

1.10.96  
Sipu tu Anno I APP

legge: Brady

T = 5'45"

1128/c

01-1128 C sim 6

Mrs SEVERINSEN (Denmark) (Rapporteur of the Committee on Relations With European Non-Member Countries).- It is with great pleasure that, on behalf of the committee, I recommend that Ukraine should take its place in the Assembly as a full member. From three years' co-operation with the Ukrainian guest delegation we all know that it is eager to play a full part in the (work) of the Assembly. For that reason I recommend that the Assembly should vote in favour of the opinion given in the Masseret report.

I do not want to repeat what has already been said by my two co-rapporteurs. I should like to make some historical reflections because Ukraine's route towards independence has been turbulent. The roots of the country go back more than 1,000 years when Kiev was one of Europe's main capitals with many rich churches, monasteries, castles and fortifications, which still give Kiev its own identity today.

Throughout history Ukraine has been dominated from the west, the east and finally from the north. That also means that for several hundred years various parts of Ukraine have not had the same political history.

Ukraine's attempt to be independent after the first world war failed, and under Stalin's fight against the Kulaks millions of people died, as happened during the second world war. After the war the process started again with deportations. For example, the Tartars of Crimea had to leave. They are now on their way back, as is the case with many others in the former Soviet Union.

The road to independence has also been turbulent. When our committee visited Kiev two years ago we got the impression of a country that was devoted to the idea of being a member of the European family, but with enormous unsolved problems, primarily economic ones. When I and my two co-rapporteurs visited Ukraine in April this year the situation was again turbulent. Major discussions were going on about the mini-constitution while there was a severe crisis in the relationship with Crimea. Things have turned in the right direction and today I dare to say that Ukraine is engaged in an irreversible process towards becoming a full and worthy member of the Council of Europe. As part of that process it will honour more than 20 commitments in the years to come.

I would like to see Ukraine's membership of the Assembly as a hopeful sign of a new European order. I come from a country that is a tenth the size of Ukraine, but I and my colleagues will be able to give the big country of Ukraine advice on how to improve democracy, maintain human rights, improve the legal system, operate local and regional self-government and, not least, create autonomy in Crimea.

During the July session we presented many questions about the numerous issues with which Ukraine must deal. We received quick answers which gave many promises and many commitments. The rapporteurs will have to follow those commitments closely given the Halonen order. We must be sure that true autonomy is offered to Crimea in order to avoid future conflict. We must follow the steps towards the implementation of local and regional self-government. That will be extremely important in a country with such a varying political history.

We must note the treatment of minorities and the churches. We must study the mini-constitution's road towards a real constitution and thereby the development also of a constitutional court to solve constitutional problems. We must follow the development of the legal system, especially the independence of the court and the abandonment of the death penalty. We must make sure that other commitments are honoured, for example the closure of Chernobyl before the year 2000. Are they internal matters for a big sovereign state of Ukraine? No. First, in an interdependent Europe very few questions are purely a matter of internal responsibility. We must realise that, and we must appreciate that as a member of the Council of Europe we take on common responsibilities to fulfil the obligations that are set to ensure that we maintain our standards. I appreciate that that is also the belief of Ukraine. It is not easy for the rapporteurs to ensure that those obligations are met and I should like to thank my two co-rapporteurs for their good co-operation. Ukraine has enormous potential to be a prosperous country and I am sure that economic reforms and economic progress will ease the solving of other problems in Ukraine.

With those words, I should like to welcome Ukraine as a full member of this Assembly.