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EDITORIAL

This is the last issue of the *CPRSI Newsletter* in this year's series. We have tried to make it thematic. The question often raised at meetings and seminars concerning Roma is that of the problem of how Roma are depicted in the media. How do the image makers of today contribute to the situation of Roma, and how can Roma representatives themselves help journalists to improve this rather negative image? Such is the discussion topic addressed in the project proposal that was prepared by the Dzeno Foundation during the meeting of representatives of Roma and non-Roma media and Roma activists.

The pictures from the exhibition at the Central Railway Station in Warsaw this autumn illustrate how the powerful and effective tools of today's media can affect society in a positive way and make people more tolerant of the differences in their cultures.

We have decided to present some excerpts from the report on the fact-finding mission on the situation of Roma in Bosnia. This report was produced by the European Working Group for Roma In and Refugees From Bosnia - an organisation based in Germany. The recommendations presented in this report could make an invaluable contribution toward improving the coordination of international efforts being undertaken in the region.

We hope you will find this issue interesting and informative, and we look forward to your comments in 1997.

Happy New Year!

OSCE REVIEW CONFERENCE

During the OSCE Review Conference (22 November 1996, Vienna), the work of the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti was praised by many delegations and NGOs, and support was expressed for its further development. A group of States proposed regular internship programmes for Roma in the ODIHR, and the expansion of legal assistance efforts at the Contact Point. It was noted that the situation of Roma, as a minority scattered throughout the OSCE region and not possessing a national state, was unique. The delegations and NGOs gave numerous examples of intolerance toward Roma across the entire OSCE region. In response, delegations outlined the policies and structures in place to respond to such problems. Delegations and NGOs both stressed the need for co-operation between the ODIHR and the Council of Europe in this realm. One NGO suggested that work on a European Charter on Roma would be advantageous.

THE MEDIA AND THE ROMA IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE: FACTS AND FICTIONS, PRAGUE, 19-22 SEPTEMBER 1996

Rapporteur: Paulina Merino

In mid-September, the Open Media Research Institute, The Project on Ethnic Relations, and the OSCE/ODIHR, coordinated a meeting of representatives from Roma and non-Roma media and Roma activists.

The discussion focused on the following primary issues: the portrayal of Roma in non-Romani media and its impact on majority attitudes toward Roma, as well as on the Roma community itself; and the influence of Roma media in shaping public opinion and in fighting social stereotypes of Roma.

The majority of participants in the discussion agreed that the coverage of Romani in the European non-Roma media is predominantly negative. According to Mr. Nicolae Gheorghe, the Romanian media makes use of two thematic approaches to the Roma issue: either brutal or romantic. The Bulgarian media, according to Rumyan Russinov, is outspoken and persistently hateful with respect to Roma, who are presented, nearly without exception, as agents of crime and social disturbance. Some of the participants, including Milena Hubshmanova, pointed out that the distorted portrayal of Roma in non-Roma media is due to the fact that non-Roma journalists are not acquainted with their subject matter. The existence, however, of numerous articles that not only simply misinterpret facts and characteristics associated with the community's lifestyle, but rather deliberately play upon the already existing prejudices with respect to Roma and thereby impose racist views upon audiences, raises questions as to whether lack of knowledge is the sole reason behind the negative portrayal of Roma in the mainstream media.

DZENO FOUNDATION PRESENTS: PROJECT FOR MONITORING AND ANALYSIS OF THE ROMA ISSUE IN THE MEDIA (Excerpts)

Prague, 19 September 1996

Note from the editor: During the meeting in Prague, the Dzeno Foundation presented its methodology for analysing the press with regard to ethnic (Romani) subject matter. This document was based on an analysis of Czech media. Nevertheless, the excerpts of this useful document could contribute much to the creation of a positive image of Roma in the media in general.

Introduction

In the Czech Republic, the question of the Romani population has not, until now, been unequivocally clarified. Attempts towards a solution have been in progress since 1990, when the government began to develop programs that were aimed at finding a solution to the Roma minority situation. To resolve the situation it is necessary to include the arguments of both parties involved: the Roma and the representatives of state power. For state institutions, obtaining well-processed data and studies is not particularly problematic, unlike the situation faced by the Roma or Romani-directed initiatives.

