

# Social and Cultural Diversity in Central and Eastern Europe: Old Factors and New

Seminar proceedings, Prague, October 2004



<b>01</b>	<b>Ethnic Diversity in Central and Eastern Europe</b>	<b>05</b>
	The Roma between the Skylla of Marginalization and the Charybdis of Exotization by Elena Marushiakova and Veselin Popov	<b>06</b>
	Ethnic Diversity versus the Ethnization of Politics: A View from Slovakia by Tomáš Strážay	<b>10</b>
	The Minority Status in Hungary by Diana Szántó	<b>14</b>
	The Past and Present of Czech Multiculturalism - Pavel Barša interviewed by Marek Čaněk and Jan Grill	<b>16</b>
<b>02</b>	<b>Religious Diversity in Central and Eastern Europe</b>	<b>20</b>
	New Religious Movements and the State in Poland by Agnieszka Kościańska	<b>21</b>
	"Believers" and the "World" - Parallel Discourses by Barbora Spalová	<b>24</b>
	Muslims in Central and Eastern Europe by Luboš Kropáček	<b>27</b>
<b>03</b>	<b>Policies of Integration in Central and Eastern Europe</b>	<b>29</b>
	Foreigner Integration Policies in the Czech Republic by Andrea Baršová	<b>30</b>
	Selected Problems of Foreigners in Slovakia in the Context of Current Migration Policy in the Country by Boris Divinský	<b>32</b>
<b>04</b>	<b>Comparative Practice of Diversity Management: East - West</b>	<b>35</b>
	European Institutions' Roma Policy by Roman Krištof	<b>36</b>
	Diversity Policies Need Rethinking... by Yudhishthir Raj Isar	<b>39</b>

The proceedings of the seminar “Social and Cultural Diversity in Central and Eastern Europe: Old Factors and New” is a selection of contributions presented during the meeting of experts held in Prague in October 1-3, 2004, under the auspices of Jan Jařab, Governmental Plenipotentiary for Human Rights and Pavel Bém, Mayor of the City of Prague. Researchers, policy makers, minority representatives, media and cultural professionals from the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Ukraine, Slovakia, France, the Netherlands and Finland took part in this event.

The main objective of the seminar was to reflect on the experience of the heterogeneous social, linguistic and religious climate in Central and Eastern Europe and explore, on the one hand, the present state of public and political discourse about the social diversity in the region, and, on the other hand, describe the policies and strategies of diversity management in selected countries in the region over the past fifteen years.

The region of Central and Eastern Europe used to be a place of important historic encounters and coexistence of diverse societies, languages and religions. However, in the second half of the 20th century this experience was disrupted for many years. Since the 1990s, due to the gradual opening and democratization of these societies, social diversity is re-emerging again in this part of the world, gaining special relevance at the time of EU Enlargement and integration. It is important for the present discourse concerning social diversity in the region vis-a- vis disadvantaged and marginalised parts of society of Central and Eastern Europe to be known outside of the region and compared to existing experiences and practices concerning diversity within the EU.

The proceedings from the seminar “Social and Cultural Diversity in Central and Eastern Europe: Old Factors and New” bring together selected contributions presented during the event. They have been further enriched by some new texts in order to give a wider picture of the region and its actual diversity management. These articles and further contributions are available on the Multicultural Center Prague website ([www.mkc.cz/en](http://www.mkc.cz/en)). Articles presented here focus on the issues of:

1. Ethnic diversity in Central and Eastern Europe
2. Religious diversity in Central and Eastern Europe
3. Policies of integration in Central and Eastern Europe
4. Comparative practice of diversity management: East-West

The international seminar “Social and Cultural Diversity in Central and Eastern Europe: Old Factors and New” was a part of a larger event called Dialog of Cultures consisting of panel sessions, artistic inputs in support of the issue, public debates, feature films and documentary screenings, interviews and media sessions. Through this event, the Multicultural Center Prague and the European Cultural Foundation as the main organizers hope to contribute to the informed debate about diversity and its management within the region of Central and Eastern Europe and beyond.

The event was organized with the financial assistance from the Open Society Fund Prague, International Visegrad Fund, the Office of the Czech Republic Government, and the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic.



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01

# Ethnic Diversity in Central and Eastern Europe



# The Roma between the Skylla of Marginalization and the Charybdis of Exotization

06

This article presents a number of issues that ensue from the social and ideological paradigm in which the Roma have been perceived during the past 10-15 years in Central and Eastern Europe. It argues that the future of the Roma is less jeopardized by racism, negative stereotypes or anti-Roma attitudes than by active interventions and constant patronizing by people who say they like them and who try “really hard” to help the Roma, enforcing upon them a model of development that they consider best. Such an approach taking the form of social patronizing is - regardless of the original intentions - essentially damaging to the natural mechanisms of community preservation, transforms the community into a permanent social patient, a client of professional well-wishers and in the end eradicates all hopes for natural development.

The question of social diversity in Central and Eastern Europe and old and new factors that influence it is particularly interesting as regards the Roma community. It would be possible to describe the specific policies implemented by individual countries, compare and analyze these policies, or discuss the technical and methodological aspects of the ways Roma research should be carried out. However, we choose instead to present a number of issues that are worth considering and ensue from the social and ideological paradigm in which the Roma have been perceived during the past 10-15 years in Central and Eastern Europe.

Of course, the space available to us does not allow for an in-depth discussion of each individual issue in great detail; nevertheless, we will try to outline what we see as the most important. Certainly, all countries in Central and Eastern Europe and their Roma communities are unique and have specific characteristics, but there are enough common features and models (both from the point of view of scientific knowledge and government policies) for us to examine the problem in a general and generalizing way.

## THE ROMA AS A MARGINAL COMMUNITY

The Roma are undoubtedly an important section of the population of Central and Eastern Europe (even when compared to other minorities in the individual countries or by their number, uniqueness and social status). Hardly anyone could doubt that the social problems of the Roma have deepened and intensified at the time of social and economic transformation that we live in. All over the region, old and well-known factors that were at play in the past have been intensified by major new factors of varying nature, some of which are “external” (i.e. resulting from various structures external to the region and its countries including international institutions, NGOs, donor organisations, etc.). In the past ten years, the “Roma issue” has become very fashionable as regards implementation of various projects (both at the level of government policies, NGOs or scientific research). All three areas are mutually interrelated and overlap, which is understandable considering the magnitude of influence of identical social and ideological paradigms in all three areas.

The issue of social differences and diversity as regards the Roma and their problems (and their position in the society) has fast been translated into the concept of social inequality of the Roma community as such. A great number of NGO-managed projects have been implemented to do away with this inequality, later followed by national programs and then also European Union programs. Roma activists from Central and Eastern Europe united in political parties and/or NGOs were not able in the end to control or at least steer the basic tendencies in the development of key concepts and the ensuing projects and programs. This is the reason behind the growing dissatisfaction with results or rather the lack thereof. More and more, Roma activists speak of a “Gypsy industry” that lives off of Roma problems and does not try to solve them, because it would lose its livelihood.

During the second half of the 20th century under socialism in Central and Eastern Europe, there was one principal and identical political line in spite of various differences between the individual countries - effort to integrate the Roma into the society. Such social integration was more or less openly acknowledged by the individual countries to be the first step on the way to ethnic assimilation of the Roma (or, in the parlance of the times, for example in Czechoslovakia, “inhabitants of Gypsy descent”). The fact that many countries carried out and published ethnographic and linguistic studies emphasizing the uniqueness and diversity of the Roma community did not change anything. When analyzing the national Roma programs in the individual, formerly communist countries, one cannot help noticing that they were all essentially identical. Even more striking and more important

## The Roma between the Skylla of Marginalization and the Charybdis of Exotization

is the fact that the national Roma programs or strategies or concepts as they are called in some of the countries created in the past few years are also very similar, and that they are also similar to the programs approved and implemented in the communist era. Of course, there is a major difference as regards the ideological reasoning and phraseology, but apart from that, we see specific problems and activities planned to resolve these problems that are to a large extent identical or at least remarkably similar, for example as regards employment, housing, education, etc. In the new Central and Eastern Europe, recent scientific research for the most part continues to serve the general social and ideological paradigms. In the past 10 to 15 years, dozens or even hundreds of sociological studies have been published (if we take the region as a whole) that focused on the social and economic problems of the Roma. We believe that it is not necessary to detail and interpret the interests of institutions commissioning these studies (World Bank, UNDP, the Open Society Foundations network, individual governments, etc.) that aim at justifying the need for future projects and activities and bring results that are expected, i.e. results that are called for.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, we would like to stress that we are in no way trying to state that there are no major social and economic problems in majority of Roma communities. Such studies often reflect to a certain degree the real and existing problems among Romanies, but there are also studies that are dubious from the methodological point of view (especially as regards selection of respondents, use of official statistics, etc.). However, the key problem lies elsewhere - in the real and present danger that the whole will be confused with its part, i.e. the entire ethnic community will be viewed and identified only with its problematic section and as a result, Romanies will no longer be considered and accepted as a distinct ethnic community with its specific ethnic culture. We would like to quote Ivan Veselý in this respect:

“it's like someone did a research on the bums on Wenceslas Square and based his perception of all Czechs on these people.”

There are many examples of this. One well-known international research focusing on poverty and ethnicity in Central and Eastern Europe conducted under the leadership of representatives of the Hungarian sociological school (both Hungarians and Hungarian re-emigrants from abroad) contains the recurring ideas and conclusions of the school that we have come to know in the 1970s. Romanies are described as a special “underclass” and bearers not of their specific ethnic culture but of the culture of poverty. These conclusions are directly related to a newly formed sociological school in Serbia which defines Romanies as an “ethno-class”. Similar sociological research has been conducted in other countries of the region including Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and Ukraine. It is worth noting that in all cases, results of research more or less follow the controversial and often criticized theory of Western anthropology first proposed by the English anthropologist Judith Okely and developed by her followers. According to this theory, “Gypsies” (a wider group containing Romanies) are not an ethnic community the ancestors of which migrated from India, but a community whose origin is based on an agglomerate of various marginal sections of the European population (agglomerate of people who were cast out of society during the industrial revolution). In the end, we have a result that the former communist governments had been trying to achieve through their policies - Romanies are not an ethnic community, but marginalized, poor and ostracized Europeans.

It cannot be said that such social and ideological paradigm is characteristic only for those expert circles that are directly or indirectly connected to the “Gypsy industry.” There are many examples of representatives of Roma organizations who - wittingly or not and perhaps with the best of intentions - essentially serve and comply with



## The Roma between the Skylla of Marginalization and the Charybdis of Exotization

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the basic postulates of this paradigm. One example of this from 2003 from Ukraine will suffice. During the debate about the Roma National Program, one Roma activist proposed that Roma women with children should receive the same child support benefits as mothers of handicapped and mentally retarded children. Romanies are therefore no longer perceived as an ethnic community like all others (even with their own specific problems), but fall into totally different categories and subsequently under different social parameters.

People often say that Romanies deny their distinction and do not acknowledge their ethnic affiliation. Considering that the Roma community as a whole is often forced to accept a marginal role in society, it is absolutely understandable that they fear such difference and that there are protests against such approach which may take a severe and dangerous form in the future.

It is naturally impossible to examine all aspects of the given issue in a single paper or propose a solution. But talking about an issue is the first step to resolving it.

#### THE ROMA AS AN EXOTIC COMMUNITY

The second part of our paper will also focus on the Roma community and we will again attempt to formulate questions rather than propose ready answers. No one probably doubts the necessity of policies and strategies of managing social and cultural diversity because they are a part of the foundation of the new and expanding European Union. However, a comparative analysis of national programs covering Romanies that have been recently approved and implemented in Central and Eastern Europe clearly shows that their chief objective and their specific activities do not aim at preserving diversity, but rather at bridging and removing differences between Romanies and other nationalities in various areas encompassing virtually the entire social life including the legal system, employment, housing, healthcare, education, etc. All such national programs (strategies, concepts, etc.) are approved and implemented with the active support of Roma representatives (the degree of cooperation and success of these programs is a different matter altogether and therefore will not be discussed here).

It is clear that there is somehow discrepancy between preserving diversity (and diversity management) and eliminating it (bridging and eliminating differences). One cannot help noticing that there are serious discrepancies between social integration on one hand and preservation and development of ethnic culture of various communities (in our case, the Roma community) on the other, and that these contradictions constantly come to surface and become apparent in various situations. Below, we include a few examples.

The last major scandal on the European level involved the EU Ambassador to Slovakia Erik van der Linden and his remarks about solving the situation of Romanies in Slovakia. His remarks were publicly condemned, especially by non-Roma human rights organizations, and at the same time embraced by most Roma organizations in Slovakia. This example illustrates the discrepancy we have been discussing.

Another example involves the process of desegregation which has been running or at least envisaged for some years now in various countries in Central and Eastern Europe (the suitability of the term itself is a different question). As a part of the process, Roma children are taken from segregated (on territorial or other basis) schools and transferred into "mixed" schools. The idea of desegregation was born among Roma activists and its staunchest opponents are non-Roma people and representatives of international and national institutions and NGOs who usually argue that Roma children will lose their identity and ethnic culture in the mixed schools (in fact, the opponents want the problems to stay because projects implemented in such schools are attractive and lucrative).

In the name of preserving "otherness" from the point of view of diversity and uniqueness of Roma ethnic culture, majority of Roma national programs and many European programs build on the principle of stigmatization, i.e. separation of the Roma community, as well as on the principle of bridging this separation through mediation by "Roma mediators" in various areas of public life such as education, healthcare, social policy and administration. For the Romanies is assigned the role of "assistants" (teacher assistant, policeman assistant, etc.) and others. We need to emphasize that such an approach is applied exclusively to Romanies and not to other ethnic minorities in Central and Eastern Europe. Again, the explanation is usually based on the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the Roma ethnic culture. According to this approach, the Roma are so specific that the rules that apply to them should be different from the rules that apply to other people. If there are protests against this approach, they come from individual Roma activists in various countries of the region and are unheard.

What are the roots of all these discrepancies? Is it true that the Roma do not understand their interests and need "good white brothers" to decide in their stead about what is good and bad for them as a whole? If we consider this all the way, it is logical that the diversity and ethnic uniqueness of the Roma can be best protected if they will be separated in reservations where non-Roma people will have the opportunity to observe the extraordinary and unique Roma ethnic culture and then go home satisfied and feeling they did everything they could to preserve the Roma culture. We are not exaggerating because we all know similar situations involving other ethnic communities in various places of the world. A similar proposal was put forward in Slovakia (some of us probably remember the failed government policy proposed by ANO, a Slovak political party, which would have been the first step in that direction).

Yet there is one area where all of a sudden, the distinctiveness of the Roma no longer needs to be taken into account, namely cutting-edge gender projects aimed at the Roma (implemented both by governments and NGOs). These projects are extremely diverse and often very impressive, e.g. the public campaign in Macedonia against the Roma custom of the first wedding night. In some cases, Roma gender problems resulted in a Europe-wide scandal. One example is the Roma "children wedding" case in Romania which led many to ask whether Romania is able to become a member of the EU without first dealing with this problem. We need not emphasize that the public opinion in this case was formed above all by non-Roma institutions and organizations, while most Roma organizations stressed the need to preserve ethno-cultural traditions and to approach them in a sensitive way. We are leaving aside the fact that in the specific case of the wedding of king Cioaba's daughter (that created the above mentioned scandal), it was a clear manipulation because approximately one month before the scandal erupted, we had visited Florin Cioaba's family and the daughter was certainly not 12 or 14 years old as the mass

## The Roma between the Skylla of Marginalization and the Charybdis of Exotization

media would have us believe and we did not qualify the bride-to-be as a “child”. It is much more important for us that the case also raised the question whether there can be universal rights outside of a specific community and historical reality that are to be realized in different ways, voluntarily or not. The other question is how to proceed when, as in this specific case, one set of rights contradicts with another set.

The issue of diversity management raises the question whether it is at all possible for us to speak of managing the diversity of the Roma community without taking account of the other side of processes, i.e. the social integration of the Roma, which, however, is impossible without societal modernization. To rephrase the question, is it at all possible for one ethnic community (the Roma in our case) to endure in today’s globalized world if they exist only in a form that someone (it is not clear who) designated as traditional, distinctive and typical for them (we will not venture to discuss the fact that all traditions were essentially born as a modernization of things past)? In this sense, the subject of diversity management and preservation of ethnic identity and ethno-cultural traditions of the Roma community is meaningful only when put into a wider context of general social and cultural processes taking place not only on national, but also on global level.

### A GLOBAL PROBLEM

We have discussed a global problem and its two sides. In the broadest terms, this global problem can be defined as follows - what are the perspectives of development of the Roma community? We believe that the two greatest dangers that may jeopardize such development lie in the extremes, i.e. in approaching the Roma as a marginal group and in their exotization. And although it may seem absurd at first, these two fundamentally different approaches

to the Roma are often mixed together and supplement each other, especially as regards specific policies at different levels.

We see the basic problem in the current Roma policies in Central and Eastern Europe are characterized by misunderstanding their distinctiveness as an ethnic community. The Roma case is an excellent example of how one nation can exist in two dimensions - as a distinct ethnic community and also as a section of the society as a whole. Whenever the two dimensions come together or one replaces the other, we arrive at what we have been discussing so far - approach to one entire ethnic community as a marginal group (if we replace the dimension of the community itself) or as a completely exotic group (if we do not consider the dimension of their belonging to the society as a whole). Mixing of the two dimensions is basically the reason for the double approach to the Roma implemented in various policies.

It may seem as a paradox, but we see the future of the Roma as less jeopardized by racism, negative stereotypes or anti-Roma attitudes than by active interventions and constant patronizing by people who like them (or at least say so) and who try “really hard” to help the Roma, enforcing upon them a model of development that they consider best. Such an approach taking the form of social patronizing is - regardless of the original intentions (idealistic or gainful) - essentially damaging to the natural mechanisms of community preservation, transforms the community into a permanent social patient, a client of professional well-wishers and in the end eradicates all hopes for natural development. In spite of the above, we strongly believe that the Roma will successfully pass the Skylla of marginalization (and de-socialization) as well as the Charybdis of exotization (and social segregation) and will find the right path of their normal development, relying above all on their own strengths and the internal resources of their own community.



# Ethnic Diversity versus the Ethnization of Politics: A View from Slovakia

The paper focuses on the impact of ethnic diversity on political stability in Slovakia in the period of post-communist transformation. Special attention is paid on the relation between the Slovak majority and Hungarian minority. The latter is not just the largest one, but also the only one with relevant political representation. Therefore, the paper focuses mostly on the level of political elites. The author argues that not ethnic diversity as such, but the ethnization of politics contributes to political instability in Slovakia, creates tensions between the Slovaks and Hungarians, and complicates bilateral relations between Slovakia and Hungary.

