

Citizen's Watch is an NGO in Saint Petersburg, Russia, among the pioneer organizations that were founded after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Primarily, it advocates and works to protect and improve the legal rights of Russian citizens. The employees, from journalists to engineers, coordinate conferences, symposiums and meetings to discuss and organize reform.

As a short-term(4 weeks) intern, I was given a sixty page transcription in Russian of a conference to translate and write an analysis about in English for international distribution. The meeting consisted of lawyers and government officials. The president of Citizens' Watch moderated it, and the discussion was essentially a comparative study of England's, Scotland's, and Russia's juvenile justice system. Their objective was to present new and viable ideas for improving Russia's legal system as it relates to minors. They suggested implementing rehabilitative measures and spoke at length about ways in which specific practices could be incorporated into Russian juvenile justice.

My project was initially daunting, as sixty pages (single spaced!) is a lot of Russian for a non native speaker. However, it was well worth the effort. I learned a great deal about Russia's legal system, the international rights of minors, contributed to the work of this organization and improved my Russian tremendously.

Attached is a summary of the conference I worked on. It will describe the subject matter in greater detail:

SEMINAR SUMMARY

**CITIZENS' WATCH
NON-GOVERNMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION, ST.
PETERSBURG**

SEMINAR
The Protection of Minors in the British and Russian Legal Systems

March 15, 2003
St. Petersburg

SEMINAR SUMMARY

On March 15, 2003 the Non Governmental Organization “Citizens’ Watch,” in conjunction with the Minister of International Development of Great Britain and the General Council of Great Britain conducted the seminar *The Protection of the Rights of Minors in the British and Russian Legal Systems*. The objective of this seminar was to present the juvenile justice system of Great Britain to Russian judges in order to introduce, discuss and develop ideas concerning the interests of minors. The seminar began with the speeches of three judges from Great Britain explaining their legal procedures regarding both underage criminals and victims. Questions from Russian jurists followed each presentation. Once the British judges had presented and answered all questions, three judges from Saint Petersburg spoke, expounding their legal procedures in relation to those of their British guests and speculating whether British methods of juvenile justice could be applied in Russia. Lastly, Boris Pustintsev of “Citizens’ Watch” moderated a discussion to conclude the seminar.

The principle task of the discussion was to explore how to best protect the rights of minors in the justice system. The judges essentially conducted a comparative analysis of their respective legal structures in order to assess the successes and failings of the pertinent legislation currently in place in both Great Britain and Russia. They considered the psychological effects that various tactics may have on children as well as the results these methods yield insofar as the recidivism rate was considered. Several of the measures discussed were isolating the child in an institution, subjecting him to a period of probation during which time local authorities closely monitor his activities, and various embryonic preventative procedures.

The speakers all agreed that unstable living conditions often underlie criminality among youths. In this seminar, juvenile offenders were viewed as victims of social circumstances, which should be addressed by rehabilitative procedures. These measures

took shape in the form of societal reintegration programs, the hiring of social workers to care for the needs of the child, and creating or increasing the amount of courts and judges specializing in the juvenile law.

The biggest problem that all the judges encountered to varying degrees, in regard to the implementation of rehabilitative and preventative measures, was insufficient funding or simply a lack thereof, which is more often the case in Saint Petersburg. Therefore, questions of financial feasibility and the practicality of prophylactic efforts were raised. In England, for example, they have a team of social workers in each region designated to care for underage criminals whereas in the Leningrad Oblast, the region represented at this seminar, such a program does not and cannot currently exist; funding is not available. However, the Russian judges and their British counterparts discussed hypothetically the creation and execution of social rehabilitative programs as the absence of such intellectual exchanges precludes the development and evolution of any legal system.