For this reason, "Dzeno, the foundation for the renewal and development of traditional Romany values," in conjunction with seasoned professionals aided by sociological research instruments and methodological advances, decided to prepare, at minimum, a segment of the information base necessary to specifically support argumentation from the Romany position. The entire project, however, involves preparations for an investigation substantially more extensive. The project's initial examination was of the problematic presentation of the so-called "Romani problem" in the Czech (and Slovak) press; the results of the examination should help in the areas addressed below.

Purpose of Retroactive Inspection

The Roma question is, undeniably, one problem that must be resolved by Czech society. It has become certainly become an intervening issue and its meaning, especially in the context of the growing racist tendencies in the Czech Republic, could be also regarded as a certain indicator of the level of democracy, the observation of law and order, and the stance of the government towards the question of human and minority rights in general.

The Roma question is political in the very sense of the word. Each political party must somehow create its profile by declaring a position on the so-called Romany problem, and further, with the help of this profile, define its place on the political spectrum.

The political parties, both within the governmental coalition and among the opposition, are well aware of these two facts, and therefore attempt to declare varying goals, efforts, and activities in relation to the Roma. These statements, however, do not confront the reality of the situation; neither is there any means to bring such declarations into effect. One possibility, however, is to follow all incidents regarding the Roma as they are reflected in the press.

On the basis of news analyses, and through examination of synapses of proclamations made by governmental, parliamentary, political party, and other individual groups, such as the church or foundations that claim to be occupied with the Romani question, "acts and deeds" can be compared. Through such a process, retroactive inspection would occur, and consequently, the Romany would have professionally developed materials in hand, which could serve as proof and support for their claims.

Making the Romani Movement Professional and Preventing Its Manipulation

Despite the government's attempts to convince the Roma themselves, as well as the rest of the public to the contrary, the Roma are still the subject of experiments for so-called solutions to their problems. These supposed solutions have been developed within an entire system of state administration, beginning with the Council for Nationalities of the Government of the Czech Republic, continuing through each ministry and municipal authority, and ending with each district council. Against a professional state administration, secured by a state budget and equipped with all possible statistical data, knowledge, and access to materials, including college-educated personnel, stand the Roma groups, whose members are socially the weakest of the population - often without employment or adequate intellectual means on which to rely - and with a nearly complete lack of access to necessary information.

For the Roma, such a position is even worse, as no lobbying group exists, either from among their own population or from among the ranks of the non-Romani population, which could effectively exert pressure toward achievement of Roma requirements. Further, the Roma themselves have a minimal knowledge of work organisation and work in the structure of the "white" population, a system that is to them essentially foreign. The establishment of an information centre containing analytically organized materials will contribute to the education of Romany activists. Using such materials, these activists will be able to seek support both for their work, and in their challenges to the non-Romani perception of so-called "Romani problems" and interpretations therein. Through this process, the establishment and development of each Roma organisation and activity will be supported both by the availability of professional knowledge and by professional skills in argumentation. Thus, equipped with knowledge, the Roma will be less subject to manipulation.

Survey Trends

A survey of the available materials will make it possible to pinpoint definite trends regarding the relations of the majority society toward the Roma, consequently allowing for the possibility of taking effective precautions against any projected problems.

Independent Sources of Information

The complex array of analytically processed data will constitute the only source of information, with regard to the problem being examined, which is not derived from the state administration. On this basis of this independently gathered information, it will be possible to create the "Romany version" with respect to a particular issue or problem, and to suggest alternative methods for its resolution.

Making Media Work Objectively

In our country, the influence of the media continues to be underestimated. Analysis of the aforementioned materials has the potential to expose, for example, the media's influence on the growth of racism in the Czech Republic. The manipulation of public opinion towards the Romany people, as well as the media's role in creating or assisting in the creation of the majority society's attitude towards the Roma, could be revealed. Such an analysis of information could serve as feedback for each newspaper as well as the press in general. Concurrently, through the exposure of the factors at work in manipulation, such forces could be partially eliminated. Moreover, by alluding to the manipulating tactics of the press in one area, it is possible assume the use of similar tactics in other areas. Generally, the analysis in question would prompt a certain control over the work of the press, making submissions increasingly objective, and consequently advancing the respectability of the press.

From indications derived from the initial stage of the investigation, the goal of which is the application of the methodology for media analysis, it is evident that a broad field of information exists, both upon commencement of the project, as well as at its conclusion. For this summary, a few primary hypotheses have been identified toward the goal of stimulating development of an adequately and methodically managed investigation. [...]