10

The paper is divided into three parts. The first one presents an overview of the Slovak-Hungarian relations before and after the split of the CSFR. In this part, both structural and political, as well as external factors are taken into account. By focusing on a concrete case, the second part points to the instrumental usage of ethnicity by the Slovak and Hungarian political elites. In the concluding part some suggestions and political recommendations are made.

## **SLOVAKIA AS AN ETHNICALLY HETEROGENEOUS COUNTRY**

After the split of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia became the only country in Central Europe with significant number of ethnic minorities.<sup>1</sup> In the European Union Slovakia belongs to member states with above the average percentage of ethnic minorities. Officially, around 14% of people living in Slovakia have an ethnic background other than Slovak. The largest minority are the Hungarians, followed by Roma, Czechs, Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Germans, Jews and other. In the last census taken in 2001, as many as 520,528 citizens of Slovakia identified themselves as ethnic Hungarians.<sup>2</sup> Due to the generally acknowledged fact that a significant part of the Roma community opted for the Slovak or, as the case may be, for the Hungarian nationality, the estimated total number of people with an ethnic background other than Slovak might reach 18%.

The number of minorities increased, in symbolical terms, after the creation of an independent Slovak Republic in 1993. Prior to that year, for instance, the Hungarian minority represented only about 3% of the whole population of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic (CSFR). In the newly created Slovak Republic the percentage of ethnic Hungarians had increased to almost 11% and so did the importance of the Hungarian minority.

Consequently, the Hungarians expected their participation in the public sphere to be more intensive.

Due to the purpose of this paper, the most attention is paid to the Hungarian minority. This reductionism, however, results from the fact that the Hungarian minority is the only one having relevant political representation in the parliament, as well as in the state apparatus (being represented by the Party of Hungarian Coalition - SMK). Secondly, the Slovak-Hungarians represent the most significant "others" for the Slovaks and serve as a negative point of reference. Slovak-Hungarian relations are therefore the most sensitive ones. And last but not least, the Hungarian minority is the biggest minority living in Slovakia.<sup>3</sup>

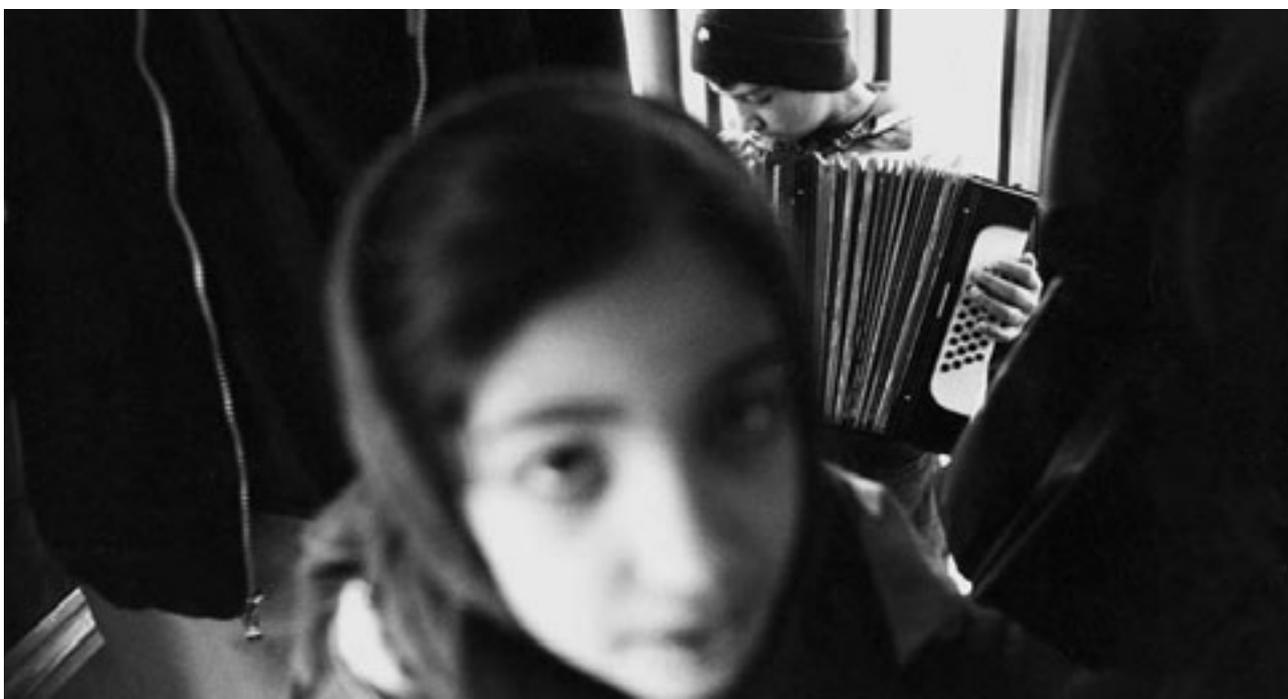
## **THE DEEP ROOTS OF ANTI-HUNGARIAN SENTIMENTS AND THE ETHNIZATION OF POLITICS**

According to several political analysts, ethnic heterogeneity of the country can make political and economic transformation more difficult than in case of one-nation countries.<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, ethnic diversity enriches the culture of the majoritarian population, on the other hand, the instrumental usage of ethnicity by political elites provokes inter-ethnic tensions and destabilizes the country. The Slovak case is supportive for such an argument.

## Ethnic Diversity versus the Ethnization of Politics: A View from Slovakia

Slovakia started the processes of political and economic transformation as a part of a Czech and Slovak Federative Republic. After the 1992 elections, however, the parallel process of building of a nation state influenced the process of democratization significantly.<sup>5</sup> Because of some authoritarian tendencies introduced by the governments of the former Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, Slovakia was excluded from the group of most advanced post-communist countries and attached to the list of states characterized as illiberal democracies. Instead of building a multiethnic democracy, the Mečiar's government opted for ethnocentric model of a state that places one ethnic group/nationality before another.<sup>6</sup> Mečiar, as well as other politicians from the ruling coalition, started to handle with a so called Hungarian card. On the one hand, doing this he wanted to overshadow the more important problems Slovak society had to face, on the other hand he was aware of the high mobilization potential of instrumentally exploited anti-Hungarian sentiments. Even the Slovak Constitution did not integrate the minorities fully. It guarantees the right of minorities but in the preamble of the

Anti-Hungarian feelings and attitudes are based partly on Slovak historical and ethno-national consciousness. A more than one thousand years lasting coexistence of the Slovaks and Hungarians in one state allowed several myths to appear. Some of them, for instance the Slovak and Hungarian myth of ethnogenesis have been clearly opposing one another. Extraordinary influential has become, however, the myth of a Hungarian threat. It has the origin in the period before 1918, when Slovakia created the northern, nationally oppressed part of the Hungarian Kingdom. It was kept alive by the post-World War I Hungarian revisionist propaganda, and was resuscitated during World War II when southern parts of the fascist Slovak State were reincorporated into Hungary.<sup>10</sup> The revitalization of this myth took place just after the political changes in East-Central Europe in 1989. The first Hungarian freely elected government led by Prime Minister József Antal triggered several times the tension between Hungary and some neighboring states by making some politically incorrect statements. In one of them Antal declared himself to be Prime Minister not only of ten millions of Hungarians, which is



Constitution the "Slovak nation" has been the bearer of power in the Slovak Republic. Only afterwards, the Preamble states that the Slovak nation does it in close co-operation with "national minorities".<sup>7</sup>

Although after the 1998 parliamentary elections the nationalist-populist governmental elite was replaced by a grand coalition of democratic and pro-integration oriented parties<sup>8</sup>, it can be hardly considered to be a nationalist-populist defeat. The support for the project of "ethnocentric" state which emphasizes the fact that the Slovak nation is the state-forming subject and poses other national and ethnic groups only to a secondary position was coming not only from former ruling parties like HZDS and SNS, but encompassed also other political subjects, mostly the Party of Democratic Left (SDL) or Christian-Democratic Movement (KDH). The Slovak and Hungarian opposition parties in the years 1993-1998 had a common interest in fighting Mečiarism, but ethno-national reflexes kept them apart. After the change of the government anti-SMK and in general anti-Hungarian attitudes have been still part of the rhetoric of some party leaders. To some extent, political elites reflect the attitudes of a wider population, based on stereotypes, prejudices and myths from the past. On the other hand, the leaders of the Party of Hungarian Coalition (SMK) openly declare that ethnicity (Hungarian) is the dominant factor that differentiates SMK from other democratic parties.<sup>9</sup>

the population of Hungary today, but the representative of all fifteen million Hungarians, including five million living outside the borders of Hungary. Antal's rhetoric was successfully overtaken by Viktor Orbán who was a Prime Minister in 1998-2002. Nationalist-populist appeals of Viktor Orbán reached the peak in the pre-electoral rally in spring 2002, in which he called for the unification of the divided Hungarian nation and claimed to be a Prime Minister of the overall Hungarian national "Community".

In the past, the strong allegiance of the Hungarians in Slovakia to Hungarian national identity persuaded a vast majority of them from signing the statement of change of identity even when they were faced serious difficulties like losing a property or citizen rights. The demonstration of the so-called healthy patriotism has different forms, including the singing of Hungarian national hymns and using of Hungarian national flag. Most of the ethnically Slovak political parties, as well as a significant part of the Slovak population look at various demonstrations of Hungarian patriotism with suspicion. They consider it to be a threat to the national interests of the Slovak Republic and its territorial integrity. Though the representatives of the Hungarian minority have repeatedly stated that they consider themselves as a loyal part of the Slovak Republic and serve the common interest of that state, their demands for the protection of their Hungarian identity are perceived as a sign of the

“The ethnocentric conception of the state and its foreign policy that dominates the Hungarian and Slovak political discourses seems to be the most important barrier for further collaboration between the two countries.”

group's disloyalty towards the "young" Slovak state by most of Slovak political leaders. Even the fact that a decisive majority of Hungarians in Slovakia do not wish any change of the borders between Slovakia and Hungary does not have an impact on this deeply rooted stereotype.

The Slovak-Hungarian relationship has had an international dimension too. The bilateral relation between the Slovak Republic and Republic of Hungary is one of the most sensitive in the region. Apart from deeply rooted prejudices and stereotypes resulting from a more than one thousand year long coexistence of the Hungarians and Slovaks in one state, most of the tensions are connected with the status of the Hungarian minority living in Slovakia. The ethnocentric conception of the state and its foreign policy that dominates the Hungarian and Slovak political discourses seems to be the most important barrier for further collaboration between the two countries. An effort of the Republic of Hungary to involve collective rights in the draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, as well as a unilateral adoption of the Hungarian Status Law, has been perceived very negatively by Slovakia. Taking into account the present configuration of political elites in both countries one can easily come up with a conclusion that the Slovak-Hungarian relations will remain among the most sensitive ones and will therefore also influence stability in Central Europe in the foreseeable future.

12

#### THE CASE OF THE HUNGARIAN STATUS ACT

In recent couple of years, bilateral relations between the Slovak Republic and Hungary have been influenced negatively by the case of the Hungarian Status Act. Similarly, the case has had a negative impact on the collaboration among coalition partners in the Slovak government by evoking long lasting emotional political discussions between the representatives of ethnic Slovak and ethnic Hungarian political parties. The main point of the act was to improve living condition of the kin minorities in the neighboring states and therefore it had an exclusivist, ethnic character since the very beginning. The act as such has become an object of negative reference for the governments in some neighboring countries, especially in Romania and Slovakia. In the same time ethnicity has become - once and again - an instrument in the hands of political elites.

The Hungarian Status Act was passed by the Hungarian parliament in spring 2001. The act guaranteed ethnic Hungarians and their families in the countries surrounding Hungary a set of mainly educational and cultural benefits. For example, it promised direct payments to parents who send their children to Hungarian-speaking schools. Slovakia and Romania, the countries with the highest percentage of Hungarian population, opposed the act claiming that it interferes with their legal systems and gave members of Hungarian minority advantages based on ethnic principles. The act as such was refused also by Rolf Ekeus, OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities who argued that it "imposes precedents in the protection of national minorities".<sup>11</sup> Béla Bugár, leader of SMK and vice-chairman of the Slovak Parliament, however, advocated the act claiming that on the Slovak territory it is valid only partially. He pointed at the exclusion of those parts of the law,

which guaranteed direct financial support for families belonging to the Hungarian minority.

In general, Bugár's attitudes towards the Hungarian Status Act were very positive. Arpád Duka-Zolyomi, MP for the Party of Hungarian Coalition in the European parliament and former MP for the same party in the National Council of the Slovak Republic considered the reaction of the Slovak political parties towards the act as inappropriate claiming that their attitudes are partly connected with the anti-Hungarian political tradition of the Slovaks. On the other hand, while the leaders of SDKÚ<sup>12</sup> tried to be as diplomatic as possible, another coalition partner - KDH - opposed strongly the undemocratic character of the act and called for the protection of the interests of the Slovak Republic.

The objections against the act, as well as the important fact that it was incompatible with the legal system of the European Union resulted in a recommendation by European Union bodies that Hungary prepare an amended version to eliminate all problems. The new Hungarian government created in 2002 and led by Prime Minister Péter Medgyessy attempted to do so, but the reactions from neighboring states were quite different. For instance, while the Romanian Prime Minister Adrian Nastasse and Prime Minister of Hungary Péter Medgyessy agreed on the amended version of the act, Slovak Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda has categorically rejected the amended version saying, "If this law is applied it would mean that our country's sovereignty is infringed and there would be discrimination on an ethnic basis."<sup>13</sup>

Dzurinda's clear-cut rejection of the amended version of the act surprised not only Hungarian Prime Minister Medgyessy, but also Hungarian politicians from the Party of Hungarian Coalition (SMK). SMK leader Béla Bugár immediately announced that his party would no longer act as an informal mediator in the bilateral dispute. He also said that Dzurinda had failed to inform SMK of all the objections he presented during his discussion with Péter Medgyessy. In an interview given to the Pravda daily Bugár complained that "coalition partners have always a problem with understanding when (Hungarian) minority issues are discussed."<sup>14</sup> Direct disputes over the validity of the Hungarian Status Act ended only after the treaty on the support of national minorities in the field of culture and education was signed between the Slovak and Hungarian foreign ministers in December 2003.<sup>15</sup>

One might argue that the disputes over the Hungarian Status Act had also a significant symbolic dimension. By rejecting categorically an amended version of the act, and by acting "behind the back" of SMK, Prime Minister Dzurinda sent a clear message to his (ethnic Slovak) voters. He presented himself and his party (SDKÚ) as the protectors of the interests of the Slovak nation. From this point of view it might be interesting to mention that Dzurinda behaved in the above described manner just before municipal elections, in which SDKÚ candidates gained significantly more votes than they expected.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Ethnic cleavage remains amongst the most important cleavages in the Slovak society. The complex character of the problem, its attractiveness for political elites, huge mobilization potential,

## Ethnic Diversity versus the Ethnization of Politics: A View from Slovakia

and last but not least historical heritage predicts that this cleavage will have a long survivability.

The inclusion of Hungarian minority representatives in the country's government might have established a good base for the future cooperation between the Slovak and Hungarian political parties. The fact that the governmental coalition created after the 1998 elections had survived the four year period and that the Party of Hungarian Coalition has become a coalition partner also in the next term signifies that the consensus among the Slovak and Hungarian political leaders did not have only a short term effect and that a longitudinal model of collaboration can be possibly established. Intensive using the so-called Hungarian card by the Slovak political parties, however, presents a serious obstacle to a more balanced relationship. It still happens very often that party leaders respond to the demands of a significant part of the population and use nationalist-populist rhetoric to attract the voters, especially before the elections. Even those political parties and politicians who consider themselves to be the so-called confident democrats are not free of positive responses to the nationalist-populist challenge.

On the other hand, the Hungarian Coalition Party (SMK), which represents predominantly the Hungarian minority, is based on an ethnic principle too. One possible way of how to overcome the clearly ethnically oriented character of SMK could be the inclusion of candidates of Slovak nationality on its candidate list. However, the last elections proved the opposite. The candidates of Hungarian ethnic origin occupied the first thirty positions on the list. According to SMK leader Béla Bugár, the candidates had to fulfill the following requirements: they had to use Hungarian variants of their names, their children had to attend schools with Hungarian as a language of instruction, and they should be able to speak Slovak at an appropriate level. Despite of the ethnic character of the party, however, SMK attracts also Slovak voters.

To summarize, in the case of Slovakia, political parties and their leaders on both sides use ethnicity instrumentally in order to mobilize their voters. The prospect of tensionless multiethnic coexistence in Slovakia is therefore rather a wish than a reality, at least in the foreseeable future. It is possible that in the course of time the Hungarians will not serve as the most important negative point of reference for the Slovaks anymore. They might be replaced by the Roma, if the latter will become politically better organized, or by the immigrants from other countries. But in no way do these possibilities represent a solution. The question concerning the prospects of multiethnic democracy in Slovakia remains without response.

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- 1 The author operationalizes the area of Central Europe to the Visegrad Group countries : Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.
- 2 According to the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.
- 3 In comparison to the Hungarians, the Roma have almost no representation on the Slovak political scene. Any attempts to create the so-called Roma party were unsuccessful, mostly because of the fragmentation of the Roma into different tribes and absence of a single leading personality. Moreover, the Slovak political parties consider the Roma to be rather a social than ethnic group.
- 4 See Linz, J S A. *Problems of Democratic Consolidation : Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. Baltimore : The John Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- 5 Szomolányi, S. *Kľukatá cesta Slovenska k demokracii*. Bratislava : Stimul, 1999.
- 6 Under the governments headed by Prime Minister Mečiar, Slovakia's young democracy has moved in the direction of so called "centrifugal" type of democratic state. According to Arend Lijphart (Lijphart 1977), "centrifugal" type of a plural democratic state - contrary to the "consociational" democracy - tends to restrict the political influence of any national or political group but the dominant one. Such democratic regimes are characterized by sharp competition between political elites and segmental cleavages, which make them unstable. Government policies concerning national minorities within the centrifugal democracy rely heavily on the numerical strength of the dominant national group. These policies typically use measures aimed at economic dependence, political containment, and denial of minority territorial definition. Such control or coercion policies are often justified on the basis of "maintaining order and stability" and on the grounds of "nation building".
- 7 *The Preamble of Ústava Slovenskej republiky : The Constitution of the Slovak Republic*. Bratislava, 1993.
- 8 The governmental coalition consisted of four political subjects, namely the Slovak Democratic Coalition (SDK), Party of Hungarian Coalition (SMK), Party of Democratic Left (SDL) and Party for Civic Understanding (SOP). Because of its internal heterogeneity, the new governmental coalition started to be called "the coalition of coalitions". The most powerful body of the Coalition - SDK - consisted of five political subjects, including Christian-Democratic Movement (KDH), Democratic Union (DÚ), Democratic party (DS), Social Democratic Party of Slovakia (SDSS) and a Green Party (SZS). SMK consisted of three subjects : Hungarian Christian Democratic Movement (MKDH), Coexistence (Spolužitie/Együttélés) and Hungarian Citizen Party (MOS).
- 9 Ethnic character of the party was strengthened, paradoxically, just before the 1998 general elections. The new electoral law pushed three Hungarian parties - Hungarian Christian-Democratic Movement (MKDH), traditionalist Coexistence (Együttélés) and liberal Hungarian Civic Party (MOS) - to create one united "super-party" based rather on ethnic principle than on different ideologies.
- 10 See also Van Duin, P.; Poláčeková, Z. "Democratic Renewal and the Hungarian Minority Question in Slovakia." *European Societies* 2(3) 2000.
- 11 See SME, 5.2. 2002
- 12 The Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ) is considered to be the successor party of SDK. Leaders of SDKÚ are the former members of parties that created SDK, mostly the former members of KDH. The leader of the party is Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda.
- 13 See *The Slovak Spectator*, Volume 8, Number 47, December 9-15, 2002
- 14 See *Pravda*, December 11, 2002. The new Slovak center-right governmental coalition came to power after the election held on September 2002 is composed from four political parties : Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKÚ), Party of Hungarian Coalition (SMK), Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and Alliance of a New Citizen (ANO).
- 15 The treaty, which came into force on February 13, 2004, defined the competences of both Slovak and Hungarian governments regarding the support of kin minorities. According to the treaty, all kinds of financial support directed to national minorities will be distributed through two civic organizations - one in Slovakia and one in Hungary. To guarantee the transparency of financing, a special mixed Slovak-Hungarian interstate commission was established.

