Yu. Strelova) draw up a draft long-term plan for co-operation with the Council of Europe. They also asked for the documents of the present seminar to be published.

The group expressed its gratitude to the co-ordinator, O.Yu. Strelova, for carefully planning the seminar proceedings and providing the appropriate working conditions.

Professor V. M. Peskov
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