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Report on the work of the Language Commission (Prague 2000)

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It is very important what was said yesterday : **we are a nation**, which came from India and we have a reference on a common language : the many millions of Rroms who everyday speak Rromani, a sweet and rich Rromani language, as well as some groups who forgot the language – but who still know that their ancestors years ago knew Rromani.

In the meeting, we first listened to the speech of Vania according to whom the Rroms came from Rajasthan, and then another theory according to which they came from the city of Kannauj, then the most developed cultural and spiritual city of India.

We listened to the presentation of the work performed by the Commission on Rromani Language after the 4th Congress of IRU; we saw many books that have been published since then and the majority agreed that it would be good to continue in this way with the common Rromani alphabet, as it was decided in the 4th Congress in Warsaw.

The tree is to be evaluated according to the fruits, and the work according to the production: papers, books, documentation, all that has been done and which can be profitable. Let us not listen much to what is said, but rather see what is being done.

The majority agreed that we must respect all the dialects, as they all are a richness of our culture and identity; it is very good to have different styles and ways of expression in a living language. The intelligent work is neither to abandon, nor to promote this or that dialect, the real issue is to identify what impedes the communication and then to seek for a way that the communication between us is the best possible. The experience shows that the difficulties do not come from the genuine rromani matter of the language, but from the borrowings from gazikane languages, and of course from the oblivion of the real rromani words.

Now in the 21st century, the family does not stay united, as it was before, so that the spiritual heritage can be forgotten. Therefore we must find other ways for the ancient knowledge to pass through the generations: publications, theatre, TV programs, radio, new technologies, CD-ROM, movies, cassettes for the Rroms to listen to while driving etc. The Rromani literature is already rich, but not enough known, because there is no real distribution of the material: the Lovara have a wonderful epos "O Tàri ta i Zèrfi", which is a pearl of the human literature, but it is not known enough. The ancient Rromani literature in Russia sleeps in the libraries of Mocow. Many old Rroms are dying – may God salve their souls, who have in their head real libraries; their go in the earth with their knowledge, as said our brother Koci. Our priority now is to gather all and to publish all this richness, which is really divine. Part of it can be published also in gazikane language, when there is an interest for the Rromani nation.

In the last years, many human rights organizations translated their documentation into Rromani, and the terminology in these domains (legal, administration, international politics) is already rich, and we have already a considerable CORPUS. Our group transtalted many pages for Europe (CoE, EU), UNICEF, UNICRI, OSCE, UNMIK in Kosovo etc. In reality, we fear our language becoming cold and dry in the administrative phraseology and therefore

wish to launch an appeal for vivifying the literature in all dialects in the common writing, and in all genres: tradition, orature, creation, prose, poetry, phantastics, publicism, translations etc. It is very important for the Rromani language to flourish and to enlarge following the Rromani spirit, and not to become a photocopy of other languages, because the Rromani mind deserves recognition as an excellent basis both in Rromani identity and in Europe.

We need more communication between us, we need to work together as brothers, for our children and their kids.

Paralelly, the administration language is important to know, especially among those who work in IRU. The Presidency proposes, with the help of Europe, the creation of a Socrates program, for the people of IRU to learn communication in political and administrative Rromani language. The proposal is to organise each year an one month international summer school on a chosen theme. It is also time now to publish a dictionary with the concepts of the modern Rromani politics.

The Rromani Union had worked on the Barcelone Charter (1996) on linguistic rights and this charter is being modified currently in UNESCO. Our group's opinion is that this document is good, but it gives little place to Rromani language and therefore we want cooperation with UNESCO for the new version of the Charter enlarges the rights of the languages that are spoken in many different countries, as Rromani.

We must create a small group of professional translators, who will go to the international conferences on Rromani thematics and will translate there between Rromani and the European languages. You see today our brother Gyusi is translating alone — thanks to him, but this is by no means normal in an international conference. We want the Rromani to be the first official language in these conferences, as it happened two or three times in the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. In this way, all the Rroms can speak to the tribune and express their concerns and their proposals.

We send our thanks to Strasbourg who opened the doors to Rromani language in many conferences and seminars. We send our thanks also to the government of Rumania, which teaches Rromani language and uses officially the common alphabet and the recommendations of the Commission on lexicon and grammar. We send our thanks also to the publishing house "Rromano kher" and to the magazine "Amaro Drom" in Hungary, which publish material in different dialiects, all in the same common alphabet. There are still other good examples: the kindergarten "Rromani baxt" in Albània, the university "Inalco" in France, newspapers "Nevipen" and "Ćacipen" in Spain, the edition "Rromano amal" in Italy and many others, who are doing a very good work in this direction. We send an appeal to all to publish material in Rromani language in the common alphabet, apèlo sa e averenqe te den avri materiàli p-e rromani éhib and-i khetani alfabèta, kaj te šaj for the Rroms of all countries to be able to read, not only those of the given country.

There is still to do in different terminologies for the language to become the most modern, for the new Europe, without losing its real soul.

For four years, Europe (DG 22 through CRT) gave money for the Commission on language to work, then it stoped, when many members from the ancient communist countries

started to work with us. We want to use again this source from Brussels. A delegation of IRU should go to Brussels and raise this question.

The Commission on Language prepared also considerable amount of material for children and for teachers, but this material is invisible: sometimes it is published but not distributed, as for example the book "Bibaxtale berša", on the Samudaripen (The *Holocaust* of the Rroms) that can not be bought, because there is no distribution. Other works have been done and remain in computers, what is really pitty, while all the Rroms are so eager to get them: tales, educational texts, proverbs, textbooks, dictionnaries, studies etc. We know that there is money for such works in Europe, for them to be distributed and we do not understand why this money does not go to the publishing and distribution of Rromani books.

We are lucky to count in our group two poets, our sisters Luminița Cioabă and Sali Ibrahim — may God give them luck. I would be fair for us to help them with this European money, since they have worked so much and so good (Luminița got the first place in 3-4 international competitions) without getting help from anyone, while working in the interest of te Rroms. Let us strengthen our communication for finding out how to surpass the difficulties, to publish their works the cheapest possible so they are bought by the Rroms in all countries, to promote these books in TV and radios, and to make them known also in textbooks with which learn Rromani and non-Rromani children.

We want to seek for scholarships for the youth to learn and afterwards to get officially employed in all scientific domains, especially in linguistics and in history. We knew about the project on distance teaching of Rromani in France and we hope Rromani youngsters will find scholarships so that they are able the soonest possible to perform this noble task.

Finally, I would like to say that there is a possibility for Rromani language to be recognized as official language in Kosovo, in equality with the three other, which are Albanian, Serbian and Turkish, and our proposal is to support this initiative, for later on it is implemented also in other countries..

Members of the working group:

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