## The Minority Status in Hungary

The article presents the situation of ethnic minorities in Hungary in the light of the 1993 ethnic minority law. This law is based on the concept of cultural rights, it defines the collective entities it concerns and it contains provisions regarding the system of representation. After more than 10 years of this law in practice it is possible to draw some conclusions. Despite the obvious breakthrough it represented at the moment of its adoption, the law has not proved to be completely satisfactory in practice. Time has come for a reform.

14

Compared to the period before 1989 - when the minority question was degraded to a social problem - a major change in the political attitude could be observed in Hungary after the collapse of the Communist regime. Among the first major political decisions was the creation of the Law on Ethnic Minorities in 1993.<sup>1</sup>

### 1993 LAW ON ETHNIC MINORITIES

The main feature of the 1993 law is that it recognises not only individual but also collective cultural rights. It considers the right to national and ethnic identity as a universal human right. Minority status can be recognised on request by the interested group. This means that everybody can decide freely if they consider themselves a member of any ethnic minority. Hungarian Jews, for example, did not request this status. From the point of view of individuals the basis of the law is the free choice of identity.

The creation of the minority status is in a way a consequence of Hungary's particular situation in the region, as there is a relatively large Hungarian population living in a minority situation in the neighbouring countries of Central Europe. In this way, a historical view of minorities and conflicts related to them is present in Hungarian social discourse. As a result of this historical view of minorities, the minority status does not apply to recent immigrant communities. "An ethnic minority can be any population having lived at least for one hundred years on the territory of the Hungarian Republic, being in actual minority with respect to the overall population of the state. Its members are Hungarian citizens differentiated from the rest of the population by their own language, culture, traditions, and at the same time having a con-

science of collective identity, aiming at the safeguard of the above, as well as at the expression and protection of the interests of their historically formed communities."<sup>2</sup>

The law ensures special rights to the communities and their members whose minority status is in this way recognised. The most fundamental one is the prohibition of any form of discrimination. It enumerates the rights of the individual, including the right to choose one's own identity, the right to respect family and community traditions, the right to learn and speak one's own language and to maintain relations with the mother country - a right obviously not applying to Gypsies. The third chapter of the law defines community rights. These are the rights to have a due representation in the media and in the political system, as well as in the cultural and educational system. Cultural rights do not imply that members of the minority groups have different rights than the majority population. All of the laws applying to Hungarian citizens naturally apply to minority groups also, but according to the law, it should be ensured that all the liberties and cultural rights of the majority should be especially recognised in the case of the minorities.

### MINORITY SELF-GOVERNMENTS

The 1993 Minority law also gave birth to a system of minority self-governments, forming the bases of a legitimate political representation of minorities: the political means of cultural autonomy is the institution of minority self-governments. These minority self-governments function at the local as well as at the national level. As a consequence, at the local level, apart from the regular local self-government there is a separate body representing the interests of the local minority. In theory, there are several ways of forming a minority self-government but in practice the most common one is by direct vote. Five recommendations are enough for someone to become a candidate. In the name of the free choice of identity, the candidate does not have to prove his or her belonging to the given minority, and the whole population can participate in the elections. Although this system does allow loopholes for political games, in reality most of the minority representatives and presidents of the self-governments do come from the given minority population. Once the self government is created, it has the legal status of a public body. It is in charge of its own functioning and it has its own competencies regarding the minority population (mostly cultural ones).

Although the Hungarian Gypsy population is only one amongst the 13 official ethnic minorities it is the one that attracts the most attention from the politics as well as the media and the public opinion. At the national level the National Gypsy Self-Government integrates the local self-governments. Its representatives are elected by electors (any local minority representative is a potential elector; where there is no local self-government, three persons from the village declaring themselves as members of the minority can choose an elector). Members of the national self-representation are elected from this limited circle. Their number can vary from 13 to 33. Its main task is to represent the interests of the local self-governments on the national level. The National Gypsy Self-Government is one of the organs striving to efface oppositions and conflicts among the different Gypsy groups, trying to create the illusion of a unified Gypsy community. Its functioning is suffering from the obvious difficulties of this mission. This situation is also reflected in its relationship with the local self-governments, often conflicting or simply non-existent.

## The Minority Status in Hungary

### SETBACKS

Although the 1993 Minority law can be considered as one of the most progressive ones in Europe in terms of the protection of minorities, it may also have some negative side effects. For example, the right to "minority education" can turn into a means of segregation. In theory, if parents demand the creation of a minority class the school has to ensure the conditions for it. However, in a few cases the process has been working the other way round: the creation of a "Gypsy class" in a school has sometimes been justified retrospectively, by an alleged request of parents.

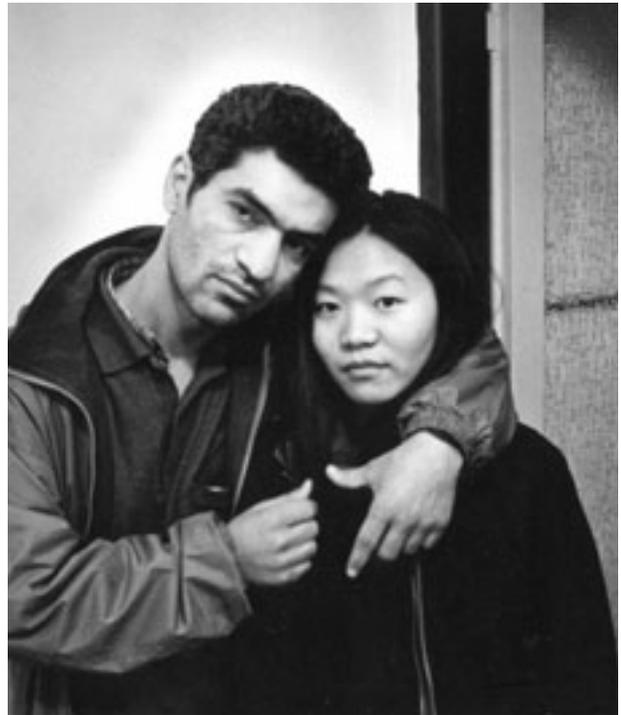
The system of minority self-governments is not without its contradictions either. Local self-governments have been created first of all to preserve the cultural heritage of a community. In reality, in their daily work the community expects them to give support in very concrete situations. However, the minority self-governments have neither the competencies, nor the means for that. This often creates tensions between the Gypsy population and the local minority self-government. The relationship between the minority governments and the majority local governments can also be problematic. Minority delegates often feel that the local functionaries look down on them, while the latter express that the educational level of the minority representatives - or rather the lack of it - make the delegates incapable of efficient collaboration. A further source of conflict is the financing system of self-governments. The national government only provides for a certain part of the finances, obliging the local governments to complete the funds of the local minority self-governments. In a situation where local governments all over the country struggle with a lack of resources such an obligation cannot but create frustrations. Not only their low educational level prevents minority representatives from being efficient, but the logistics they have to use also suffer from a lack of means. In some small villages even the basic equipment is missing from the offices of minority representatives, including a simple telephone line or a computer.

Despite these deficiencies, neither the members of minority government, nor the leaders of the local governments consider the system of self-representation useless. According to public opinion, the minority governments contribute considerably to maintaining a peaceful relationship between the majority and the minority, they help integrate the Gypsies and make their opinion heard. Nevertheless, today, after more than ten years of experience, it is impossible to conceal the weaknesses of the system. At the moment of the publication of this article the possibilities of changing the system of minority representation in Hungary are being debated. 2005 will probably be the year of the reform of the minority law.

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### RESOURCES

#### WEB PAGES OF INTEREST

[www.romapage.hu](http://www.romapage.hu) • Portal operated by Kurt Lewin Foundation  
[www.amarodrom.hu](http://www.amarodrom.hu) • Roma Journal, electronic version  
[www.romnet.hu](http://www.romnet.hu) • Roma portal  
[www.romacentrum.hu](http://www.romacentrum.hu) • On-line information centre operated by Mediator Foundation  
[www.romaweb.hu](http://www.romaweb.hu) • Portal operated by Government Office of Equal Opportunities

#### ORGANISATIONS OF INTEREST:

European Roma Rights Centre H-1072 Budapest Nyár u. 12 Hungary  
 • <http://errc.org/>  
 Országos Cigány Önkormányzat - National Roma Self-Government. H-1074. Budapest Dohány út 76.  
 • [www.oco.hu](http://www.oco.hu)  
 Nemzeti és etnikai kisebbségi jogvédő iroda - Bureau of legal protection of national and ethnic minorities. -H-1537 Budapest, 114. Pf. 453/269. • <http://www.neki.hu>  
 Roma Parlament H-1084 Budapest Tavaszmező u. 6.  
 • [romaparlament@axelero.hu](mailto:romaparlament@axelero.hu)  
 Roma Press Centre 1078 Budapest nefelejcs u. 39.  
 • [www.rroma.ionlab.net](http://www.rroma.ionlab.net)  
 Romaversitas H-Budapest 1078 Nefelejcs u. 39.  
 • [www.romaversitas.hu](http://www.romaversitas.hu)  
 Kurt Lewin Foundation H-1136 Budapest, Balzac u. 17-19.  
 • [www.kla.hu](http://www.kla.hu)  
 Rádió C. Roma radio. Budapest 1086 Teleki tér 7.  
 • [www.radioc.hu](http://www.radioc.hu)



1 Act on the rights of ethnic and national minorities 1993/ LXXVII (1993. évi LXXVII. törvény a nemzeti és etnikai kisebbségek jogairól)

2 Idem



## The Past and Present of Czech Multiculturalism

### DISCUSSING MULTICULTURALISM IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC: UNDERSTANDING, A CRITIQUE AND POLICIES

**M.Č.:** How difficult is it to characterize and define multiculturalism in the Czech Republic?

P.B.: It is as difficult to do so with regards the Czech Republic as it is in general. There are only a few public officials or documents in the Czech Republic that use the word. There are a few non-profit organizations that also use the word, but talking about multiculturalism in the Czech Republic as a government policy is not possible - this is in contrast to countries like Canada, Australia, the UK or the Netherlands in the past. The word surfaces in a government document now and then, but it would be difficult to say it is the government's strategy.

**M.Č.:** To what degree does the idea of multiculturalism influence the Czech Republic's official policy towards minorities and immigrants?

P.B.: I believe that it has been an influence since late 1999, when the Commission for the Integration for Foreigners was established and the word began to appear in these documents, although in a more or less declarative sense. Strategic documents covering Roma integration rarely include the word 'multiculturalism', but one could argue that they

contain certain elements of multiculturalism. What it essentially means in both cases is that the aim of integration is to incorporate members of minorities into the citizenry while allowing them to preserve certain characteristics of their group identity or culture. I think this is the most common meaning of the word. To put it simply, multicultural integration is the opposite of assimilation. Assimilation is a notion that members of minorities cannot become a part of the civic nation if they fail to surrender their cultural and collective differences. The objective of multicultural integration is to integrate these people as citizens, economically and politically and at the same time enable them to retain certain special features on a different, non-political level.

**M.Č.:** How do you explain that the word started appearing in official documents specifically at that time?

P.B.: I do not know. It seems that the left is more open to this although the issue so far has not been articulated well on the left-right axis. Because we talk about distinguishing between the left and the right, I would like to add something. Lately, there have been opinions voiced in regard to multiculturalism from the right, and the word is used in the pejorative sense. For example the president Václav Klaus uses it in his articles and the City of Prague Mayor Pavel Bém used it during the last congress of the Civic Democrats. They speak of multiculturalism as a leftist ideology. They are right in one respect: from the

## The Past and Present of Czech Multiculturalism

long-term historical point of view, multiculturalism as an idea mostly came from liberal, leftist circles than from the conservatives and the right. But the term and policies related to it have gradually entered mainstream politics, be it in the UK, Australia or Canada. For example, the Australian Prime Minister John Howard, a conservative politician, uses the term in an entirely positive way and talks about multiculturalism in Australia. On the other hand, there was a specifically leftist critique of multiculturalism from the beginning because the left has traditionally understood social conflict in terms of class or, when the class rhetoric disappeared, in terms of material interests. A part of the traditional left in the West continues to see it that way and problems related to ethnicized poverty are not perceived as problems of the coexistence of ethnic groups, but rather as problems of social coexistence of the rich and the poor. So there is conservative multiculturalism like John Howard's and there is a critique of multiculturalism from the left saying that it is misleading to understand certain conflicts as being ethnic because in spite of its ethnic character, poverty is above all poverty and must be approached as such.

**J.G.: What is the motivation behind the critique of multiculturalism by Václav Klaus? How would you place it in the wider context of the multicultural debate?**

P.B.: I think it reflects the change of mood following 9/11 when existing policies began to be reviewed as a result of the growing fears with regard to the Muslim minority and more emphasis was put on civic integration, i.e. the requirement that immigrants adhere to the values and institutions of host societies. This mood shifted the center of gravity from support of group differences to civic integration. But this shift may be also seen as a refusal of multiculturalism as such, as an acknowledgment of its failure. I think that Czech politicians are taking over this idea from the conservative discourse in the West expressing the changed mood. In the Czech context, however, it sounds somewhat strange because multiculturalism as a systemic government policy does not exist in this country. It is odd to define yourself against something that does not exist.

**M.Č.: You say that multiculturalism is not an official policy. How do you account for multicultural shows aired by the Czech Television or ministerial grants promoting multicultural coexistence?**

P.B.: You are right; maybe I should not be so quick in formulating this. I am just not sure that when Václav Klaus says we need to "reject the false multiculturalism spreading across Europe" (I do not know whether I am quoting him right), he means a TV show where foreigners living in the Czech Republic talk about their life here. I do not think that is what he means, he means something else, but it is not clear what it is. This is why it is so difficult to respond - one does not know what they really mean.

**M.Č.: Do you think that multiculturalism as a social and political project in the Czech Republic has its foundation in selected elites and institutes?**

P.B.: It is really hard to say. I do not want to reduce it simply to elites and institutes, but the truth is that this is where the impulses for integration policies come from. For example, it is easy to show that the word made it into the strategic document on integration thanks to the influence of the Council of Europe. But with regards to TV or the Ministry of Education, it is really hard to say. But I think that when money is being earmarked for something and grants announced, mostly by government bodies, it is clear that the elites - in the sense of decision-makers on the state level - have accepted the issue as their own.

### DEFINING MULTICULTURALISM & DUAL IDENTITY

**J.G.: The word 'multiculturalism' has many meanings or possibly none because it is used in so many different contexts. What is your understanding of the concept, what does 'multiculturalism' mean to you and in what respects do you talk about it?**

P.B.: It is true that multiculturalism can be understood in many different ways based on the specific context. If we talk about multiculturalism as something that I personally see as praiseworthy, we are talking about selected policies which support integration into the citizenry and at the same time provide room for the preservation of a particular group's subculture or culture on the non-political level. During the past 20 years, this idea has been embedded into the liberal mainstream in Western societies. I understand multiculturalism as having a broader meaning when compared to its critics such as Tomáš Hirt. He defines it purely as a concept for the coexistence of ethnic groups. I base my understanding on the broader definition of multiculturalism that has been accepted in the USA since the 1960s and that includes not only ethnic groups, but also other minorities or lifestyles marginalized or excluded by the cultural majority.

Ethnic groups are just one example of a lifestyle or identity which is or historically has been marginalized, excluded or penalized in various countries. The case of African Americans or Native Americans is just one form of marginalization. Women in modern European societies are another example because it is possible to demonstrate that as a group, they had been excluded from politics and business for a long period of time. One never ceases to wonder when he looks at women in France for example - that they had been granted the right to vote as late as in 1945! Sexual minorities are yet another example, which is perhaps not politically correct, so let us say gays and lesbians. Then there are disabled people, both mentally and physically, and all those who do not fit the prevalent picture of a normal Czech or a normal American. This picture is always defined by those who are at the top of an imaginary Gaussian curve. The marginal elements of the curve are people underrepresented in the society and therefore people who cannot be heard so well in a democratic society. They are less robust in the public arena and their lifestyles or features (be it physical or behavioral) put them in a marginalized situation. As a consequence, they are considered as abnormal, pathological or as something that does not belong and which people do not wish to see. Generally speaking, multiculturalism is a movement for an inclusive society, i.e. a society that will be able to include even such "atypical" members and will not exclude people based on the fact that they are perceived as looking or living in a "strange" way by the majority.

However, such tolerance and inclusion is not limitless. At least principally speaking, those who are not capable of embracing such tolerance towards others exclude themselves. This includes

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## The Past and Present of Czech Multiculturalism

ideological fundamentalists or extreme nationalists who proclaim the supremacy of their own group and do not tolerate others. Such people pose a problem for a liberal inclusive society. Often, there is no other way of dealing with this than repression. Therefore, I am not a propagator of multiculturalism without limits. My concept of multiculturalism is liberal. It is based on the need for a society to be capable of including different lifestyles and minorities. But, at the moment when a minority starts being intolerant towards the society or its members (this includes particularly sects), a liberal state must interfere in the name of its values of equality and individual freedom.

