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Open letter to D.V. Tabachnyk, Deputy Prime Minister on Humanitarian Issues

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<http://khp.org/en/index.php?id=1164674586>

Our people, fastidious and healthy by nature, have never liked extremes. Have you ever heard in an upright rural family people sneering at a synagogue or church? One came upon individuals who could turn the conversation to something dodgy, but they tended to serve more as an edifying warning. People were accustomed to conceal what was shameful. These days ever more of them are tumbling into a state of total shamelessness. Daring to be shameless has even become fashionable. The cultural environment, it seems, has suffered even more than the natural environment, and no Greenpeace can save it.

The radio station “Culture” has interesting and informative discussions, but a Mr X. butts in with an anti-Semitic question, destroys the whole cultural level and people say that culture reeks of anti-Semitism. Sometimes the stench is programmed as a filling. There are, for example, obligatory doses in the programs of MAUP [the Interregional Academy of Personnel Management]. Sometimes the smell is of Arab oil, sometimes it bears the unconcealed mark of the FSB [the Russian Security Service]. The lack of shame can lead to even a national catastrophe – the genocide of 1933 - being used to blame “Jews and Free Masons”. When all this is mixed with the bad flavour of the gutter press, the conclusion becomes worryingly clear: the cultural atmosphere in Ukraine is polluted and in its spirit – anti-Ukrainian.

There are very bad symptoms: the infection has been unleashed on public figures who in any normal society provide a standard for propriety. The Soviet regime was anti-Ukrainian, but the officials donned an international mask, concealed their shameful and the bad smell. Today the general wildness is become pathological and the fact that anti-Ukrainians and anti-Jews are mooching around the market doesn't worry anyone. They say that there are bad people, there are deviants, and there are people who are just sick.

An example of the extremely polluted state of the cultural environment was an interview given by the Deputy Prime Minister on Humanitarian Issues Dmytro Tabachnyk to the notorious journalist O. Buzyni who, as is known, has made a career for himself out of his own weaknesses. We have in mind

the program credo of the high-ranking culture bureaucrat: “One cannot run cultural policy only to suit the interests of a narrow layer of Ukrainian-speaking intelligentsia who are simply frightened of competition in everything”.

Viktor Andriyovych (Yushchenko) is right: ours is indeed a unique state. In any other country, following a phrase like that from a deputy prime minister on humanitarian issues, there would be such a scandal that the official would be forced to immediately resign (sufficient to imagine how at one time Israelis would have reacted to the words from a minister: “One cannot run cultural policy only in the interests of a narrow layer of the intelligentsia that is trying to revive Hebrew”). In principle the protest of academician Ivan Dziuba who asked several questions which it would seem the Minister was unable to answer should have been enough for the latter’s resignation. Yet the dismissive silence from Mr Tabachnyk does not remove the actual issue: an individual who is prepared to express himself in such a fashion has no right to hold any post in the Ukrainian Government. We would be committing a grievous sin against our civic conscience if we did not express openly and publicly our demand that the Ukrainian Government immediately dismiss Mr Tabachnyk.

This demand is not as radical as it may appear at first glance. It is indeed not difficult to foresee that the

Ukrainian Government will most likely ignore the demand. It was equally easy to foresee back in 1976 that the Government of the USSR would ignore the demands of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group, the anniversary of which Mr Tabachnyk would now, late in the day, like to mark. However then and now it was important for society to impose upon their governments a system of tests through which they would demonstrate their true nature. Therefore in the case of Mr Tabachnyk it is dependent now on the Government what colour our simple litmus paper will turn.

We would also like to address a few thoughts to the Deputy Prime Minister himself. If for you, Mr Tabachnyk, the layer of the Ukrainian-speaking intelligentsia is too narrow, then return to us the legions of those who over 70 years rose up in defence of the individual against the violence and headlong Russification, and were then sacrificed to the idol on each of the regular anniversaries of the “Great October”. If you, Mr Tabachnyk, would like a fair competition with Ukrainian identity, don’t pretend and measure out the same distances for the runners. After all a person of your learning cannot fail to know the principle of “positive discrimination” in favour of those persecuted which is what the western civilization of human rights rests upon. If you, Mr Tabachnyk, would like justice, then think

about the healing of the spirit, about the liberation of the Ukrainian people from the horrors of the Holodomors and GULAGs, because it was this horror, and not the superiority of Russian culture which pushed your despised fellow country people to “the language of the great Lenin”. Lack of comprehension, or disregard, for these things is simply incompatible with a state office in Ukraine. .

Your Jewish roots should have made you better skilled at considering the situation. After all, by making such statements, you have given a fine present to those of all ilk who hate Jews, and who will use the opportunity to link your contempt for “a narrow layer of the Ukrainian intelligentsia” with your ethnic origin. Your phrase therefore has not merely an anti-Ukrainian ring, but also anti-Jewish. And this was always the case: phobia against Jews has always poisoned the fate of Ukrainians, phobia against Ukrainians has always hit hard at Jews. The negative harvest poisons the atmosphere for everybody.

The present situation for Ukrainian culture and identity is, without any doubt, disturbing, and this is because of the lack of good will among those people who should embody it. You, as Deputy Prime Minister for Humanitarian Issues, were vested with the responsibility to prevent humanitarian catastrophe. Yet the most important issue for Ukraine is not division on language lines – it is a shame that you don’t notice how in a Russian-speaking milieu a Ukrainian national spirit which you don’t know is becoming ever more tangible!. A true civilization challenge for Ukraine is the inability to distinguish good and evil which is taking on truly apocalyptic proportions. An illustration of this is provided by all that is associated with your person: the texts of the speeches that you have written and now write, the gifts that you present to those in power, the orders which you issue to the OMON [riot police] about participants in a funeral procession[1], the disrespect for the Institute of National Remembrance, and finally the circumstances under which you returned to the Government circles. However you as a historian should know well enough: the dismissal which history imposes on people is the most frightening. Do you remember who was in charge of humanitarian issues in Kaganovych’s team? We don’t remember either.

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