Final Aims of the Analysis

The final aims should be:

- 1) Change in the mass media's position towards Roma;
- 2) Change in the government's stance on resolution of the so-called Romany problem;
- 3) Improvement in the quality and objectivity of the mass media;
- 4) Creation a professional database, to include complete information from identified areas; and
- 5) Provision of assistance to Romany organizations in their efforts at self-organisation, improvement of work and promotion of mutual connections. [...]

NEVIPE PRESS RROM NEWS AGENCY

Nevipe Press Rrom News Agency was founded on 5 November 1991, in Amsterdam, Holland. The branch office of the Nevipe Foundation in Presov, Slovakia, was registered and opened on 4 June 1994, as an independent foundation.

The purposes of the Foundation are to publish various documents related to Roma in Romane and other languages; and to establish and implement radio and TV programs in Europe promoting Rromani life and providing authentic information about and for Roma in order to increase positive values among Roma.

The Nevipe Foundation publishes *Patrin*, the first international Romani periodical. *Patrin* is issued in bilingual mode, i.e., in both English and the standard form of the Rromani language, and is prepared and published on a quarterly basis by a professional Rromani journalistic staff.

SLOVAK NEWS SERVICE

Courses for Unemployed Gypsy Women in Kezmarok, Slovakia, 1 October 1996

The PTK ECHO company, which organises re-qualifying courses, granted seamstress certificates to 25 young and unemployed Gypsy women in Kezmarok. Given the long-term problem of high rates of unemployment among Gypsies, the company, which works in co-operation with the Job Offices in Poprad and Kezmarok, decided to design this course especially for Gypsy women. Additionally, in 1996, the company intends to establish a centre for traditional handicrafts in Spisska Bela, near Kezmarok, where unemployed Gypsies will have the opportunity to learn how to initiate entrepreneurial activities in this realm.

"CYGANIE" - EXHIBITION IN WARSAW

Note from the editor: In September, the Central Railway Station in Warsaw hosted a rather unusual event. The photo exhibition, "Cyganie," organised by Gazeta Wyborcza and the Stowarzyszenie Romow w Polsce, presented fascinating photos of Roma taken by Piotr Wojcik and Marek Chromicki. The photo project originated in Warsaw under the Grota Bridge, where hundreds of Roma refugees from Romania found shelter in 1994. After the tragic events of 1995, however, when this small settlement was cruelly destroyed by police and its inhabitants had to leave without any destination, the photographers decided to continue their project in Romania in the summer of 1996. We present our readers with only a small part of this exhibit.

[Note: the ODIHR was granted permission for reprint of the photos only. Therefore, we do not put them on this electronic version. If anybody of our readers is interested in seeing those photos, we invite you to write us (ilya@odihr.osce.waw.pl)]

**REPORT ON THE FACT-FINDING MISSION
ON THE SITUATION OF ROMA IN BOSNIA
12-19 October 1996**

Katrin Reemstma (Excerpts)

Note from the editor: This report was produced by the European Working Group for Roma In and Refugees from Bosnia - an organisation based in Germany. The participants in the mission were Katrin Reemtsma, a cultural anthropologist and long-term expert on Roma issues; and Hedina Sijercic, the journalist responsible for the Roma program on Radio/TV Sarajevo, and who has lived as a refugee in Germany since 1992.

Before the war, Roma were the largest minority in Bosnia. In the former Republic's Constitution they were recognised as a "nationality." They had their own radio/TV program in Sarajevo and several cultural associations.[...]

Thousands of Roma are living in other European countries, mainly Germany, and internally, on Muslim government-controlled territory in Bosnia.

In Republika Srpska, very few Roma are left. Of the former 5,000 - 7,000 Roma from Banja Luka, only about 200 remain in the area; about 500 Roma from Banja Luka now live in Rome, another 500 live in London, and many reside in Berlin. Of the 8,000 Roma from Bijeljina, only 190 Roma remain. Villages that were inhabited only by Roma, such as Jasenje and Staro Selo, have been destroyed; the former inhabitants live in Berlin and other parts of Germany or Austria. Roma families from Doboje survived the war in Tesanje, and were transported to Sarajevo in the spring, where they now live in deserted Serbian homes in Vraca.