**J.G.: Your concept is the basis of the “dual identity” concept in which you distinguish between the citizenship principle, which is to include all members of the given society/state who would be able to retain their specific differences, ethnic or other. It reminds me of the concept proposed for example by Will Kymlicka<sup>1</sup>. Is your opinion based on this concept?**

P.B.: Yes, it is largely based on the tradition of liberal multiculturalism. Multiculturalism as understood by Kymlicka is not communitarian - for him, the highest value is not a group culture or identity. Such group identity and its preservation or reconstruction is only an instrument. Its support or recognition is not an end in itself, but only a means to include people who have been excluded. The ultimate value is freedom and equal opportunity for the individual. In this concept, multiculturalism is not an idealization of cultural diversity for its own sake - it follows from the ideal and principle of equal dignity of all people. All people should be respected for their equal dignity and what follows is that their equal rights must be respected and equal opportunities provided. Discriminated minorities and their members are in a situation where equal rights and opportunities are not really guaranteed. What's more, the equal dignity of their lives is damaged by the fact that their group is undervalued for example based on racial or homophobic prejudices. Such people are “degraded” because they are not considered equal in value and therefore in their dignity. Respect for their equal dignity requires us to also respect their group identity or their way of life.

This, however, does not mean that we are to impose a value judgment with regards to their way of life, which is something that most critics on the right constantly imply. They describe multiculturalism in such a way that it presumes a kind of cultural relativism. In other words, that we, people belonging to one culture, must force ourselves to like a different culture or a different way of life. It is possible that some forms of multiculturalism suggest this, but at any rate,

liberal multiculturalism similar to that of Kymlicka does not imply this. What is important for him is that if we want to respect a human being as an individual, we need to respect his group identity because it is a part of the individual identity and cannot be easily separated from it. On a personal level, I may be convinced that my way of life is valuable and doubt the value of another group's way of life. But we need to make a distinction between this and the moral-political level, on which I respect the others as citizens of one country and unless they threaten other members of the society by their way of life, it is my duty to respect their way of life or their group culture. At the same time, I may be indifferent or even critical to this culture on the personal level.

## MULTICULTURALISM AND ROMA ISSUES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

**J.G.: I would like to be more specific now and ask you about one aspect of the critique of multiculturalism as presented by Tomáš Hirt and Marek Jakoubek<sup>2</sup>. In their texts, they often criticize the labeling of the “problem” as ethnically defined. You wrote that you share the same goal with these authors, but the road to be taken should be different. Where do you think a reformulation of the “problem” from ethnic to social (de-ethnicization), as proposed by Hirt and Jakoubek, could lead?**

P.B.: This is a good question and I think a crucial one. I tried to answer it briefly in my article for Lidové noviny<sup>3</sup>. They are right in many aspects, in my opinion. But it is not a major discovery. A similar debate took place in the USA in the 1980s. In 1987, the African American sociologist William Julius Wilson published *The Truly Disadvantaged*, a book in which he explains that not all blacks are “truly disadvantaged”. It follows from this that the solution to their poverty must be found outside of the ethnic-racial dichotomy - we need to start seeing their problem less as a problem of racial coexistence and more as a problem of a subculture of poverty.

At the same time, however, Wilson also says that the ethnic and racial aspect should not be left out entirely because it often plays an important symbolic role in social exclusion. I have described Wilson's concept in the *Political Theory of Multiculturalism* (1999) and still think it is right<sup>4</sup>. That is why I do not have a problem with what Hirt, Jakoubek or Křištof say - to a large extent, it corresponds with Wilson. They are right in saying that the propensity of politicians and us, middle-class Czechs, to think that the problem is essentially ethnic and that it will go away if we give more money to Roma organizations for ethnical emancipation, is really an alibi that solves nothing. I only reproach Hirt, Jakoubek and Křištof for not taking into account the symbolic aspect of exclusion in their search for practical solutions. For me, their criticism underscores the need for governmental policies and programs to make a much clearer distinction between the social and ethno-cultural aspects. So if an organization applies for funding for a social program, it is necessary to check whether it is really qualified to do it. And being a “Roma” organization is no qualification. Funding must be clearly divided between money for the development of Roma cultural identity and money for organizations active in social work.

**M.Č.: Do you think that we may understand this with history on our mind because when describing the 1990s, many people in the Czech Republic and elsewhere talk about the “ethnicization” of Roma integration as a reversal of the issue to another extreme?**

P.B. I have indicated that the danger of sliding into a reversed one-sidedness exists. However, Jakoubek, Hirt and Křištof got the most important things right. Astonishingly, my article published in Lidové noviny<sup>5</sup> was characterized as being against them. But what I say in it is that the center of gravity should move to social work. I only maintain that we should not forget about the ethno-symbolic aspect. I also think that the whole debate should move from a variety of academic “-isms” “ to actual ways of helping people who are “down”.

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## The Past and Present of Czech Multiculturalism

## J.G.: Do you mean practice?

P.B.: Yes. It is very interesting for me to read texts by Štěpán Moravec and other people who are engaged in practical social work because they are showing that the ideas of local public officials that the Gypsies will agree among themselves one way or another as well as the attempts to find “representatives” of the purported “community” to act as intermediaries between the community and government institutions are more damaging than beneficial. This is due to the fact that they are not really that cohesive. It is more likely that the given family will start using the intermediary role for its own profit. Štěpán Moravec shows us that the ethnic perspective, which makes them all members of one cohesive group with which we can deal through intermediaries, is not working.

Critics of the existing policies are also right in saying that prominent Czech Roma figures like Karel Holomek or Ivan Veselý really do not represent the excluded Gypsies. So the notion that they should and could solve their situation and function as their spokesmen is erroneous. (This is precisely what Wilson says about the relationship between middle-class or upper middle-class African Americans and African Americans from inner cities.) It is true, unfortunately, that policies in this area have been focused that way. But I do not think this was because of an ideology of multiculturalism, as Tomáš Hirt seems to argue, because as I said, government documents on Roma integration are almost free of the “m” word. I think that the tendency towards one-sided “ethnicization” of the whole issue stems from the fact that it is easier for public servants, politicians and the Czech middle class in general. It is much easier to say this is a problem of coexisting with another ethnic group with a different way of life and then expect to find a leader of this group to deal with. It is easier than seeing the reality, which is much worse, because it shows that the heart of the matter is not a relationship with a united ethnic community but rather a relationship with a broken subculture on the margins of society.

- 1 For example, see Kymlicka, W. (1995) *Multicultural citizenship. A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford : Oxford University Press; or Kymlicka, W. (199) “Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe,” in W. Kymlicka & M. Opalski (Eds.) *Can Liberal Pluralism be Exported? Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe*, Oxford : Oxford University Press.
- 2 *Social anthropologists from the University of Pilsen.*
- 3 Barša, P. “Konec Romů v Čechách? Mladí antropologové z Plzně kladou kacířské otázky”; *Lidové Noviny*, January 15, 2005. Also see reactions by Karel Holomek (*LN (Orientace)*, January 22) and Ivo T. Budil (*LN (Orientace)*, January 29); or articles published in *Respekt* XVI(4) : 13-15,19.
- 4 Wilson, W. J., *The Truly Disadvantaged : The Inner City, The Underclass, and Public Policy*, Chicago University Press, 1987.
- 5 Barša, P., *Politická teorie multikulturalismu*. Brno : CDK, 1999.
- 6 Barša, P. “Konec Romů v Čechách? Mladí antropologové z Plzně kladou kacířské otázky”; *Lidové Noviny*, January 15, 2005. <<http://lidovky.centrum.cz/clanek.phtml?id=322658>>.



# 02

## Religious Diversity in Central and Eastern Europe

20



## New Religious Movements and the State in Poland

The paper deals with legislative regulations concerning new religious movements in Poland. The first part of the paper consists of introducing remarks on Poland and religion: the dominant position of the Roman Catholic Church and general conditions for the development of NRMs are discussed. Next, the law of Freedom of Conscience and Belief, passed in 1989, is presented. Next section considers further legislative changes and well as a governmental report on 'sects'. Moreover, the influence of anti-cult movements on legislative process is discussed.

### IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION IN POLAND

Poland is a predominately Roman Catholic country. According to Church data about 95% of citizens have been baptised. Although it does not mean that all baptised ones are engaged in regular religious practice, the dominant position of Catholicism in the country is unquestionable. In spite of the secular character of the Polish state, the Church has a significant influence in the country. Thus, the Church is visible in the public sphere; for instance, various state ceremonies are accompanied by religious celebrations. The Church and various Catholic associations also have an influence on the legislative process. The best example is a restrictive anti-abortion law passed under the pressure of the Church. Moreover, Catholic ministers are present in state institutions such as hospitals, prisons and schools. It is important to note, that the Catholic catechisation is carried out in public schools. Although courses are not mandatory, pupils of other faiths may encounter various forms of discrimination.

The influence of the Church is conditioned historically; the Church played an extremely important role in the Polish struggle for independence at the Partition Period in 19th century as well as during the Communist rule after the Second World War. After the downfall of Communism in 1989 the Church supported the new governing elite with its symbolic power.

The dominant position of the Catholic Church and its influence on state politics also has a considerable impact on the relationship between the state and minority religions. In this paper I am focusing on those religious minorities which are described as new religious movements (NRMs). Although various Catholic agendas had co-operated with some NRMs in different cases like, for instance programs concerning drug addiction or prison ministry during the socialist period, since the beginning of the 1990's a general attitude of the Church towards NRMs has been changed and becoming gradually hostile. Almost all anti-cult organisations are associated with Catholicism. Undoubtedly, activity of those institutions has influenced the state policy towards NRMs.

### DEVELOPMENT OF NRMS IN POLAND

There are different definitions of the NRMs. In this paper I am referring to Eileen Barker's general statement, that 'an NRM is new in so far as it has become visible in its present form since the Second World War, and that it is religious in so far as it offers not merely narrow theological statements about the existence and nature of supernatural beings, but that it proposes answers to at least some of the other kinds of ultimate questions that have traditionally been addressed by mainstream religions'. Thus, the term NRMs encompasses organisations of different beliefs, structures, and origins. One may include the NRMs with religious innovations (e.g. Scientology, the Unification Church), imports (e.g. Buddhist communities in the West, consisting of converts) as well as modifications and movements within a dominant tradition. Moreover those three elements may be mixed, for instance the Brahma Kumaris movement which is a modification of the Hindu tradition imported to the West.

NRMs first appeared in Poland in the mid 1970's. At the time the International Association of Krishna Consciousness, the Unification Church and the Zen Buddhists emerged in Poland. Their teaching was facilitated through various alternative milieus, for instance psychotherapists interested in new methods or counter-culture youth.

However, the activity of those communities was not registered and extremely limited. NRMs could only be registered as secular associations. Moreover, even that kind of registration was made difficult by the state's officers<sup>2</sup>. An activity of NRMs, similarly to an activity of the Catholic Church, was often kept under secret service surveillance. Thus, it was only on the beginning of the 1990's when the development of the NRMs' activity was intensified. Aside from those mentioned above, in Poland numerous NRMs are present, for instance, the Brahma Kumaris, the Chaitanya Mission, the Realians, the Transcendental Meditation, the Art of Living Foundation, the Karma Kagyu.

### THE LAW ON FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND BELIEF

Since the 1970's NRMs have gradually gained more and more autonomy. The passing of the law on Freedom of Conscience and Belief on 17th May, 1989, just two weeks before the first democratic election in post-Second World War Poland was a turning point in the history of the development of NRMs in the country. In the preamble of the law, it is stressed that churches and religious

“The influence of the Church is conditioned historically; the Church played an extremely important role in the Polish struggle for independence at the Partition Period in 19th century as well as during the Communist rule after the Second World War. After the downfall of Communism in 1989 the Church supported the new governing elite with its symbolic power.”

associations played an important part in the development of the national culture as well as in establishing moral values. Moreover, the document says that the law aims at allowing all citizens participation in the public sphere. There is also a reference to international resolutions against discrimination (among others to the UN and the OSCE). The first part of the law says, inter alia, that the state provides all citizens, as well as foreigners and those who are stateless, but living in Poland, with freedom of conscience and belief. That refers to religious activity within both public and private spheres, and treats all religions equally. Religious activity may be restricted only if this activity is against the public security, as well as against public order or it threatens morality, health or basic laws concerning other persons.

The second part of the law refers to the relation between the state and churches and religious associations. It says, among other things, that all churches and religious associations are equal and have freedom of acting. However, the state is secular and does not donate to religious organisations, but it co-operates with churches and religious associations in maintaining peace and preventing social pathologies. Moreover, churches and religious associations enjoy various tax allowances, for instance, their income from non-economic activities is exempted from tax. Churches and religious associations have also a real estate tax exemption. Furthermore, donation tax as well as inheritance tax were reduced.

The third part defines the way in which churches and religious associations may be registered. In order to register a church or a religious association a group of 15 citizens have to provide a detailed description of its activity.

Up to now 144 churches and religious associations have been registered under the law. Moreover, the relation between the state and churches may be regulated by separate legislation. There are 15 churches, whose activity is regulated under separate law, inter alia, the Roman Catholic Church, and various protestant and orthodox churches<sup>5</sup>.

#### ANTI-CULT MOVEMENTS' INFLUENCE: NEW REGULATIONS AND GOVERNMENTAL REPORT ON 'SECTS'

However, in the course of the 1990's the activity of registered NRMs has been seen as controversial. Members' families were disappointed with the converts' new way of life and public opinion considers the religious practice of some NRMs suspicious. As a result numerous anti-cult movements were established. They referred to the experiences of anti-cult movements in other countries, especially France and the U.S. Almost all anti-cult movements are in some way associated to Catholicism. There are anti-cult centres managed by the Dominican Order. Moreover, there are associations of the lay Catholics, however not all of them are recognised by the Church. Some of them were criticised mostly by progressive bishops for their radicalism and an anti-ecumenical character. There is only one anti-cult movement, which does not refer to Catholicism - Komitet Obrony przed Sektami was founded by the former Member of Parliament of the left party<sup>4</sup>. It happens that accusations against NRMs, which are expressed publicly are groundless and refer to a conspiracy theory. Some of the accused groups decided to seek justice in the courts. In these kinds of cases usually NRMs win the court trials.

Arguments against NRMs were different. However, usually NRMs are accused of using mental manipulation or they are perceived as 'fake' religions. Generally, in the mid 1990's 'opponents of NRMs urged a more controlling and restrictive role of the state in these matters, which should include changing the existing law concerning the registration of religious unions in the direction of making the registration process more demanding<sup>5</sup>. As a result of anti-cult activity the law was actually changed and a new law was passed in June 1998. According to this law 'the required number of members for the official recognition of a religious group was changed from 15 to 100, and the possibility of state monitoring of the most controversial groups was also considered<sup>6</sup>. As most of the religious associations are rather small Tadeusz Doktor comments on the new law: 'This demand is difficult to fulfill not only for some small religious movements, but also for some small traditional churches such as the Anglican Church, which in Poland would be too small to be registered<sup>7</sup>.

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Another result of the anti-cult movements' influence was a 'Report on Certain Phenomena Connected to the Activity of Sects' issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in May 2000<sup>8</sup>. The report consists of two parts. The first part is entitled 'Sects in Poland - A sociological perspective,' whereas the second 'Sects as destructive groups'. Although the report refers to scientific resources, the text itself is highly evaluating. Detailed analysis of the report goes beyond the scope of this paper. Therefore, I would like to give just two brief examples of an anti-cult influence on the document. The first one is a definition of a sect, which is normative and extremely general and indeed quite controversial:

'A sect refers to every group that possesses a highly developed structure of power, that is characterised at the same time by differences between declared aims and realised aims, and by the concealing of norms that essentially regulate members' lives. It violates basic human rights and principles of normal social intercourse. Its influence on members, sympathisers, families and society has a destructive character.'

The definition is followed by a discussion on the social reasons for sects' popularity, and elaboration on their classification and structure. The most significant moment for my purposes comes in their discussion of how sects should be classified:

'Sects in Poland may be divided into categories according to different criteria... At the same time we want to stress that if the doctrine and worldview of a group is similar to one of the categories it does not necessarily mean that this group should be considered a sect - the most important criterion is destructiveness.' On the one hand, the report allows for the possibility that a NRM might meet some of their criteria for being considered a sect, but not in fact be a sect. The most important criterion, the report says, is 'destructiveness.' While the report tries to be objective, it does not, ultimately, define what is meant by 'destructiveness.' It turns out, in fact, that 'destructiveness' is left as a category that is open to much interpretation and manipulation.

The influence of anti-cult movements is visible not only on the level of presented ideas, but also on the level of used terminology. The language used in the report is rather propagandistic.

The vocabulary is taken from anti-cult publications, for instance, the word *werbownik* - a 19th century term for a military recruiter is used to name persons who proselytise.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The relation between the state and NRMs seems to be highly problematic in Poland. On the one hand, Poland is a secular state, which guarantees its citizens and other inhabitants freedom of belief. On the other, however, Poland is a Catholic country, which - often against its own laws - privileges the dominant Church and its agendas. Those agendas, amongst others, form the basis of anti-cult movements. The law of June 1998 and the Ministry of Internal Affairs report are, in my opinion, convincing examples. The strong position of the Catholic Church makes situation of NRMs in Poland unique in comparison with other Central European countries.

- 1 Barker, E. "New Religious Movements. Their incidence and significance." *New Religious Movement. Challenge and Response*. Ed. B. Wilson and J. Cresswell. London and New York : Routledge, 1999, 16.
- 2 Urban, K. "Status prawny kościołów i związków religijnych w Polsce po upadku komunizmu." *Religie i kościoły w społeczeństwach postkomunistycznych*. Ed I. Borowik and A. Szyjewski. Kraków : Nomos, 1993, 104.
- 3 Doktór, T. "New Religious Movements and the State in Poland." *Regulating Religion. Case Studies from Around the Globe*. Ed. J. T. Richardson, New York : Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2004.
- 4 Kościańska, A. "Anti-Cult Movements and Governmental Reports on 'Sects and Cults'. The Case of Poland." *Regulating Religion. Case Studies from Around the Globe*. Ed. J. T. Richardson. New York : Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2004, 267-268.
- 5 Doktór, T. *Ibid*, 262.
- 6 Doktór, T. *Ibid*, 262.
- 7 Doktór, T. *Ibid*, 262.
- 8 For detailed analysis of the report see Kościańska, A. *Ibid*.

## “Believers” and the “World” - Parallel Discourses

The paper discusses a long-term socio-anthropological research of religiousness in the Czech Republic and particularly in the country's northern part. Based on observations and biographies of believers or members of several religious groups, it presents a periodization of the relationship between the society and believers in the past 30 years and examines the parallel discourses through which the “world” conceptualizes “believers” and vice versa. At the end, we include a number of suggestions made by respondents in order for the passing discourses to cross their paths from time to time.

