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Crisis: Russia cuts Ukraine's gas supply

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2 January, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Crisis: Russia cuts Ukraine's gas supply

Russia has cut off its gas supplies to Ukraine because the two countries could not agree on the price Ukraine should pay for Russian gas. Moscow wants Kiev to pay five times more for its gas. Ukraine's President Yushchenko is angry over Moscow's action. He described it "as showing clear signs of a threat to our national security". He added: "We consider this an obvious form of economic pressure...and a violation [by Russia] of treaty obligations." Many observers believe Mr. Putin is putting pressure on Ukraine to stop Mr. Yushchenko's plans for his country to join the EU and NATO.

Russia and Ukraine have been arguing over gas prices for most of the past year. Moscow said it is time for Kiev to start paying higher prices. The current agreement gives Ukraine gas at discounted prices because it pipes a lot of Russia's exports across its own borders into Europe. Ukraine's leader has said he is ready to ask nuclear nations and the EU for their support against Russia. The cutting of gas supplies to and through Ukraine will badly affect Europe. Worst hit would be Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, which depend on Russia for 70 to 100 percent of their natural gas supplies.

WARM-UPS

1. UKRAINE SEARCH: Talk to other students to find out what they know about Ukraine. When you have finished, sit down with your partner(s) and share your information. Tell each other what you thought was interesting or surprising. Would you like to visit or live in Ukraine?

2. MY NEIGHBORS: Do you get on well with your neighbors? Are you a good neighbor? Have you been a good neighbor recently? Answer these questions in pairs / groups. Talk about the following neighbors. What are relations like between your neighbor and you? Have they always been this way?

- a. My next-door neighbor where I live
- b. My other neighbors
- c. The countries neighboring my own
- d. The people in the next town / city
- e. My English class neighbors

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Russia / natural gas / agreements / threats / national security / economic pressure / plans / NATO / discounted prices / pipes / neighbors / nuclear nation / borders

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. RELATIONS: What do you know of Russia's relations with other countries? Find out as much as you can from other students. Share your findings with your partner(s). You could talk about these countries:

- USA
- China
- Japan
- Cuba
- Iran
- Ukraine
- India
- Your country

5. FUTURE HEADLINES: Talk about the following "headlines" in pairs/ groups. Do you think they could become real headlines? Talk about them as though each was true.

- a. Russian Revolution 2006 – People rise up against Putin.
- b. Ukraine joins the EU and NATO.
- c. Russia breaks up – More breakaway states become independent.
- d. Russia attacks Ukraine.
- e. Russia and US are close to war over Ukraine.
- f. Putin and Yushchenko win Nobel Peace Prize.

6. PRESSURE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "pressure". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Russia has stopped selling natural gas to Ukraine. | T / F |
| b. Ukraine's president called the move a threat to its secretaries. | T / F |
| c. Ukraine's president said the move was a form of economic pressure. | T / F |
| d. Ukraine's president wants his country to join the EU and NATO. | T / F |
| e. The latest disagreement over gas prices started last week. | T / F |
| f. Russia currently sells gas to Ukraine at a discount. | T / F |
| g. Ukraine has asked nuclear nations to support it against Russia. | T / F |
| h. The crisis between the two countries is unlikely to affect Europe. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| a. cut off | challenge |
| b. angry | rely |
| c. threat | fighting |
| d. observers | designs |
| e. plans | brings |
| f. arguing | furious |
| g. current | affected |
| h. pipes | stopped |
| i. hit | present |
| j. depend | commentators |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| a. Russia has cut | across its own borders |
| b. clear signs of a threat | country to join the EU and NATO |
| c. an obvious form | and through Ukraine |
| d. Mr. Putin is putting | of economic pressure |
| e. stop Mr. Yushchenko's plans for his | to our national security |
| f. arguing over gas prices for most | for their support against Russia |
| g. it pipes a lot of Russia's exports | pressure on Ukraine |
| h. ask nuclear nations and the EU | off its gas supplies to Ukraine |
| i. The cutting of gas supplies to | would be Slovakia, Hungary... |
| j. Worst hit | of the past year |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

WORD ORDER: Put the underlined words back into the correct order.

Crisis: Russia cuts Ukraine's gas supply

Russia has gas to cut supplies off its Ukraine because the two countries could not agree on the price Ukraine should pay for Russian gas. Moscow wants Kiev five more for times to pay its gas. Ukraine's President Yushchenko is angry over Moscow's action. He described it "signs showing as of clear a national to threat our security". He added: "We consider this an obvious form of economic pressure...and a violation [by Russia] of treaty obligations." Many observers believe Mr. Putin is to stop Ukraine pressure on putting Mr. Yushchenko's plans for his country to join the EU and NATO.

