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New Faces of Anti-Gypsyism in Modern Europe. Prague: SLOVO 21, 01.06.2012-02.06.2012.

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New Faces of Anti-Gypsyism in Modern Europe

The international seminar "New Faces of Anti-Gypsyism in Modern Europe", framed by Prague´s Khamoro World Roma Festival, was held during the 1st and 2nd of June in 2012 in the 'Americke Centrum' of the United States´ Embassy. Organized by Roma linguist HRISTO KYUCHUKOV (Berlin) and the NGO SLOVO 21, a czech organization specialized in cultural management and integration programs, it lasted two days with more than five sessions. The seminar hosted numerous talks and debates concerning theoretical, historical and political accounts of the series of phenomena referred as Anti-Gypsyism. It was conceived as part of the recent gatherings where academics and professionals in the policy sector analyze the role of history and social structures in the present situation of Romani groups. Both the enlargement of the European Union in the past years and the recent Euro economic crisis have brought into question the existing trend to naturalize negative, even aggressive, sentiments against people deemed as "Gypsies". The goal proposed by the organizers was to gather scholars, activists and policy makers to discuss the need for explicit actions against the escalation of violence against Romani groups.

The first session focused on describing the context for the seminar´s proceedings. It accounted for the historical processes leading to those contemporary events that go from subtle discriminatory measures to public displays of hatred. Kyuchukov presented a short introduction, where he challenged the present representatives of the European Union. He discussed the fact that recent violent and discriminatory events could establish Europe as a non-safe place for Roma, where normalized hate-speech and practices similar to other forms of racism occur in an alarming frequency. Here, MARCUS END (Berlin) provided an introduction to the social causes of Anti-Gypsyism, where he stated the necessity to address them as "separate phenomena" in order to explain the existence of this type of racism and the stigmatization of Roma people. He proposed a shift in the focus of research and analysis, unraveling this phenomena as an "ideology, a form of communication; a set of pictures and stereotypes, constructed told, perpetuated and reaffirmed by the majority society". Markus End, The historical roots of Anti-Gypsyism in Europe, paper presented at: "New Faces of Anti-Gypsyism in Modern Europe" Seminar. Prague. 2012. For him, the purpose of this system of ideas is, precisely, to strengthen the majority´s own sense of stability and distinctiveness at the expense of those individuals or groups that are deemed to fit in the "Gypsy" category.

THOMAS ACTON (Greenwich) complemented this account with a reflection on the history of Romani Studies and the need to counter "ignorance" with facts. Any theoretical explanation of Anti-Gypsyism, he explained, has to be "grounded in specific and historical analysis". Bringing to the table Herbert Heuss´s work Herbert Heuss "Anti-Gypsyism Research: the creation of a new field of study", in: Thomas Acton (Ed.), Scholarship and the Gypsy Struggle,. Hatfield. 2000. , Acton mentioned how the key issue is addressing the functions that the image of an idealized "Gypsy" has in each context. To prove this point, he introduces new insights in the history of Romani speaking people, especially the doctoral dissertation of Adrian Marsh, which suggests the possibility of a "Gypsy stereotype" being developed in the Anatolia peninsula before the actual arrival of Romani speakers to the area. Adrian Marsh, "No promised land": History, Historiography & The Origin of the Gypsies, London, 2008. This development probably was influenced by a previous set of anti-nomadic ideas and other clashes of "material interests" that are not limited to Roma people and their immediate contexts.

The second session delineated the assessment of Anti-Gypsyism by different institutions and organizations. This seminar occurred just after the call for the implementation of National Strategies for Roma integration in the European Union, by the European Commission, during may of 2012. It was one of the events that

called for a peer review of these documents that are vital pieces for understanding policy tendencies. STANISLAW STANKIEWICZ´s (Warsaw) intervention took as an example the context of migration and integration in the European Union, and the differential policies directed by the rejection of Roma people based on Anti-Gypsyist ideas. The main criticism of his intervention mirrors Acton´s claims reaffirming the need for a well-informed approach to these issues. With urgency, he called to counter measures that deem today´s migratory processes from Eastern to Western Europe as solely a "Roma problem", ignoring the complexity of these population movements. For him, these cases made evident the need for the involvement of Romani groups and its representatives in decisions that concern their future.