24

Since 1998, I have been involved in qualitative research of contemporary religiousness primarily in Northern Bohemia (with the occasional trip to the neighboring Saxony or Poland), a very specific region as far as religious diversity is concerned. Although according to the last census, a mere 20 percent of people profess their affiliation with one of the religions, the heterogeneity of the region's modest scene is breathtaking. To a certain degree, it reflects the diverse makeup of the population - for example, the original German population left behind the New Apostolic Church<sup>1</sup> and the Old Catholic Church. The roots of the Roman Catholic Church, the Jewish community as well as the Baptist Brethren Unity also date to the period before WWII. Members of the Czech minority during the First Republic were often affiliated with the Czechoslovak Hussite Church. People begun to move into the border areas of Czechoslovakia after 1945, following the expulsion of up to 90% of the original German inhabitants.<sup>2</sup> Czechs from Volynia brought with them the Orthodox Church, while re-emigrants from Zelov<sup>3</sup> joined the local Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren, the Unity of

Brethren and the Church of Brethren. Even before 1989, there was a number of centers for the teaching of yoga and Buddhist-inspired paths. After the Velvet Revolution, a number of charismatic congregations arrive and the Jehova's Witnesses come out of illegality. However, the beliefs of scientific atheism are also widespread, perhaps even more so in Saxony than in the Czech Republic. Every town has groups of Satanists, Euro-Indians and Rastafarians. “Opium Krishna believers”<sup>4</sup> meet in basements, while the Great Mother Goddess is worshipped in the volcanic hills and people in Česká Lípa receive signals from people from outer space ...

In spite of the above, however, Northern Bohemia is perceived as a non-religious region: Catholics pity themselves for living in the “stone pit of God” and the Litoměřice Diocese is a missionary area where young Polish clergymen come to train for service. Their amazement as regards the situation in the region is rather telling. One, who works in the Šluknov area, told me: *“I arrived and went to serve my first mass and there was nobody in the church. I thought that people probably didn't know that I was there. So I waited in the presbytery for someone to come, but no one came. I was alone for a week, there was only fog all around. So I went to them. I came to the pub and told them I was a priest and would serve in their town. And they said ‘oh, you are a father, well that's OK, have a beer.’”*

I believe that this field is perfect for the subject that I have chosen for this occasion, namely social discourses used by the majority society to conceptualize “believers” and believers to conceptualize the rest of the world. However, the categories that I use, i.e. “believers” and the “world” must be understood as variables the contents of which change depending on the speaker. For me, the ideality of the field lies in the fact that due to the uncommonness and uniqueness of a person's affiliation to a form of religiousness manifested in words or deeds, these discourses are more apparent and better traceable here. In the following text, I would like to introduce 1) a scheme of development of the relationship between the society and groups of people oriented towards religion in the past 30 years as documented in the biographies of believers; 2) the types of parallel discourses that appear in the biographies, i.e. discourses in relation to which “believers” define themselves and discourses which are used to talk about “believers”; and 3) conceptualization of the “world” from the point of view of “believers” (when, how and why is such definition or delineation fashioned). Considering the declared objectives of this seminar, I will end with several suggestions and ideas regarding the way of simplifying or facilitating communication between the “world” and “believers.”

### BIOGRAPHIC SCHEME OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SOCIETY AND BELIEVERS

Biographies of religious people (i.e. narratives they told me when I asked them to tell me about their lives) contain a number of temporal levels which we may call biographical, social and universal time. The biographic time or “time of mortals”<sup>5</sup> starts for the narrators with their birth and ends at the time of interview or near future and they function in it as homo faber. The time is primarily filled with personal and family events in a more or less chronological sequence. The social time often enters the narration as an explanation for a personal decision or action, when describing a specific situation of the biographical time. It is usually spatially related to the locality or country.

It is extraordinary that regardless of different religious affiliations and identities of the respondents, the characteristics of the social time are very similar. We can therefore extract from them the following model:

## “Believers” and the “World” - Parallel Discourses

After a revival at the end of the 1960s, the 1970s and early 1980s usually blend into a shapeless and insipid period. It is described in a generalizing way as “Communist”, “old regime” or “totalitarianism.” It is during this period that God disappears even from families where he was at least latently present in the past. *“Dad and Mom stopped going to church around the time I was born (1971), so we did not go at all... Mom was a kindergarten teacher, member of the party, and her twin sister was a school inspector, her direct superior, so when I started going to church (1986), it was the first moment when I was very scared and a moment that later proved to be, maybe in a different way, a really big problem; when I first told her, (...) her first reaction surprised me because she was really happy and kept saying that she felt remorse about us living totally without God (...) and that she prayed each night for God to give us time to come back to him. But her idea about religious life was similar to the way they were raised 40, 50 years ago: you fulfill a certain duty and the Lord certainly understands that living in that day and age, we will not go to church even on Sunday”* (Mr. Oleg (31), Premonstrate).

The wasteland of the 1970s interrupts the continuity in families of passing faith onto the next generation and “magic” grandmothers are the only ones to go on; at the same time, it enables young people to radically shift their understanding of what faith is - faith is everything but not obligation and tradition. The only public activity of “surviving believers” (term used in sociological publications of the period, e.g. Kadlecová 1966<sup>6</sup>) that is tolerated is the occasional visit to a mass or cleaning up the church. Believers gather in tightly-knit groups about which the outside world hardly knows let alone understands what it is these people believe and how and why.

*Under the blanket of rigid totalitarianism, a new spirit of followers (Mr. Oleg) is born, entering biographies with an adventurous vigor starting in the mid-1980s. “Underground” activities start reaching a wider audience, the life of believers becomes an adventure that can no longer be severely punished, but is still dangerous enough to be lived to the full.*

*“It was in 1983 or 1984, and the persecution of the church was very strong and we met a few Christian families and found out that you can experience faith in a completely different way. We met in people’s homes and we had to do it in secret and the Secret Police was following us, it was, me being from the countryside, it was utter nonsense; why would they persecute the church, I was not aware that anything like this was going on. So we met, it was like a community, in a village near Most, and they followed us there, surrounded the house and we were really scared, so we closed the shutters and hid. Afterwards, we received invitations for interrogations from the Secret Police, and me being a village girl, I still did not understand why, when we did not do anything to anybody, we did not steal anything, you know...”* (Mária Břizová (40), Roman Catholic).

People who were not part of a religious community at that time describe the atmosphere in the society in a similar way.

*“I went to yoga lessons and in the late 1980s, a lot more spiritual literature was getting here. It was all samizdat, though. And things were getting more and more spiritual. The first impulse that I remember was my reading Jack London’s Star Rover. (Laughs). It was like a little stir - there is not only this material world, there is also something spiritual”* (Monika Ježková (52), Catholic, then member of the Unity of Brethren, Christian Community and now again Catholic).

The 1989 revolution and the hectic early 1990s were like a fuse for conversions, be it first or deepening conversions. New schools and monasteries were opening up, many new denominations arrived from abroad and the market was flooded with both domestic and foreign books. Everybody agrees that it was a time of spiritual openness and permeability of all frontiers. Communists went to church, Christians spent weekends in Krishna’s yard, lovers of bacon turned to vegan food, economic forecasters learned astrology, etc. Michal Šnek, who was 20 at that time, says: *“I went to the stadium twice to see some preachers and once to see the Pope. And for me, it was the same, spiritual leaders from whom a person can learn something. But I had the feeling that I pretty much knew about Christianity, what’s it about, so I was interested in learning about how things work in different places. So I studied Buddhism and then*

*Hinduism. And then I went to work in a monastery, on the walls, because I thought where else could I find really spiritual people. Well, after three years, I ran away, it took away my faith completely.”*

In the second half of the 1990s, “spirituality” had established itself as a fully developed market with supply and demand, believers ceased to be so exotic and “earthly problems” of various denominations such as property disputes eliminated the remaining euphoria. While older people fear today’s spirit of consumerism, witchcraft and charlatanism, younger people view it as a normal backdrop to their lives:

*“I didn’t feel the need to experiment... I always, like, checked out something... a different system of religion or philosophy, and saw that it is not yet the right thing... hmm, my boyfriend... and his friends lived according to Květoslav Minařík, which is really a huge delusion... it’s not good because he makes available to the public secret teachings based on which several people went mad... like that... pretty strong practices that should not be used at all without some sort of supervision... and... so, like, I kept away from that and kept waiting to find something somewhere that would really suit me and then, based on a poster that we saw in H. and that announced a lecture by Ole Nydahl in Prague, we went to Prague to hear the lecture and that is when I told myself: OK, this is it”* (Dennisa (21), Karma Kaggyu).

Today’s situation is an extension of the situation in the mid-1990s. It is characterized by the gradual closing and strengthening of the temporarily open frontiers between various spiritual movements and the society. Many eager converts from the early 1990s abandoned their path, others cooled off, and still others immersed themselves into the life of their church, ceasing to build bridges between the community of believers and the world. Priests either do not have enough time or they are prohibited from taking secular jobs that used to serve as a point of contact. Traditional denominations feel threatened by the available range of spiritual movements and often display an exclusive attitude that prohibits dialogue. The average Czech, who was passionate about wisdom just ten years ago, has attained a certain level of knowledge and the sphere of religion is again out of his field of vision. Once more, an apt characterization by Michal Šnek who is 30 today: *“Well, I’m happy that when I tell someone that I believe in God, they don’t get scared and run away like they did before the revolution. On the other hand, today, when the subject comes up, people just carry on like I didn’t say anything. Before the revolution, they would at least ask whether I was raised that way or how did it happen.”*

### PARALLEL DISCOURSES

I would like to go back in more detail to the quoted excerpts in order to demonstrate the parallel discourses against which believers define themselves. For example father Oleg was very scared in the late 1980s to tell his family that he attends church. When Mária Břizová talks about secret meetings of Christian families with the shutters down and Secret Police patrolling around, she says: *“No one at work could know but fortunately, no one was interested, it did not occur to anyone that we might believe in God.”* Fear and suppression of the religious dimension in total oblivion disappear with the revolution of 1989 and are replaced with interest and great hopes, as evidenced for example by Michal’s efforts to find Truth with the inhabitants of a Dominican monastery. Jehova’s Witnesses present an interesting testimony about this period because they meet a wide range of people thanks to their sermonic activities: *“After the revolution, things changed a bit and people started talking about religion. They asked questions and wanted to study the Bible. Or they argued with us, one man for example said ‘you believe in God, you are some sort of fanatics; I personally believe in UFOs.’ But he let us explain things and then said that God is actually a type of extraterrestrial civilization. Now, I would say, as we talk to people a lot, things are getting worse. People don’t have the time and above all, it’s not so popular anymore.”* (Máša Plyšová (33), Jehova’s Witness). Willingness to overcome cognitive barriers, e.g. between the faith in UFOs and the faith in God, is therefore declining. The question of religious affiliation is purely individual and as such is met with discrete silence, just like Michal Šnek says: *“people just carry on like I didn’t say anything.”* The rich spiritual market described by Dennisa offers all those interested such a form that “suits them”. The believers’ efforts

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have come to be perceived by the majority as a hobby. Zdislava Šneková (25, Roman Catholic) talks about how her friends see her: “They see us like people who go out picking mushrooms, thinking we enjoy meeting other people who pick mushrooms, talk about mushrooms and go to the woods on Sunday. It’s like a social status plus a certain lifestyle. And the closest friends, they cannot believe that we actually believe in God. That we really believe that God exists.”

**“BELIEVERS” VERSUS THE “WORLD”**

In the interest of symmetry, I should now attempt to outline the way in which “believers” relate to the world. It is impossible to make generalizations because - as one respondent told me - “it’s piece by piece”. Nevertheless, we can identify certain factors and themes around which the frontier is erected. I have tried to show that this frontier has been getting less permeable since the mid-1990s, which is clearly related to the consolidation of religious groups and their gaining more control over members and entry points - for example the immediate christenings on request that were common in the early 1990s have practically disappeared.

Religious groups have set conditions for joining and participating in them. The more demanding and exceptional this prescribed orthopraxis is, the more markedly legitimized must be the frontier between us, the faithful ones, and the rest of the world. Again, Jehova’s Witnesses are instructive in this respect: “The life of a Christian is very hard in this world, isn’t it? If you want to stay pure as regards moral and spiritual aspects, it’s very hard in itself. Let alone - and this is something I cannot imagine - if there were no people around me with the same values and the same faith who support you in doing positive acts. So the congregation, like, for me, and I think for everybody else, is very, very important. But essentially, it’s day-to-day struggle. Because Jesus says that his disciples are not a part of this world... And that I think is really important. Because for example Revelation shows that a person should not take part in things that really are a part of this world. This means, it’s religion, it’s politics, it’s perhaps big business. It’s more like a way of life, a person does certain things and doesn’t do other things. That’s how we differ. Take Christmas, for example. Some people celebrate it, we don’t. (Máša Plyšová (33), Jehova’s Witness) We see differentiation based on orthopraxis, theological substantiation of one’s uniqueness and stress on the congregation’s importance as a refuge of truth in a world full of dangers. Smaller evangelical and especially more charismatic denominations, such as the Apostolic Church, Church of Brethren, Unity of Brethren, Christian Community or Baptist Brethren Unity, use similar rhetoric. Such legitimization - and this is true also for Catholic denominations - involves an interesting manipulation with the label of atheist Sudetenland, the stone pit of God, which facilitates the act of dramatizing the difference between us, the few faithful in a God-forsaken wasteland.

Apart from orthopraxis and orthodoxy, often explicitly mentioned during services of the Orthodox Church, it is also possible to erect the frontier on different characteristics. For example, the Buddhists of the Karma Kaggyu school are proud of the fact that all members of the local community have university degrees, while the Ukrainian section of the Orthodox Church emphasizes its ethnic and linguistic identity.

Finally, it is necessary to note that the degree of accommodation towards the world largely depends on individuals or on the leaders of the given religious community who are unfortunately frequently unaware of the workings of the world behind their door. Of course, considering that all religious communities perhaps with the exception of the Jewish community have a more or less developed missionary ethos, they are not indifferent to the outside world as is often the case in the relationship between the world and believers.

**SUGGESTIONS AND IDEAS**

I am not a fundamentalist advocate of dialogue and I do not want to give advice on how to communicate to people who do not feel like communicating. I have therefore asked the respondents what they perceive in the relationship as problematic, what changes they would welcome and what would they be willing to participate in. The following are a few practical ideas based on the answers:

a) Many people hope to see better education at schools of all levels that generally speaking should bring about more spirituality and correlation in order for the spiritual dimension to be present in essence in all classes. This is not a call for some sort of an esoteric education but rather a reaction to a school system dominated by strict and dogmatic positivism and materialism even 15 years after the Velvet Revolution. The reintroduced instruction of religion has not only failed to fulfill this requirement, it negated it. Many respondents think that this religious formation implemented by followers of various religions belongs in a context different from a public school, which should rather offer (comparative) religious studies not colored by any confession.

b) The respondents view the presentation of religion in the media and art as problematic. However, criticism goes in particular to their own ranks, because who is to blame for the nearing death of the Czech Catholic poetic tradition or for the fact that representatives of this or that religion do not write newspaper articles? It would help if believers were more active, although I do not think that what is necessary is a clerical-literary revolution announced a few years ago by an individualistic priest from Prague.

c) The third way suggested to overcome mutual misunderstanding and detachment between the world and believers is a deep and authentic religious life which - at least according to mystics - leads to an experience of unity that may help overcome narrow-mindedness of orthodoxy and orthopraxis. However, the tension between staying on the true path and commitment of the mission is something common to all periods and all missionary religions; in a somewhat different sense, it is perhaps a universal human experience of the tension between the desire to be one’s self and the desire to be comprehensible to the others and the world.

- 1 Its today’s members are almost exclusively descendants of the original Germans who were allowed to stay in Czechoslovakia after WWII.
- 2 The figure varies based on the geographic area.
- 3 The Czech Zelov community in Poland was founded in 1802 by evangelical emigrants. After WWII, a part of the population answered the government’s call to inhabit the border regions and returned to Czechoslovakia.
- 4 I have encountered this group by chance - they were a few people just out of puberty who met in a basement to smoke opium under a picture of Krishna and quieten down in order to be able to love everybody. At least that is how they put it ...
- 5 Ricoeur, P. *Life, truth, symbol*. Prague : Oikoymenh, 1993, 23.
- 6 Kadlecová, E. “Religion in the Socialist society and the ways to overcome it.” *Gods and people*. Ed. Erika Kadlecová et al. Prague : Nakladatelství politické literatury, 1966.

# Muslims in Central and Eastern Europe

This article reflects on the Muslim presence in Central and Eastern Europe during the communist regimes and in the aftermath of democratic changes in the region. In contrast to what occurred in Western Europe, the Central European communist régimes did not encourage immigration of labour from Muslim countries after the Second World War. Most young people coming to the region from various parts of the Arab world were students. Therefore, the social set-up of the rising Muslim communities in Central and Eastern Europe was different from that of Western Europe, made up mostly of migrant workers. After the democratic changes, Czech Muslims were registered in 2002 and their efforts have focused on publishing periodicals and books, as well as on setting up mosques, facing rather hostile attitudes. The situation in Hungary seems by and large similar.

27

Muslim presence in present-day Europe consists of three basic parts, distinctly different from each other in their historical origins. Two blocs took shape before several generations and, accordingly, are considered autochthonous. The first was set up by Tatar and Turkic peoples who once played a hegemonic role in Russia and Ukraine, the second was a fruit of the Ottoman conquest in the Balkans. Finally, the third grouping is still viewed as allochthonous, being a result of immigration to Western, Northern and Southern Europe after the Second World War.

The area of our concern, i.e. Central and Eastern Europe, has been partly touched by the first and the second waves of the expansion of Islam. Numerically weak groups of Tatars still live in Eastern Poland, an unusual feature in Muslim architecture are their ancient mosques built of wood. In the Balkans the strongest Muslim groups, outside Turkey, live in Bosnia, Sanjak and Bulgaria, and are also represented by Albanians. A significant part of Central Europe, in particular the territory of former Czechoslovakia, has remained more or less untouched by the spread of Muslim communities by both historical expansion and modern immigration. At least until recent and present times.

### AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN MONARCHY

In the erstwhile Austro-Hungarian monarchy the presence of Islam got official recognition after the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1908). This was done by Act No. 159 from 15th July, 1912, signed by the Emperor Franz Joseph. In its wording the recognition was provided to "followers of Islam according to the Hanafite rite". In Hungarian part of the monarchy a similar Act was passed by the Parliament in 1916, that is at the time of the war alliance with the Ottoman Empire; the recognition was given to Islam in general, without specifying any rite (madhhab). In Austria the Act has remained in force up to now, whereas in the interwar Czechoslovakia the double,

somewhat disparate heritage of Austrian and Hungarian legislation was causing some difficulties for a grouping of heterogeneous Muslims, a handful of foreigners and local converts, who started to claim the recognition of their religious community officially founded in 1934.