Approximately 500 Roma from Sarajevo now live in Rome, with others in Germany; a few hundred have survived the war in Kakanj. One hundred seventy families (of approximately 220-230) from north central Zavidovici have fled to Germany. Roma who lived in the Herceg-Bosna, close to Mostar, fled to Italy. [...]

A number of Roma who remained in Serbian-controlled territory were forcefully drafted into the Serbian Army. One - a refugee from the destroyed village of Jasenje in Bijeljina - was, as his Red Cross documents show, later jailed in the Batkovic camp close to Bijeljina.

Orthodox Roma, belonging to the same family but living in Banja Luka and Sarajevo, were drafted into the Serbian Army in Banja Luka and into the Bosnian Army in Sarajevo in 1992.

Other Roma either were forced to fight or voluntarily fought in the Bosnian Army. On 4 April 1994, Roma were invited to the *obstina* to enlist as voluntary fighters; 35 men from Sarajevo-Gorica decided to fight in the Bosnian Army. From among the 52 families that stayed in Zavidovici during the war, 32 men formed a Roma unit called "Garavi Vod"

("Black Unit") and fought as a part of the Bosnian Army in 1993-1994 near their hometown. [...]

Finally, the following observations were made:

- * Roma are a minority in all Bosnian entities; there exists no Bosnian governmental unit which regards itself particularly responsible;
- * Roma have lost the status of a recognised minority, or "nationality";
- * Despite the fact that Roma shared the fate of the Muslim population, they have been the last to be considered with regard to housing and employment;
- * Roma do not have the organisational infrastructures which could link them to humanitarian, national and international bodies and developments;
- * International organisations and national governments have only sporadically included Roma in their work and expertise, if at all; and
- * As with humanitarian aid during the war, Roma are now in the process of being left out of the little reconstruction that is currently taking place.

This report also makes some practical recommendations to international and local bodies dealing with the Roma issue:

- * National and international humanitarian aid and relief organisations should include Roma in their work;
- * An organisational infrastructure among Roma should be established, with links to Bosnian and European and international institutions and integration into European, Roma-related politics;
- * Local projects should be developed with Roma in the fields of reconstruction and work, education, culture and inter-group understanding (not only with respect to ethnic affiliation, but also with regard both to those who have remained in or left Bosnia);
- * International organisations (UNHCR, OSCE, Council of Europe, ECMM, NGOs, as well as national agencies of the European States or of the USA) should regularly include Roma in their work, and should regard the situation of Roma not as a sideshow, but rather as a touchstone for democratic, multinational developments in Bosnia;
- * International organisations and national governments should support Roma in their efforts to regain the status of "nationality" or national minority;

* It should be noted that generally, a forced return of refugees, no matter of what ethnic affiliation or from which third countries, to any Bosnian entity will increase tensions and violence, whether such is attempted at the present or in the spring;

* The criteria for return cannot be based on material status, criminal offenses, finances, foreigners' law, or time of the year; it must insure voluntary return, safety and the provision of a social minimum (accommodation and a developing labor market); and finally,

* The return of a great number of people should be thoroughly organised and prepared among the inhabitants of an area, the local and national institutions, the returnees, and the international organisations involved.

REPORTS

"25 Anni Insieme Per Un Cammino Di Giustizia," Bimestrale Associazione Italiana Zingari OGGI, 30 July 1996.

"Children of Bulgaria - Police Violence and Arbitrary Confinement," Human Rights Watch, Helsinki, 30 September 1996.

"Destroying Ethnic Identity - The Gypsies of Bulgaria," Human Rights Watch, Helsinki, 30 July 1996.

"Human Rights Watch Condemns Treatment of Roma Street Children by Police and Confinement of Children in Labor Education Schools in Bulgaria," Human Rights Watch, New York, 9 December 1996.

"Report on the Fact-Finding Mission on the Situation of Roma in Bosnia," Katrin Reemstma, European Working Group for Roma In and Refugees from Bosnia, 19 October 1996.

"Rights Denied - The Roma of Hungary," Human Rights Watch, Helsinki, 30 July 1996.

"Roma in the Czech Republic: Foreigners in Their Own Land," Human Rights Watch, Helsinki, 30 June 1996.

"Sudden Rage at Dawn - Violence Against Roma in Romania," European Roma Rights Center, 30 September 1996.

"The Case of Anguel Zabchikov from Razgrad," Human Rights Project, 30 June 1996.