Russia and Ukraine have been for most gas arguing prices over of the past year. Moscow said it is time for Kiev to start paying higher prices. The current agreement gives Ukraine gas at discounted prices because it exports a lot of Russia's pipes across its own borders into Europe. Ukraine's leader has said nuclear ready nations to ask is he and the EU for their support against Russia. The cutting of gas Ukraine through and to supplies will badly affect Europe. would Slovakia be worst hit, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, which depend on Russia for 70 to 100 percent of their natural gas supplies.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Crisis: Russia cuts Ukraine's gas supply

Russia has _____ its gas supplies to Ukraine because the two countries could not _____ on the price Ukraine should pay for Russian gas. Moscow wants Kiev to pay five times more for its gas. Ukraine's President Yushchenko is angry _____ Moscow's action. He described it "as showing clear _____ of a threat to our national security". He added: "We consider this an obvious _____ of economic pressure...and a violation [by Russia] of _____ obligations." Many observers believe Mr. Putin is putting _____ on Ukraine to stop Mr. Yushchenko's plans for his country to _____ the EU and NATO.

Russia and Ukraine have been arguing _____ gas prices for most of the past year. Moscow said it is _____ for Kiev to start paying higher prices. The current agreement gives Ukraine gas at discounted prices because it _____ a lot of Russia's exports across its own borders into Europe. Ukraine's leader has said he is _____ to ask nuclear nations and the EU for their support against Russia. The cutting of gas supplies to and through Ukraine will _____ affect Europe. Worst hit would be Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, which _____ on Russia for 70 to 100 percent of their natural gas supplies.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'natural' and 'gas'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. WORD ORDER: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers.

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "GAS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about the current situation between Russia and Ukraine.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|------------|--------------|
| • agree | • arguing |
| • five | • discounted |
| • angry | • borders |
| • signs | • ready |
| • pressure | • worst |
| • plans | • depend |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Have you been following this story in the news?
- c. Which country do you think is right?
- d. Do you think Russia's actions are too strong?
- e. Do you think Russians dislike the fact that Ukraine and other states broke away from Russia and became independent?
- f. Do you think other parts of Russia might break away?
- g. Do you think politicians in Moscow are worried about Mr. Yushchenko's pro-European thinking?
- h. What do you think of Mr. Yushchenko?
- i. How would Europe be changed if Russia joined the EU?
- j. What can the European countries affected by this problem do to reduce the pain?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think the five-fold price rise is reasonable?
- d. Do you think this crisis will get worse?
- e. Who do you think is the better leader, Mr. Putin or Mr. Yushchenko?
- f. What do you think Mr. Yushchenko wants the nuclear nations and the EU to do to Russia?
- g. What do you think of Mr. Putin?
- h. Does your country have good relations with Russia and Ukraine?
- i. When was the last time someone put pressure on you to do something?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

GOOD NEIGHBORS: In pairs / groups, agree on the most important two points for each of the neighbors below to improve their relations.

NEIGHBORS	TWO POINTS
Russia / Ukraine	1. 2.
India / Pakistan	1. 2.
North Korea / South Korea	1. 2.
USA / Cuba	1. 2.
Israel / Palestine	1. 2.
Other	1. 2.

Change partners and tell you new partner(s) the two points you decided with your old partner(s).

Talk about which of your points are the most important. Discuss the chances of positive action being taken on these points that improve relations between the neighbors.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the problem between Russia and Ukraine. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. NEIGHBORLINESS: Make a poster about how to be a good neighbor. Show your posters to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar ideas?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to Mr. Putin and Mr. Yushchenko. Tell them both how you think they should end this problem. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone write similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

a. T b. F c. T d. T e. F f. T g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. cut off	stopped
b. angry	furious
c. threat	challenge
d. observers	commentators
e. plans	designs
f. arguing	fighting
g. current	present
h. pipes	brings
i. hit	affected
j. depend	rely

PHRASE MATCH:

a. Russia has cut	off its gas supplies to Ukraine
b. clear signs of a threat	to our national security
c. an obvious form	of economic pressure
d. Mr. Putin is putting	pressure on Ukraine
e. stop Mr. Yushchenko's plans for his	country to join the EU and NATO
f. arguing over gas prices for most	of the past year
g. it pipes a lot of Russia's exports	across its own borders
h. ask nuclear nations and the EU	for their support against Russia
i. The cutting of gas supplies to	and through Ukraine
j. Worst hit	would be Slovakia, Hungary...

WORD ORDER:

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