### ISLAM IN THE COMMUNIST REGIMES AND IN THE AFTERMATH

After the Second World War communist régimes in Central and Eastern Europe started, stage by stage, to selectively develop relations with Arab and other Muslim countries, but did not show any enthusiasm for having Islam in their national territory. In Czechoslovakia vague promises were given to Libya's Qadhafi that an "Islamic Centre", including a mosque, might be built in Prague and, in a like manner, a project was fostered in Budapest to open a mosque at the Mausoleum (Türbe) of the Turkish Sheikh Gül Baba, buried there since the Ottoman times. However, nothing of the kind materialized. In general, in contrast to what occurred in Western Europe, the Central European communist régimes did not encourage immigration of labour from Muslim countries but looked for other sources of supply. Thus e.g. Czechoslovakia imported manual workforce for her extensively expanding industry mainly from Vietnam, Cuba or Mongolia. Accordingly, most young people coming to the country from various parts of the Arab world were students. Many of them after their graduation decided to stay, often got married and since the democratic change in 1989 have been professing their Muslim identity instead of the previous "anti-imperialist" discourse. In this way the social set-up of the rising Muslim community in the Czech Republic was clearly different from that of Western Europe, made up mostly of migrant workers.

In the Balkans, in their turn, the Muslims shared to the full the painful experience of their respective countries in transition from communism. In Bulgaria they suffered both ethnic (Turks) and religious repressions staged by Jivkov's régime in its pre-mortal agony in late

Muslims in Central and Eastern Europe

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of Islam etc. A needed material help was provided by the Vienna-based East European office of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) and by the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA), operating with mainly Saudi Arabian financial backing. The efforts of Czech Muslims, under the heading of Islamic Foundation, to build a mosque had to face rather hostile attitudes from a part of the social environment, apprehensive of imaginary vices or dangers. This appeared in particular in 1995, when local authorities in a spa city of Teplice, which hosts every year about 2000 Arab clients, turned down a proposal of a rich Arab merchant from the Gulf to build a mosque and Islamic cultural center. Finally, however, a mosque was built and opened in Brno (in 1998) as well as in Prague (in 1999). An emerging small community of Turkish businessmen opened, in its turn, a prayer-room in another district of Prague. Small Muslim prayer-rooms were also arranged in a number of Czech university towns, where dwell Arab or other Muslim students.

The long history of Czech Muslims endeavour for registration reached a partial success in 2002-2004. Under the new Law (Act 3/2002) a religious society can apply for registration with just 300 signatures for a probing period of 10 years. Then, it might under certain conditions advance among traditional Churches and acquire respective rights. So far the Czech Ministry of Culture has agreed to register the Muslim Community under the Act 3/2002. In January 2005 an otherwise unknown Czech lady raised a sharp protest against this decision claiming that Islam is a doctrine of violence and terrorism, as she tried to prove by selected quotations from the Quran. This initiative raised considerable media attention and a public debate. However, the Czech Ministry of Culture did not consent to such criticism and confirmed the registration. Some Christian churches, in their turn, agreed that Islam should be placed alongside other respectful religions.

The situation in Hungary seems by and large similar. In the official census adherence to Islam was claimed by some 4000 residents, mostly immigrants. Their community got the shape throughout 1990s. They also had to face difficulties and opposition in their efforts to have mosques, which have proved successful in the end. In addition to a big mosque in Budapest and prayer-rooms in private apartments in a number of Hungarian cities. The Muslims pray on Fridays also in an ancient Ottoman Djami in Pécs. On the whole the community is not united in one single organization, nor in political and moral attitudes. One part, called "Church" (Egyház) is duly registered in terms of Act 4 of 1990 on religion.

**CONCLUSION**

An overwhelming majority of Central and Eastern European Muslims tend to condemn terrorism. At the same time, critical voices are heard in their midst as to acts of violence and injustice committed against Muslims in various parts of the world. In the Balkans the tenth anniversary of the massacre at Srebrenice will be commemorated in 2005. It is high time to work for better understanding with the Muslims. Of particular value can be a better understanding of those who live with us in Europe. Only a little has been done so far for a better knowledge of the Muslims of Central Europe. In conclusion three bibliographical advices for further reading and research on Muslims in Central and Eastern Europe: Muslims in the Enlarged Europe, a most substantial report on Islam in European Union has been worked out by B.Maréchal, S.Allievi, F.Dassetto and J.Nielsen<sup>1</sup>. It covers also selected new EU members and applicant countries: Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. Further information is at the time being researched and prepared for publication at the University of Warsaw under the leadership of Dr. A. Nalborczyk. As regards Muslims in the Czech Republic their history is described in greatest detail in J. Bečka and M. Mendel<sup>2</sup>. Finally, a possible importance of European Muslims for the promotion of positive values within the Muslim world has been recently shown by the well-known French expert Gilles Kepel.<sup>3</sup>

1 Maréchal, B; Allievi, S; Dassetto, F; Nielsen, J. *Muslims in the Enlarged Europe*. Leiden, 2003.

2 Bečka, J; Mendel, M. *Islám a české země*. Praha, 1998.

3 Kepel, G. *Fitna, guerre au coeur de l'islam*. Paris, 2004.

1980s. In former Yugoslavia Bosniak Muslims were made one of ethno-religio-political blocs drawn into bloody civil war in 1992-95. A number of Bosniak refugees found a temporary asylum abroad, including the Czech Republic, during that period. Albanians, in their turn, have had to face both material and spiritual misery left behind their communist, militantly atheistic régime. In spite of manifold efforts by Arab donors, building hospitals, schools and mosques in order to revigorate Islam in the country, the Albanians stick definitely more to their ethnic and national than religious identity and traditions. This goes also for their communities living in Kosovo and Macedonia.

**DEMOCRATIC CHANGES IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE**

Under new, democratic régimes the situation of Muslims in Central Europe has changed a great deal. In the Czech Republic the primary concern of their organization, called *Et Ittihad El Islami* or Muslim Religious Community, was to obtain an official registration along with Churches and religious societies. The Laws in force since 1991 and 1992 required, however, that such application for registration should be accompanied by signatures and full personal data of 10.000 adult believers having all a permanent residence in the national territory. This was unaccessible for the Czech Muslim community, whose active core consists of approximately 3000 to 4000 persons. Hence the community decided to function as a cultural association. It managed to develop a fairly large activity, publish a periodical Hlas ("The Voice") and a range of books and booklets on various aspects

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## Policies of Integration in Central and Eastern Europe



Andrea Baršová

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## Foreigner Integration Policies in the Czech Republic

30

The permanent nature of immigration in the Czech Republic after 1989 left the country facing the question of integrating the newly arrived immigrants into society. To deal with the question, the government had been developing a state integration policy in the course of the 1990s. In the beginning, the policy included only limited measures focusing primarily on particularly vulnerable groups, refugees and compatriots, but starting in 1999 embraced all immigrants. This paper presents an overview of the development of integration policies in the Czech Republic and demonstrates the ways in which the selected integration strategies were influenced by ideological changes taking place in Western Europe and especially by the shift from multiculturalism to individual integration of citizens. The paper also notes that integration strategies have had a hard time making it in real life.

### INTRODUCTION

After 1989, the Czech Republic quickly became a target country for migrants. The permanent nature of immigration after 1989 in the Czech Republic left the country facing the question of integrating the newly arrived immigrants into society. To deal with the question, the government had been developing a state integration policy in the course of the 1990s. In the beginning, the policy included only limited measures focusing primarily on particularly vulnerable groups, refugees and compatriots, but starting in 1999 embraced all immigrants. At the same time, Western Europe has been moving from policies of multiculturalism that require maximum respect to the cultural differences of immigrant communities towards strategy of individual citizen integration. Developments in the traditionally tolerant Netherlands have symbolized the fall of multiculturalism. The situation in the UK is also changing. These changes go hand in hand with a debate about national identity and the core social values that immigrants need to respect. This paper aims at outlining the development of integration policies in the Czech Republic and demonstrating how the above ideological changes reflect in the Czech environment.

### CHANGES OF CZECH INTEGRATION STRATEGIES

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Czech society had been confronted with a new phenomenon - a flow of refugees in search of protection. As early as December 1991, the government adopted executive measures that had laid the foundation for a program of assistance to recognized refugees. The program - which exists to this day, albeit in a modified form - offered assistance in the areas of housing and instruction of Czech.<sup>1</sup> The same model had been applied to help compatriots, i.e. people of Czech descent living in risk areas abroad who decided to return.<sup>2</sup> However, the assistance programs designed for refugees and compatriots did not turn into a starting point for integration policies focusing on the main flow of refugees. They had a limited humanitarian justification and were so costly that their replication proved impossible.

The government's policy started taking account of the objective of integrating "foreigners" (the main flow of immigrants coming because of economic or family reasons) in the late 1990s. Birth of the integration policy had three crucial aspects: 1) internal need arising from the growing number of immigrants, 2) willingness of the Ministry of Interior to start dealing with integration issues, and 3) involvement of the Council of Europe, which functioned not only as a catalyst,<sup>3</sup> but also influenced the ideology and language of government documents.

Integration policies have developed in three phases: 1) the initial phase described above (1990-1999) and characterized by only limited measures; 2) the foundation phase (1999-2003) which saw the formation of basic principles under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior; and 3) the final phase, which started with the transfer of the integration agenda from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs as of 1 January 2004, and may well become the phase of reflection and reconstruction.

A 1999 document entitled Principles of the foreigner integration concept was in fact the government's first integration strategy. The document is not a multicultural manifesto; rather, it declares the existence of a society-wide task of integrating foreigners through equal opportunities and a proactive approach on the part of government institutions. Nevertheless, the document's fifteen theses and commentaries strongly reflect the multicultural discourse as they introduce the term "immigrant community" and undertake to "build a multicultural society". Immigrant communities as groups united by historic consciousness, culture, language, national

## Foreigner Integration Policies in the Czech Republic

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identity or racial affiliation are considered to be "an integral and enriching part of society as well as full-fledged and indispensable partners in creating a multicultural society". Building of a multicultural society must therefore be "based on a dialogue between communities with the objective of mutual cultural enrichment". On the other hand, the Principles note that "recognizing an individual's affiliation to a certain community does not mean that the individual is to be always and completely identified with it", i.e. communities are dynamic units.

In 2000, the Principles were followed by the longer Concept of foreigner integration. While the ideological foundation of the Principles is to be found in documents of the Council of Europe, the Concept reflects the intellectual discourse of the European Union and in particular the conclusions of the Tampere European Council (1999) and the call for approximating the status of foreigners with long-term residency to the status of citizens and strengthening equal opportunities.

The role of communities disappeared from the Concept: integration of "each foreigner is implemented individually" and perceived as "incorporating an individual or a group into the life of society". There is only a marginal reference to communities. For example, the Concept emphasizes the need to focus attention on the situation of women in immigrant communities (in society as a whole and inside the community itself) and calls for support of foreigner community research. As regards the situation of women, the Concept states that "in spite of respecting traditions and certain differences of some cultures, it is not always possible and suitable to fully comply with the requirements of foreigners in the area of traditions... Similarly, it is not possible to tolerate attitudes and behavior incompatible with the Czech legal order (e.g. forced marriage, polygamy, limited access to education and healthcare, prohibition of employment or domestic violence)". The term "multicultural" remains crucial only in the area of education where multicultural instruction is promoted.

Not even the more recent documents, such as the Analysis of the situation of foreigners (2003) prepared by the inter-ministerial commission of the Ministry of Interior, contain any more advanced multicultural considerations.<sup>4</sup> The part of the Analysis covering culture and religion distinguishes between two models of cultural integration: cultural assimilation and pluralistic cultural integration. According to the second model, "various cultures may flourish within a single democratic country if [these cultures] respect the unifying and limiting frameworks of fundamental rights and values and if these cultures are internally open. A pluralistic cultural integration may be defined as mutual acceptance and respect of differences plus sharing of democratic norms".<sup>5</sup> The

analysis also puts emphasis on command of Czech: an inability to speak the local language is not a manifestation of multiculturalism but a lack of integration. "It supports fragmentation and the segregation of immigrant communities."<sup>6</sup>

The act of reflecting pluralistic cultural integration as a process wedged into the majority's legal and institutional framework is a clear indication of new trends. The turnaround has been confirmed by the annual report on foreigner integration for 2004 prepared by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.<sup>7</sup> Among other things, the document examines the shortcomings of methods used in the past that were for the most part too general. The report criticizes the fact that the conditions for successful integration of immigrants have not been set. There is also a lack of motivation in integration efforts. "The concept focuses primarily on approximating the legal status of foreigners to the legal status of citizens, but does not contain a positive formulation of expectations. It does not impose any obligations as regards integration measures and at the same time does not provide any rights and does not give preference to persons who demonstrate their willingness to be integrated into society". According to the authors, the solution lies in the Czech Republic's taking a road of integrationist legislation similar to that taken by the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland, Germany or Austria. However, the document also explicitly accepts a new trend: the strengthening of individual citizen integration is not viewed as a result of a spontaneous process, but rather as a conscious act of concluding and executing a contract between the immigrant and the host society.<sup>8</sup>

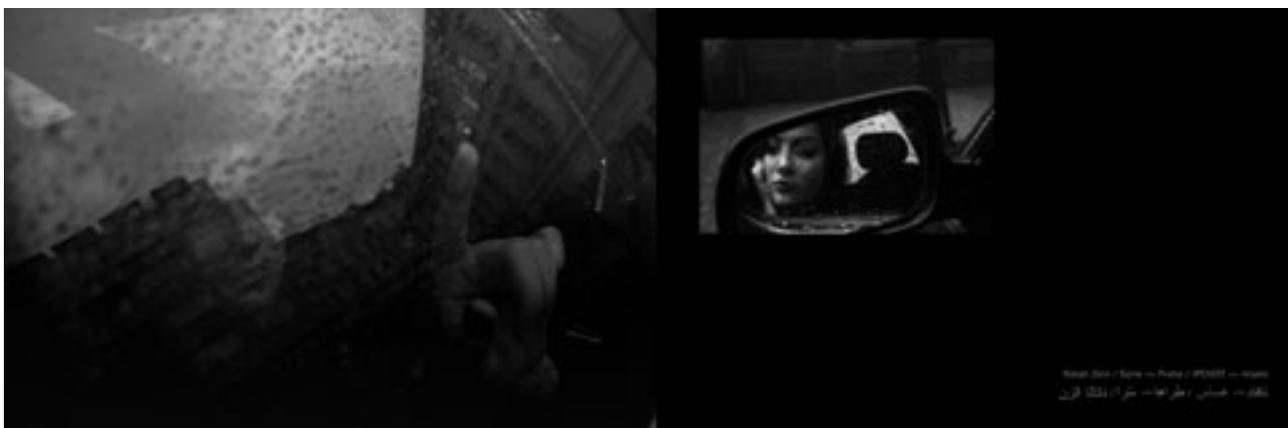
## CONCLUSION

To summarize the above, Czech integration policies flexibly react to ever changing challenges. However, we cannot be optimistic in regard to the implementation of ideas in real life. The legal and institutional framework, which has been failing to make foreigner integration easier, did not change. According to the Analysis of situation of foreigners with long-term residency in the Czech Republic and proposal of optimization measures, "many foreigners have become used to perceiving the current situation as full of administrative obstacles, petty discrimination and the lengthy process of obtaining a long-term residency permit or citizenship as a lack of interest on the part of the Czech Republic as regards the settlement of foreigners"<sup>9</sup>. A real challenge for the government's integration policy does not really lie in the shift from multicultural integration towards citizen integration, but rather in making theory work in real life.



- 1 Drbohlav, D. *Migration Trends in Selected EU Applicant Countries. Volume II - The Czech Republic - The Times They are A-Changing*. Vienna : IOM, 2004, 96 -98.
- 2 Drbohlav, D. *Ibid*, 48-49 and 98.
- 3 In 1998, the Ministry of Interior and the Council of Europe organized the National Roundtable as a part of a project on inter-community relationship. In 1999, the Seminar on strategies of implementing integration policies took place. In 2001, the Ministry of Interior translated and distributed a Council of Europe's document entitled *Diversity and cohesion : new challenges for the integration of immigrants as well as a study entitled Framework of integration policies*.
- 4 The Analysis was an attachment to a document entitled *On the implementation of foreigner integration concept in 2003*. See *Government Resolution No. 126 of 11 February 2004*. The author took part in preparing the Analysis.
- 5 Analysis, p. 33.
- 6 Analysis, p. 35.
- 7 *Government Resolution No. 5 of 5 January 2005*.
- 8 Baršová, A. "Integration : Free choice or obligation?" *Integration of foreigners in Europe*. Prague : Slovo 21, 2004, 40-42.
- 9 *Ivan Gabal Analysis @ Consulting*. Oct. 2004, 13.

## Selected Problems of Foreigners in Slovakia in the Context of Current Migration Policy in the Country



32

The Slovak Republic has become a Member State of the European Union since May 1, 2004. This fact brings about a multitude of consequences, among others in the areas of international migration and the integration of foreigners on its territory. This article attempts to evaluate the current Slovak migration policy as well as the situation of foreigners in the country, critically pointing out some Slovak specificities, sometimes in comparison with other countries in the region of Central Europe.

The issues related to the presence of various alien communities in Slovakia have increasingly been important over the last years. Development in international migration into the region has resulted in the forming of some new problems or enhancing of others in the country. Is Slovakia prepared for this situation? What is the contemporary state in the treatment of allochthonous populations? What are the policies and management for the integration of foreigners?

### EVALUATION OF CURRENT SLOVAK MIGRATION POLICY

A clear, simple, first answer could be that unfortunately the treatment of foreign persons in Slovakia shows signs of an incomprehensive, insufficient and uncoordinated approach towards them. Slovakia has not elaborated any good migration policy until now; the integration of foreigners into society is weak, rather formal; the number of asylum seekers is the highest in Central Europe with the lowest level of asylums granted; the extent of irregular (illegal) migration is enormous - probably the highest in the region too; the degree of xenophobia in society is substantial but worrying. However, there are certain positive features to be mentioned as well, at least in the last period.

Up to now, I consider the absence of consistent, effective and balanced migration/integration policy of the State to be the biggest problem in Slovakia because such a policy usually creates a general framework for the treatment and incorporation of aliens into society. Actually, after the establishment of the Slovak Republic in 1993, the Slovak Government passed Principles of the Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic (by its Resolution No. 846/1993). These Principles reflected an objective reality at that time. The forms and methods of implementing a migration policy were derived from it. But already twelve years have elapsed since the adoption of the Principles; hence, it is natural that their provisions are rather obsolete and less coinciding with the contemporary situation in the country or Central Europe. In addition, by many experts and NGOs, current migration policy based on the still valid Principles is not realized in a pro-immigration way.