The following presentations and debates revolved around the discussion of the present situation in Europe. ROBER RUSTEM (Strasbourg) concentrated on current events that forfeit Roma European citizen's free rights to move and settle, or even to vote, for example, when they receive the *gens du voyage* legal status in France. He denounced the clear generalization and naturalization of these political categories as a manifestation of racism against these populations. From here on, a constant on every intervention was the description and condemnation of several extreme cases in each of the represented countries and a call for further research and effective action. ADEM ADEMI (Budapest) emphasized the fact that even though the Decade of Roma Inclusion is on its way and the states have issued their strategies, Anti-Gypsyism was not part of the discussion that guided these documents, and there is little chance for successful measures if they are not revised with these problems in mind.

During the last two sessions, several programs that addressed positive measures were discussed. They emphasized the need for a comprehensive approach through which Romani groups are not only "targeted" but there is real involvement of local communities in policy decisions. The presenters mentioned how stereotypes, that Markus End had identified as a feature of Anti-Gypsyism, were reproduced freely and uncritically. Particularly, their recurrent appearance in media was emphasized, including their role on forming public opinion and the selection of the information transmitted to a wider audience.

The last day of the seminar several presenters assessed the current state of affairs in specific countries in the European Union. It was mainly during these exchanges that the intensification and reiteration of Anti-Gypsy violent cases were noted, giving examples from every country represented on Session 5. ANGEL IVANOV (Sofia) warned about local circumstances turning into "ethnic crises" and the consequences that these outbreaks could have. The fact that certain political parties rely on Anti-Gypsyist ideas as an electoral tool was heavily criticized. The debate settled in the need for actions that encompass not only the specific Roma communities, but the education of the whole population concerning the need to de-naturalize these ideas and address them as a condemnable form of racism.

At the end of the two-day gathering, the organizers expressed their intention to publish the papers presented by the participants. Organizing the seminar during the Khamoro festival provided not only a fertile ground for discussion and academic exchange, but the opportunity to talk to activists, cultural managers, artists and performers about these issues. The speakers opened new ways to grasp Anti-Gypsyist phenomena and deal with their contemporary manifestations in a variety of contexts. The combination of a historical overview and analysis, and an assessment of the present political and social European context helped the audience realize the deep power structures that explain and reproduce Anti-Gypsyism. The exercise, in perspective, proved its validity when, months later, the concerns of the attendees towards escalating conflicts have materialized in Hungary and other EU member states. From this vantage point is that future policies and actions should be implemented, analyzed and revised both inside and outside academic grounds.

Conference Overview:

Introduction

Hrsito Kyuchukov, Freie Universität, Berlin

Session I: Roots, Historical Context, Causes and Consequences of Anti-Gypsyism

Chair: Hrsito Kyuchukov

Markus End (Technical University Berlin): The historical roots of Anti-Gypsyism in Europe

Eva Davidova (South Bohemian University): Anti-Gypsyism in Czechoslovakia during the Communist Era

Thomas Acton (University of Greenwich): Social and Economic Bases of Anti-Gypsyism

Session II: Anti-Gypsyism and International Organizations/Institutions

Chair: Gabriela Hrabaňová

Briggite Luggin, European Commission Representation, Czech Republic

Stanislav Stankiewicz, International Romani Union

Robert Rustem, European Roma and Travellers Forum

Marek Szilvasi, European Right Roma Center

Adem Ademi, Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat

Session III: Anti-Gypsyism in Contemporary Europe

Chair: Hrsito Kyuchukov

Gabriela Hrabaňová (ERGO Network, Brussels): Anti-Gypsyism: Right to a Culture of Tolerance

Stefan Kati (Constantine the Philosopher University, Nitra): Roma, Value Systen and Anti-Gypsyism

Jarmila Balažova (Romano Vodi): Anti-Gypsyism in Media

Session IV: Examples of Good Practice in Combating Racism

Chair: Gabriela Hrabaňová

François Sant'Angelo (ECRI (Council of Europe), Brussels): ECRI GPR or Combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma

Hrsito Kyuchukov (Freie Universität Berlin): Forms of Anti-Gypsyism in University Education

Esen Fikri (Bulgarian Commission for Protection against Discrimination): Fighting Anti-Gysyism at University Level

Session V: Daily Anti-Gypsyism and its Manifestation in Particular Countries

Chair: Hrsito Kyuchukov

Anna Daróczi, Central European University, Budapest

Csaba Oláh, Central European University, Budapest

Gruia Bumbu, Asociatia Pakiv Romania

Angel Ivanov, Bulgaria

Klára Kalibová, Masaryk University, Brno

Andrea Bučková, Social Development Fund, Ministry of Labour, Slovakia

Joint Statement and Closing Remarks

Hrsito Kyuchukov

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