Some State institutions claim that there is a considerable endeavor to constitute satisfactory conditions for an economically productive section of foreigners and to create barriers to the influx of questionable migrants, coming legally or not. But it is controversial and inexact to define and divide them ahead who are who.

**Selected Problems of Foreigners in Slovakia in the Context of Current Migration Policy in the Country**

Some other central organizations express an opinion that co-ordination among all parties involved in this area is not sufficient. On the other side, there are strong feelings - more or less warranted - from the side of NGOs that State migration policy is not much resounding and the public is little informed about it. Progress is apparent in the formation and harmonization with the EU of legal norms for the stay and movement of aliens or for the granting of asylum in the very last years. However, State migration policy should comprise an elaborate set of various instruments, not only the preparation of legal norms, however important, topical and broad they are.

**SITUATION OF FOREIGNERS IN SLOVAKIA**

At present, some 22 000 of foreigners with a permit to stay reside in Slovakia (see Table). These persons thus represent only 0.4% of the total population in the country. From the viewpoint of international comparison, this is a very low figure. For instance, the share of foreigners with any form of permitted stay in the Czech Republic achieved as much

“The Slovak Ministry of Interior finally presented a new, long expected Conception of migration policy of the Slovak Republic and submitted it for public discussion at the beginning of 2005.”



as 2.3% of the total country’s population at the end of 2004. In this way, there come 4 persons of foreign origin per 1000 inhabitants in Slovakia, while in the Czech Republic it is over 23. In Hungary, the percentage of foreign population makes up 1.2% of the total population, in Austria even 8.7%. What a difference within a small region.

Out of the demonstrated numbers it is evident that after a certain initial growth of foreigners in Slovakia since 1994 we have witnessed its stagnation from 1998. Even in October 2004 their number fell by some 7 000! In this month not only the so-called foreign Slovaks finished to be registered any more but primarily the statistics of aliens was cleared and numerous doubly registered persons were removed. Due to it, unfortunately, the values for single years are now not comparable. The question is how could this happen and what the quality of the statistics of foreigners was until then.

**DEVELOPMENT IN THE SELECTED CATEGORIES OF ALIENS ON THE TERRITORY OF SLOVAKIA IN 1994-2004**

Reasons for ongoing stagnation in the number of foreigners

Year / Number	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Foreigners with permitted stay	16 946	21 909	21 482	26 424	28 419	29 488	28 801	29 418	29 505	29 219	22 108
Asylum applicants	140	359	415	645	506	1320	1556	8151	9743	10 358	11 391
Refugees	55	68	129	65	49	27	11	18	20	11	15
Irregular migrants	1900	2786	3329	2821	8236	8050	6062	15 548	15 235	12 493	8690

are not unequivocal. On the one hand, Slovakia - as the smallest, economically weakest and least known country in Central Europe - does not represent an especially attractive destination for foreigners from Asia, e.g. Moreover, the communities of foreign compatriots already established in the country are not so numerous and helpful as they are in the neighboring countries (the Vietnamese, Chinese, Ukrainians etc.) It seems that the accession of Slovakia to the EU does practically not much to change this situation. On the other hand, according to comments of aliens proper, the Slovak Republic does not signalize high willingness to grant permits to stay and work, particularly to foreigners from economically less developed countries. Moreover, impacts of momentary social and economic reforms carried out in Slovakia do not create a hospitable climate for economically weaker entrepreneurs or employees from among the aliens with permitted stay. They then consider and partly realize departure from the country, so their numbers in Slovakia do not increase (with the exception of citizens of EU countries).

**INSTITUTIONAL TOOLS**

As far as the integration of foreigners with permitted stay in Slovakia is concerned, there is no topical framework or practical approaches for the process in the country. There is only a document forming legal space for the integration of persons with the refugee status or of asylum seekers with a high chance to be granted asylum. It is called Comprehensive solution of the integration process of foreigners with the recognized status of refugee into society. This document was adopted in 1996 by the Government Resolution No. 105/1996, therefore is of an incomplete and rather obsolete character once again. The integration of foreigners alone in practice is thus chaotic, without any stricter rules, in fact formally and institutionally non-existing. A comprehensive approach here is absent.

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From the institutional aspect, Slovakia is missing an authority dealing with the matters of foreigners on the parliamentary or governmental level. At present, the issues referring to aliens in the country should theoretically be under the jurisdiction of the vice-premier for European matters, human rights and minorities or the parliamentary Committee for human rights, minorities and women position. This state is entirely non-systemic. The integration problems of foreigners are not solved sufficiently and effectively, rather just registered. Slovakia extremely misses a specialized autonomous body like, for example, the Czech Committee for the rights of foreigners or similar authorities in Member States of the EU, which provide a wide, comprehensive basis for the solution of living and working problems of foreigners in the country. Yet, a Migration Information Center established by responsible State organizations and/or international organizations - rendering also assistance and information to all categories of aliens on the territory of Slovakia - is still absent, though its operation has already been planned for a long time ago. This could also be a contributory tool in the process of foreigner's integration into Slovak society.

**IRREGULAR MIGRANTS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS**

The growth of irregular migrants and asylum seekers represents another significant problem in Slovakia over the last years. Since 1993, the absolute number of irregular migrants in the country has increased roughly 6-7 times (with an unexpected drop in 2004 - see Table). These dynamics reflect a general increase of international migration in the region of Central and Eastern Europe owing to migration pressure from a lot of countries, particularly in Asia. Especially as regards Slovakia, it is worth mentioning the fact that the ratio of irregular migrants to the number of all inhabitants in the country is practically the highest in the region. It is evident that significant smuggling routes, mainly from Ukraine, pass through the country despite actions carried out against this phenomenon.

The quantitative growth of asylum seekers in Slovakia was even much more remarkable within the given period. In 2003, their number exceeded the limit of 10,000 persons a year for the first time and thus rose almost 120 times against the value of 1992! It is presumed that such a tendency will continue in the future too so the number of asylum applications will be growing. The importance of Slovakia as a destination country has noticeably been enhanced after the accession of the country to the EU. However, only a minimum number of asylum applicants in Slovakia are granted asylum (merely 563 persons as of the end of 2004). This circumstance is often a subject for criticism by non-governmental organisations, international

institutions and migrants proper. Moreover, if the ratio of the number of asylum seekers to the number of Slovak inhabitants is the highest in the region of Central Europe, it is absolutely contrariwise in the case of granted asylums.

**NEW CONCEPTION OF MIGRATION POLICY IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC**

But not to be only too critical, some good news in the conclusion: the Slovak Ministry of Interior finally presented a new, long expected Conception of migration policy of the Slovak Republic and submitted it for public discussion at the beginning of 2005. Though it is still in a rough form, i.e. not an approved proposal, there is apparent a large qualitative shift in the philosophy and wording of the Conception. As a fundamental strategic document, it reflects the ongoing process of unifying migration and asylum policy in the Member States of the EU. It incorporates existing regulations, directives and recommendations of the EU and tries to be also in congruity with the Hague program. Of course, the Conception is not perfect; several relevant remarks have been made already about it. For example, the matters of foreigners' integration with permitted stay need to be developed deeper in it, i.e. their education, activities at a local level, the participation of foreigners in domestic political, administrative and economic life, associating and active work of their organizations, informing the media, etc. (The Conception was elaborated by the Migration Office, therefore the questions related to asylum and irregular migration are overemphasized in it.) It is also necessary to more accentuate the equality of chances for all migrants and the inadmissibility of their discrimination. The complex of issues resulting from the employment and enterprise of aliens on the Slovak labour market, then the education and informing of Slovak children at schools about foreigners in the country as well as the fight against xenophobia in society should more resound there. Despite all that, the Conception of migration policy of the Slovak Republic could be a good, modern, comprehensive instrument in the treatment of aliens on the territory of Slovakia to achieve conditions already standard in some neighboring countries of Central Europe, or even the EU as a whole. Only in this way is it possible to gradually mitigate a presumable growth of irregular migration to the territory of the Slovak Republic and, on the contrary, to effectively support those aliens who have an interest in living and working in the country in accordance with the possibilities and legal standards of Slovakia and the European Union.

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04

## Comparative Practice of Diversity Management: East - West



## European Institutions' Roma Policy

Institutional engagement in terms of Romani issues occurs in many forms and to various extents within the framework of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Council of Europe, and also, though in a specific way, the European Union. Whereas in the early 1990s, Romani issues were still included in the broader discourse about the situation of national minorities and human rights, in the late nineties, they began to be set apart as a specific area. The author intends to briefly describe a grasp of Roma policy presented by key European institutions: CoE, EU and OSCE. It is important to mention the role of other actors in the theatre of European Roma policy design: Trans-national Radical Party, Open Society Institute, Roma National Congress and International Romani Union.<sup>1</sup>

36

Creating a European pro-Roma platform has always been integral to the policy of agitators akin to the Romani National Congress (RNC), for whom this goal overlaps with their efforts to confirm their close relations to international organizations and to establish a representative organ of Roma in Europe. The International Roma Union formulated similar goals in their "Declaration of a Roma Nation" from the year 2001, which postulates, apart from other things, that Roma are a politically uniform and conscious community, which needs its own, separate political representation. All remarks concerning the European dimension or the need to create a European standpoint in considering the Roma question, despite their good intentions, were readily used by various agitators as arguments to establish "Roma" representation at the European level. In connection with the need to set up a European Roma platform, it is often mentioned that Roma are a "European minority", which is proved by the fact that they live in all European states<sup>2</sup>. The contemporary discourse of European pro-Roma policies is thus characterised by two strong myths: First, calls for establishing a European platform and European Roma policy imply that such a platform and policy are missing. Contrary to such opinions, a European platform for forming policies towards Roma exists. It is comprised of international treaties on human rights and on the rights of national and ethnic minorities, which are binding for the signatory states<sup>3</sup>. Secondly, it is faulty to categorize Roma as a "real European minority," a sentiment supported by the argument that (pro)Roma organizations and activists represent a united modern emancipation movement.

### 1. COUNCIL OF EUROPE (COE)

Within the CoE the idea of Roma as a special pan-European diaspora, different from other national minorities has prevailed. It has legitimised the creation of specific structures apart from those which tackle problems of European national minorities in general (i.e., the High Commissioner on National Minorities in the OSCE; this process resulted in the approval of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in the Council of Europe<sup>4</sup>). This fact resulted in strengthening those opinions which consider the Romani a primarily political problem. Its advocates maintain that this problem

has to be solved by means of changing the political mechanisms, for example by asserting anti-discriminatory measures, but also by creating Roma representation and ensuring its participation in the decision-making processes. All the above have resulted in the creation of a quasi-international, non-governmental organization - European Forum for Roma and Travellers (EFRT) - established in fact by the secretariat of CoE with Finnish financial and political help from September to November, 2001. EFRT has become a newest focal point of international Roma policy making. However, there is not much to say now (February 2005) about its activities. There is no record of them to be found. At this point, it is necessary to pay attention to an assumption behind the proposal to establish the ERFT: a silent acceptance of the basic notion of Roma nationalism: that Roma are a nation. Based on this fact, they have the right to be, as a nation, represented at the international level. In other words, this nation is to become a new subject of international relations and law.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of contemporary international law this thesis is wrong. The international community is a community of sovereign territorial states, not nations.<sup>6</sup> The international law knows no "nations" to be represented and to participate in the international system.<sup>7</sup>

### 2. EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

Within the framework of the EU, one cannot speak about the institutionalisation of Roma issues in terms of establishing special administrative structures, as is the case with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe. Nonetheless, the situation of Roma in the accession countries has become a part of the formalised process of negotiations about acceding to the EU: as one of the criteria of addressing the so-called Copenhagen Criteria from 1993 which included protection of minorities. The EU invested, above all within the framework of the Phare Programme, considerable finances to support programmes aiming to improve the situation of Roma. Even though this support was primarily realised in the form of developmental aid, it indirectly resulted in strengthening activist (pro)Roma groups in the accession countries.

## European Institutions Roma Policy

The most recent EU experts' "Report on the Situation of Fundamental Rights in the European Union for 2003" (from May 26, 2004, hereinafter just "Report") recommends the adoption of a Directive specifically aimed at encouraging the integration of Roma. "This urgency also stems from the inappropriateness in several respects of Directive 2000/43/EC (so called "Racial Directive"<sup>8</sup>), which was not specifically aimed at achieving the integration of groups that are traditionally excluded, such as the Roma."<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, in the parts concerning Roma issues, the report simply repeats all the vices of the similar previous reports of the CoE. For example: "Considering that the itinerant lifestyle is part of the Roma identity, non-discrimination in access to housing as in principle imposed by Directive 2000/43/EC (Article 3§1, h) should be understood as obliging the authorities to provide sufficient stopping places for caravans" or, "...the Roma should, for example, be able to have access to employment or obtain services without being prevented from doing so by the fact of them wearing traditional clothing, even there where a justification may be given to support the prohibition of such clothing"<sup>10</sup>. The EU experts recommend turning to a cultural definition of Roma which signals quite a different approach from the previous stance, represented by an ex-European commissioner Angelica Diamantopoulos, voiced at the OSI/World bank conference in Budapest in 2003<sup>11</sup> in which the ex-commissioner pointed at the impossibility of tolerating some of the traces of traditional Roma culture within the process of social inclusion aimed at Roma groups, such as pre-mature marriage.

**2.1 The activities of the Trans-National Radical Party** play an important role in the process of creating an international Roma policy, and one cannot ignore the direct influence of its exponents on the International Romani Union (IRU), to which the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs is bound by a Memorandum of Co-operation<sup>12</sup>. The Commissioner for Foreign Affairs of the IRU and a member of the Trans-National Radical Party, the Italian politician Paolo Pietrosanti has contrived the idea of a non-territorial Romani nation, which became the key concept of the IRU, expressed in the "Declaration of a Roma Nation" at their congress in Prague in May 2000. Pietrosanti made number of critical comments on the Finnish Initiative, and he objected the establishment of the EFRT due to the apparent lack of legitimacy. This attitude is in accord with the positions of the Trans-National Radical Party. The Party highlights the "democratic deficit" of European transnational structures, which should be removed by means of a re-evaluation of the traditional concepts like state and nation. According to Pietrosanti, politics is the slowest area to develop in Europe, and for this reason it should be accelerated.<sup>13</sup> Roma, in their non-territoriality, fulfil more so than others the idea of European citizenship anchored in the contracts about the EU, but they only do so partially and in a subsidiary manner.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, they are suitable bearers of acceleration of politics

leading towards federalisation of Europe and towards achieving a primary status of the European citizenship over its current subsidiary character (that is, derived from the member states citizenship). That would, however, imply a radical change to the character of European institutions, and an emancipatory Roma movement can, according to Pietrosanti, trigger such a change.<sup>15</sup>

### 3. ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE, CONTACT POINT FOR ROMA AND SINTI ISSUES

In the OSCE, "Romani issues" were incorporated into the so called "human dimension", and in 1995 the so called Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues (CPRSI) was established under the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. The mandate of this new structure was broadened in 1998 to include the collection of information, co-ordination, and a provision of counselling in terms of legal and political developments concerning Roma and Sinti, at European as well as at national levels. One may say that Nicolae Gheorghe, head of the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, is himself an institution and that the activity of the Contact Point is a de facto attempt to realise his visions, aimed at establishing a transnational Romani platform. According to Gheorghe, this platform should be recognised as subject to international law; but in order to create it, it is necessary to construct a new common Romani identity corresponding with this requirement. This kind of "constructing" a new identity should be the main goal of Romani activism. It should also contribute to a shift from the viewpoint from which the situation of Roma seems to be soluble by means of sanctions and prevention of discrimination. Activists, though, should draw the attention of the public to the existence of problems linked to the situation of Roma and thus strengthen the demand for solutions, which they would supply.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, Gheorghe criticises the process of recognition of Roma as national minorities, supported by some Roma elites because then the Romani identity is only presented as one of numerous ethno-political identities of the created or manifested pluralism in Eastern Europe. The concept of national minorities tends to confirm the legitimacy of states functioning on the ethnic basis or even to conceal the actual state of things.<sup>17</sup> In fact, this kind of Romani identity policy is inspired by the tradition of East European cultural nationalism. It must be pointed out that this criticism is not included in the official documents of the Contact Point. The transnationalism presented by Gheorghe is already embedded in a report for the European Commission from 1993 in which he proposes, along with Liégois, establishing a "Romani/Gypsy partnership at European level"<sup>18</sup>.

In this report he emphasises the transnational principle of the Romani identity. The presented transnationalism corresponds to the idea of a dispersed, non-territorial nation. This nation can be most easily asserted in interaction with non-national and transnational institutions which can make a contribution to its new identity beyond the concept of nation-states and beyond the current discourse about discrimination. Working towards the creation of the transnational identity presupposes the establishment of an official organisation "sufficiently qualified to represent the interests of the people".<sup>19</sup> The most suitable in this sense seems to be the Canadian (Kymlicka's) conception of mosaic multiculturalism, because the splinters or Romani settlements can create the mosaic of the Romani nation in accord with Gheorghe's visions. Even though the new "Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area" from November 2003 contains explicitly in part VIII./121 support of the initiative of the Council of Europe to establish a possible European Forum for Roma and Travellers,<sup>20</sup> Gheorghe virtually never<sup>21</sup> took part in the work of the Exploratory Group, and at the key meetings of the MG-S-ROM concerning composing the European Romani Forum he obviously remained dissociated from the actors of the Finnish Initiative and from its main Romani protagonist, Rudko Kawczynsky (RNC). One of the reasons is the fact that his demand for the forum to be "qualified" does not seem to be fulfilled.

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## European Institutions Roma Policy

## 4. CONCLUSION: ARBITRARY CHARACTER OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROMANI IDENTITY.

Every ethnicity is a construct to a certain extent. What is essential, though, is who constructs it. Is it a construct made by a dominant majority, scientists, politicians, or by subjects of the ascribed ethnicity, Roma themselves? Numerous authors refer to the "nationalist" project of construction of the Romani identity by the international Roma elite in the 1970s. Still, the question arises to what extent the activities of these international Roma elites are authentic efforts of the Roma actors themselves, or to what extent they are triggered by the scholarly discourse of Romani studies, whose actors are usually non-Roma. With regard to the last decade, engagement of transnational organizations and foundations are characteristic of this period, during which they are usually looking for a topic. This is the case with the Open Society Institute, which attempts to engraft the rhetoric and practices of the post-war American movement for the rights of blacks (civil rights movement) to the situation of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Also, the situation of Roma in the so called accession countries is a topical political issue during the

process of enlargement of the EU. Furthermore, there exist obvious attempts of the staff of officials in the Council of Europe to cement their posts by means of creating the European Roma representation and in this way to prevent their gradual fall into the meaninglessness of the situation of the de facto expanded EU. Apart from that, engagement of institutions like the World Bank or the European Development Bank in Paris, which produce reports about the necessity of participation of international Roma elites and which in this way try to offer to states their not always very advantageous services, is motivated by the effort to gain a successful contract rather than by a detailed processing of the participatory model. I would like to conclude with an excerpt from the work of Seyla Benhabib: "Practical autonomy, in the moral and political sphere, is defined as the capacity to exercise choice and agency over the conditions of one's narrative identification. ...Using the dialogical and narrative model of identity constitution, I propose to define group identities much more dynamically and to argue that in reflecting upon politics of identity/difference, our focus should be less on what the group is but more on what the political leaders of such groups demand in the public sphere."<sup>22</sup>



- 1 This article is based on results of the Research project RB 11/17/03 of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic executed by the IOM Prague. Apart from the author main contributors of the research project were Andrea Baršová and Eva Sobotka. <http://www.iom.cz>
- 2 According to the study which became one of the sources of the report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, written by C. Tabajdi, "Legal Situation of Roma in Europe", Document No: 9397 from 26th March 2002, Roma do not live in only four European countries: in Andorra, Malta, Iceland, and the Vatican.
- 3 "This European platform was, however, systematically used by Romani agitators striving for transnational representation of Roma only at the beginning of the nineties. Since the year 1996, the system of treaties and political mechanisms based on human rights treaties, for instance the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, have been used by the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), which cannot be categorised along with organizations supporting the symbolist fight for self-determination or recognition. Agitators who exerted themselves so vehemently to establish the European Roma Forum (later ERFT) had not made use of mechanisms set up within the framework of the human rights treaties since 1992. At this point, one may notice a deflection from the international mechanisms based on international conventions and declarations about human rights protection towards a symbolic level, which lacks definition of any sort. Then, of course, the question arises whether in the final stage the member states went put the international system in misbalance, if they grant the European Roma Forum the opportunity to act on the level of identity politics, rather than, in accord with the typical procedures of averting to human rights violation," Sobotka, E. Research project RB 11/17/03, 2003.
- 4 However, the Framework Convention does not define the concept of national minority.
- 5 Roma nationalism does not exist yet in the form of one consistent ideology. Its two main branches, represented by the Romani National Congress (RNC) and by the International Romani Union (IRU), differ in several aspects. The given points of departure and demands are common to both of them, though. See Roma and the Question of Self-Determination : Fiction and Reality, Jadwisin, Poland, 15th - 16th April 2002. Project of Ethnic Relations.
- 6 "The contemporary international system comprising sovereign territorial states results from a process which was commenced by the Peace of Westphalia. As some studies show, though, even a much broader conception of the state, including for example the papal state, a feudal state, the Church, orders of knights, or other entities before the Peace of Westphalia, was always based upon the fact that these entities were able to mobilise military power for their defence. For participation of culturally or ethnically defined entities, without real power given by an effective political and

- defensive power, there cannot be found a credible analogy in the history of the international system (See for example Lars Bo Kaspersen (1997) War, State, Sovereignty, and Citizenship. Ph.D. thesis, Institut for Statskundskab, Aarhus University.)" See Baršová, A. Research project RB 11/17/03, 2003.
- 7 It only knows the nations' right of self-determination - but only the right of self-determination realised in the form of creating a new territorial sovereign state, not in other forms like establishing cultural or territorial municipality as the basis of direct and autonomous participation in the international system- for more, see Baršová, A. Research project RB 11/17/03, 2003.
- 8 "Racial Directive" has not been incorporated yet into Czech legal system (February 2005).
- 9 Report on the Situation of Fundamental Rights in the European Union for 2003, p. 103.
- 10 Report on the Situation of Fundamental Rights in the European Union for 2003.
- 11 Conference hosted by OSI/World bank and Hungarian government launched preparation of "Decade of Roma Inclusion".
- 12 Memorandum of Understanding and Co-operation between the International Romani Union and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, 4.4.2001.
- 13 "In Europe, however, politics is the slowest sector of human activity, and this characteristic has always been dangerous" In : "Ich bin ein Zigeuner", so far unpublished article by Paolo Pietrosanti, written for the bulletin "Roma rights" published by the European Roma Rights Centre in Budapest.
- 14 Ibid : "that is contemplated by the treaties by the treaties of Union, but unfortunately only to a partial extent and in a subsidiary manner".
- 15 A personal interview with Paolo Pietrosanti, Rome, December 2003.
- 16 See Acton, T, ed. Gypsy politics and Traveller identity. Hertfordshire : University of Hertfordshire Press, 1997, 157. "So we put pressure on governments to create a need for more knowledge but on the other hand we ourselves have to produce that knowledge in order to meet the requirement",
- 17 See Acton, T, ed. Ibid, 160. "the true concept of national minority is only a by-product of nation-state-building... ethnic minority policies are exhibited as if in a display cabinet, like a showcase in international politics to make sure that the Council of Europe and the western democracies think that things are good in eastern Europe".
- 18 Extract from a report for the European Commission DGV- 1993, p 3.
- 19 Extract from a report for the European Commission DGV- 1993, p 162.
- 20 Decision No.566 - Action Plan on improving the situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE area, 479 Plenary Meeting, 27 November 2003.
- 21 Nicolae Gheorge took part at three meetings of the Exploratory Group.
- 22 Benhabib, S. The Claims of Culture. Princeton : Princeton University Press, 2002, 16.

## Diversity policies need rethinking...

This article reflects on EU diversity policies and procedures and starts by observing that there is no coherent EU cultural policy. The policy recommendations developed by the Council of Europe are presented as a sort of diversity management blueprint characteristic of current Western European thinking. It is argued that at the basis of the diversity management is a dialogue between the cultural differences and political practice of homogenising nation-states in the West, a dialogue in which power is a central element. Finally, the need for re-conceptualisation of cultural diversity is pointed out: The challenge is how to reconstitute the national and European “we” within a public space that cherishes both plural identities and the shared identity of common citizenship.

Having been asked to speak on the question of existing EU diversity policies and procedures, let me observe at the outset that the very notion of an EU cultural policy is an oxymoron: there are no such policies and procedures because culture is not in the domain of the Union. To be sure, there are a certain number of general normative ideas. There are some normative instruments and programmes; there are also various initiatives regarding anti-discrimination or minority rights issues being handled at the EU level. But they do not add up to a coherent policy.

Another preliminary observation I need to make is that the term ‘cultural diversity’ in Western Europe has become, for better or for worse, the standard-bearer of the French-led campaign to exclude cultural goods and services from global free trade rules - the cause that at its onset was referred to as the ‘cultural exception.’

This notion of cultural diversity is not principally the issue of different cultural communities finding ways of living together but has become a discourse on the right of governments’ elaborate policies that protect and support their national cultural goods and services...

Finally, there is certainly no consensus among Western European countries on the policy issue of cultural diversity in the senses that you have been talking about it from the East-Central European perspective. The national histories and traditions are so varied. So, in a nutshell, there are no strategic reflections emerging on this matter from the European Union (or Commission) as such.

### COUNCIL OF EUROPE: DIFFERING DIVERSITIES

Policy recommendations have emerged, however, from the work of the Council of Europe which are germane to your concerns. This is why I want to share with you some of the key findings of a Council of Europe ‘transversal’, in other words comparative, study that resulted in a book called “Differing Diversities“<sup>1</sup>. The study reviewed diversity policies in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Canada (which, although it is not situated in the European landmass, is a member of the Council of Europe). It was based on a number of research reports from these countries, as well as specific position papers. Together all these contributed to a synthesis, a conceptual and practical framework for addressing the policy challenges of cultural diversity, which was elaborated by Tony Bennett, who is the professor of Sociology at The Open University in the United Kingdom.

This synthesis is in fact a sort of diversity management blueprint characteristic of current Western European thinking. The forms of diversity it focuses on are those ‘ethnically marked cultural differences associated with the international movement of peoples, and within national territories, the claims to difference associated with the protracted struggles of indigenous minorities to maintain their identity.’ For the purposes of the study, the team then sub-divided these kinds of diversities into the following four types:

- i. sub- or multinational, which dispute the homogenising tendencies of national cultures, but do so on the basis of essentially similar strategies by articulating a competing set of associations between a territory, its people, and their culture;
- ii. autochthonous, in other words the situation and circumstances of ethnically- marked minority communities that are the result of earlier movements of peoples (or of national boundaries) within Europe;
- iii. diasporic: cultures produced in association with the histories of displaced peoples, involving the development of mobile international cultural networks operating across, and offering an alternative to, the territorial logic of national cultures;
- iv. indigenous, which, developed in the context of resistance to colonial histories of occupation, typically contest dominant national cultures, by national mappings of people, culture, history and territory mobilising deeper and longer histories of indigenous cultural continuity.

The work then goes on to analyse diversity policies and practice in four frameworks:

- i. civic contexts: the distribution of civic rights across different groups, the kinds of divisions thus established between different sections of the population in terms of their cultural rights and entitlements. The principal variations observed in the study concern the extent to which the different conceptions of citizenship are based on assimilationist, implicitly pluralist, or explicitly multicultural principles;
- ii. administrative contexts and their policy dynamics, whether devolved or centralized, whether direct or at arm’s-length, and the increasing tendency to conscript communities as agencies of cultural governance;

Diversity policies need rethinking...

- iii. social contexts refer to the social objectives that cultural diversity policies are connected to, usually in ways which either qualify or give a particular inflection to those policies;
- iv. economic contexts, linked to the perception that diversity constitutes a cultural resource that needs to be nurtured and managed from the point of view of the economic benefits it might bring through cultural exports or a thriving cultural industry sector;
- Finally, conceptual contexts are those provided by the breadth of understanding of the concept of culture which define the scope and directions of cultural diversity policies. In this connection, significantly, the synthesis points out 'the need to revise such conceptions in order to attend to the flows and crossovers between cultures, and the patterns of their intermingling that are produced by the movement of peoples and the restless cultural mixing that now characterises developed cultural markets.' The synthesis then examined five general areas which provide the ground for possible policy instruments:
  - i. cultural policies and public spheres, i.e. the respective roles of cultural policies that seek to diversify the national public sphere comprised of 'mainstream' cultural and media institutions, and those which aim to promote a range of different public spheres to serve as the vehicles for debate, cultural expression and solidarity within and between the members of specific minority groups;
  - ii. the changing social dynamics of diversity that emerge out of the measures that the members of minority groups take to maintain an active involvement in their cultures and of the resources they draw on for such purposes. Relevant issues here include the role played by the new media - video, satellite, cable television, and the Internet - in the cultural practices of minority communities;
  - iii. cultural markets are affected by the actions of governments which, in regulating the conditions in which such markets operate, can play a significant role in enhancing the social dynamics for diversity that emerge out of the community and associational life of different cultural traditions and the relations between them;
  - iv. cultural policy and everyday life, or how the procedures through which cultural policies are developed and put into effect might need to be adjusted in response to the ways in which ethically-marked cultural differences inform not just artistic and media preferences but are knitted into the fabric of everyday life. This perspective affects the relations between intellectual property standards and cultural diversity with particular regard to the situations of indigenous or traditional peoples;
  - v. assessing for diversity identifies the need for the implementation of cultural diversity policies to be subject to more developed, but culturally appropriate quantitative and qualitative forms of assessment.

Finally, let me share with you four principles enumerated in the study that reflect the more general perspectives of cultural democracy and the needs of citizenship:

- i. an entitlement to equal opportunity to participate in the full range of activities that constitute the field of culture in the society in question;
- ii. the entitlement of all members of society to be provided with the cultural means of functioning effectively within that society without being required to change their cultural allegiances, affiliations or identities;
- iii. the obligation of governments and other authorities to nurture the sources of diversity through imaginative mechanisms, arrived at through consultation, for sustaining and developing the different cultures that are active within the populations for which they are responsible;
- iv. the obligation for the promotion of diversity to strive to establish ongoing interactions between differentiated cultures, rather than their development as separated enclaves, as the best means of transforming the ground on which cultural identities are formed in ways that will favour a continuing dynamic for diversity.

**POWER AS A CENTRAL ELEMENT**

Now all of this, as pointed out by the political scientist Bhikhu Parekh in his recent work entitled "Rethinking Multiculturalism - Cultural Diversity and Political Rights"<sup>2</sup>, boils down to a dialogue

between cultural differences, on the one hand and political practice - as well as political theory - on the other. It is a dialogue in which power, including economic power is a central element. It is a dialogue impelled by politics and the recognition and representation on the part of self-conscious and organised groups of various kinds, which are attempting to change the nature of their relationship with the national communities - the nation-states - of which they are a part.

Speaking from the vantage point of the Western European nation-state, the problem is that our contemporary multicultural societies in the West have emerged against the background of several centuries of the culturally homogenising nation-state. And this homogenising nation-state has taken as its basis for the idea of social unity the recognition of the individual as the sole bearer of rights; it has sought to create a homogenised legal space made up of uniform political units that are subject to the same body of laws and institutions. Since this state has required, for that reason, cultural and social homogenisation as its necessary basis, it has for centuries fought to mould the wider society in that direction. As a result, we have become so accustomed to equating unity with homogeneity and equality with uniformity, that we feel morally and emotionally disturbed by the political demands of a deep and defiant diversity and are never quite sure how to accommodate it. This state of affairs is accentuated by globalisation, which makes a mockery of the project of national cultural unification on which all modern states have relied for their stability and cohesion. In these circumstances, we really have to ask ourselves what 'national culture' means. 'What is the national narrative?'

I will leave you with this question of the narrative, of what is visible in the public sphere and what is kept in the private sphere. This question dwells in the heart of the various political doctrines with regard to cultural diversity, whether assimilationist, proceduralist or communitarian. These terms, and other key issues and notions, cannot be explored here for want of time but are well covered by Parekh. Indeed I can think of no better summation of the issue than his call for a re-conceptualisation of cultural diversity in the following terms: "We" cannot integrate "them" as long as "we" remain "we"; "we" must be loosened up to create a new common space in which "they" can be accommodated and become part of a newly constituted "we".

In other words, the challenge is how to reconstitute the national - and European - 'we' within a public space that cherishes both plural identities and the shared identity of common citizenship. This is obviously no easy task. It cannot be simply one that concerns existing majority communities. There has to be effort on all sides, through a true 'multilogue.'

- 1 Bennett, T. *Differing Diversities : Cultural Policy and Cultural Diversity*. Strasbourg : Council of Europe Publishing, 2001.
- 2 Parekh, B. "Rethinking Multiculturalism : Cultural Diversity and Political Theory." Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 2002.

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### ...A TOLERANT SOCIETY, OPEN TO DIFFERENCES AND MAKING THE MOST OF CULTURAL VARIETY...

The mission of the Multicultural Center Prague is to prove that multicultural coexistence is possible and enriching on all levels. It serves as an open space for communication, encounters, and research aimed at investigating the diversity of European and non European cultures, their points of contact, their histories and their mutual influences - both in the Czech Republic and abroad. Its goal is to spark the interest and the willingness to get to know, respect and appreciate others, thereby leading to a deeper understanding, effective integration and social cohesion in the Czech Republic.

Multicultural Center Prague not only reflects the increasingly multicultural character of the world we live in, but also attempts to investigate and articulate a vigorous response from within to one of the most pressing issues challenging Czech society today, namely the situation of its Roma (Gypsy) population - without, of course, ignoring other cultural and ethnic groups in the Czech Republic.

Founded in 1999 under the auspices of the Open Society Fund Prague, Multicultural Center Prague has achieved its goals through a variety of educational, informative, editorial and research activities. Since 2003, Multicultural Center Prague has supported the efforts of the European Cultural Foundation as its Czech National Committee. The European Cultural Foundation is Europe's only independent, non-national and pan-European cultural foundation. See [www.mkc.cz/en](http://www.mkc.cz/en) for more information.



The internet portal [www.migrationonline.cz](http://www.migrationonline.cz) covers international migration issues with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe, providing up-to-date and high-quality information, research and opinions about the phenomenon of migration and related issues. Migration has many sides and even more causes: [www.migrationonline.cz](http://www.migrationonline.cz) strives to help people better understand those who have willingly or unwillingly become migrants. The site was created in 2003 by the Multicultural Center Prague under the support of the Open Society Fund Prague.



## IVF FACT SHEET

<i>Date of Establishment:</i>	9 June 2000, Štiřín (Czech Republic)
<i>Member States:</i>	Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia
<i>Governing Bodies:</i>	Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs Council of Ambassadors
<i>Executive Body:</i>	Executive Director (Andrzej Jagodziński)
<i>Administrative Body:</i>	Secretariat
<i>Seat of the Secretariat:</i>	Drotárska 46, 811 02 Bratislava, Slovakia

### Results of applications selection process (status July 19, 2004)

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
No. of applications	236	469	475	639	398
Requested amount	8 677 583	12 122 811	7 746 000	9 699 942	6 371 855
Amount available	406 317	1 523 019	1 924 594	2 081 917	1 070 341
Number of grants	26	89	144	203	144

The budget of the Fund is created by equal annual contributions of all Member States. Beginning in 2003, Member States agreed to contribute EUR 600.000 each, providing a budget for grants of almost EUR 2.000.000 and enabling to support more than 30 scholarships every year. The post of Chairmanship of the International Visegrad Fund rotates on yearly basis.

The mission of the Fund is to promote the development of closer cooperation between the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, the strengthening of ties between these states, and their integration into the European Union. In other words, to promote regional cooperation among Visegrad countries through supporting the development of common cultural, scientific research, educational projects, exchanges between young people, and cross-border cooperation. In the year 2002 the Visegrad Scholarship Programme was launched for doctoral and post-master studies.

The applicant for financial support has to be a resident of a V4 state. The Fund may also participate in the funding of projects presented by an entity with partners outside the V4 countries, provided that such projects are in compliance with the objectives of the Fund ("Visegrad +" projects).

Applicants could submit project applications for Standard Grants twice a year (before March 15th, or September 15th) and for Small Grants every three months (before March 15th, June 15th, September 15th, and December 15th) with requested amount up to 4.000 EUR. Deadline for applications for the Visegrad Scholarship Programme is January 31.

Application must be done only in English.

Detailed information is available at [www.visegradfund.org](http://www.visegradfund.org).

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Central and Eastern Europe used to be a place of important historic encounters where diverse societies, languages and religions coexisted. In the second half of the 20th century, however, this experience was disrupted for many years and generations. Now, due to the gradual opening and democratization of these societies, social diversity is re-emerging again in this part of the world, gaining special relevance at a time of EU enlargement and integration. How did the various societies, languages, lifestyles and cultures in Central and Eastern Europe co-exist in the past and how do they do so today?

The aim of “**Social and Cultural Diversity in Central and Eastern Europe,**” a meeting of experts organized by the Multicultural Center Prague, Czech Republic in October 2004, was to explore the present state of public and political discourse about social diversity in the region and the policies and strategies of diversity management in selected Central and Eastern European countries.

Main organizers:



[www.mkc.cz](http://www.mkc.cz)



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