

THE EDUCATION OF THE ROMANIES

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The paper gives an account of the historical development of education of the Romanies on the territory of Slovakia. Romanies form the second largest ethnic minority group in Slovakia (after the Hungarians). As a consequence of their historical position as a marginalized social group, a low level of education is characteristic of them, particularly in eastern Slovakia, where they still live in isolated settlements. In spite of the fact that school attendance was compulsory as early as in the nineteenth century, the attendance of school by the Romany children was not required. After World War II the relation to the Romany inhabitants began to be solved consistently as a social issue (ethnic and cultural approaches were rejected), the method of enforcing the cultural model of the majority society was applied, which meant ethnic assimilation. New possibilities for the education of the Romany pupils were opened after 1989.

The first records about the Romany people in the territory of what is today Slovakia date back to the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. In contrast to Western Europe, where the members of this ethnic group were persecuted and slaughtered in the mid-eighteenth century, the central and south-eastern regions were more tolerant. The first groups of blacksmiths and musicians were settled in Slovakia during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. When the “Gypsy regulations” of Maria Theresia and Joseph II were introduced, the majority of the Romanies already had a settled way of life in this territory. A special sub-group is ‘vlachike Roma’, who came to the territory of Slovakia during the nineteenth century from the territory of what is today Romania. They led a nomadic life until 1959, when they were forced to settle down. They make up about 5% of the total number of Romanies in this territory (Mann 1996, 267). Slovakia is one of the countries with the highest percentage of Romany inhabitants: according to the latest 2001 population census, only 89,920 persons declared their nationality to be Romany, which is less than one third of the supposed number of Romany citizens, which is estimated to be about 350-450,000. Their level of education is still low, they often have to repeat classes, leaving school in lower classes, the percentage of those with secondary education is low and the number of university graduates is not satisfactory (Fliegel 1992, 19-20).

Attempts to solve the level of education of the Romany inhabitants were made as early as in the eighteenth century, when, on the initiative of the Hungarian royal

council, “registers of the Gypsies” were made in particular counties, also paying attention to the problem of school attendance. In 1872, the Emperor Joseph II ordered “to educate the Gypsies who should care for the proper school attendance of their children” (Horváthová 1964, 119-126). This so-called regulation of the Gypsies was, however, mostly unsuccessful.

An interesting experiment was a “Gypsy folk school”, which was formed on the initiative of the Archbishop of Esztergom in the town of Nové Zámky in 1843: it was probably successful at the beginning, but after more than twenty years it disappeared (about 1865-68) (Kadlečíková 2001, 150-151). Other attempts to educate Romany children were also initiated by priests and devoted teachers: in the village of Jasenie there was a priest Tomáš Hromada (1793-1870) (Gál Podd'umbiersky 1936, 124), in the village of Hrádok it was the teacher Jozef Šturma in 1833 (Mrva 1996, 124), Ján Kacvinský introduced a separate instruction for Romany children in the town of Levoča (Chalupecký 1975, 200).

The 1893 Register of the Gypsies in the Kingdom of Hungary also paid attention to school attendance: Romany children attended school in 23% of the 6,300 villages of the Kingdom, they partially went to school in 10% of villages, and in 67% of the villages children did not attend school at all. The commentary part states that “the school attendance law is permanently evaded” by the Gypsies and there is “a proposal to build educational, correctional institutes, where children, whose parents do not want or are not able to observe the elementary school laws, should be interned” (A Magyarországban 1893, 30-31).

Although school attendance was compulsory, Romany children mostly did not attend school in the inter-war period, but no special sanctions were imposed because of this (non-Romany children in the Slovak countryside also went to school only in winter, when they did not have to help on the farm). Also in that period, the education of Romany children depended on the activities of the particular people. In the Spiš region there were special Gypsy classes in ten villages between 1928 and 1938 (Kollárová 1992, 64-65). A “Gypsy school” in Uzhgorod (which belonged to Czechoslovakia till 1945) became very popular. It was founded in 1926 and denoted as “the first of its kind in Europe”. President of the Czechoslovak Republic T. G. Masaryk gave 10,000 crowns to support the school, Ministry of Education gave 15,000 crowns, and the rest was paid by the town of Uzhgorod. The Romanies produced building material themselves (bricks) and their manual labour was done gratis. The curriculums were also adapted to the children—lessons lasted thirty minutes, teaching the violin as a speciality, was approved on a special basis. The teacher M. Cinkovský compiled a Gypsy grammar; there was a singing and a theatrical group at the school (Nováková 1995, 18-20).

In the history of European Romanies there were in principle two approaches of the majority population to this ethnic group. The first was the absolute refusal of coexistence—negation, which in many cases resulted in genocide. The second approach can be denoted as the method of enforcing the cultural model of the major-

ity society. It was based on the assumption that the only possibility to integrate the Romanies into society is their adaptation to the way of life of the majority population, their absolute integration, that is, assimilation. We saw that method as early as in the eighteenth century in the orders of Maria Theresia and Joseph II, when repressive means were used to achieve assimilation with peasants (they were not allowed to use their own clothes, language, to perform their traditional trades, they were not allowed to intermarry within their group, children were taken from their parents by force and sent to peasants to be brought up) and in the proposals published in the ‘Register of the Gypsies in the Kingdom of Hungary’ of 1893. A similar approach was used in establishing the “Gypsy classes” and “Gypsy schools” in the first half of the twentieth century: for example, in the Spiš village of Lúbica, school began on January 16, 1928 “with the assistance of the gendarmerie” (Kollárová 1992, 65).

The method of enforcing the cultural model of the majority society was also applied after World War II. The resolution of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party of April 8, 1958 entitled “About the work among the Gypsy inhabitants in the ČSR” set out the aims to liquidate the Romany’s nomadic way of life and to gradually achieve their complete assimilation: the resolution refused to accept the ethnicity, cultural and linguistic identity of this population and the reason was that

Similar efforts would slow the process of re-education of the Gypsies, it would strengthen their unwanted isolation from other working people, and support the conservation of the old, primitive way of life of the Gypsies (Jurová 1993, 51-52).

In 1958 special “Directives on the education of Gypsy children” were also published. That task was shown to be topical because, at that time, about twelve thousand Romany children did not go to school at all or very irregularly. The regular school attendance should have been secured by taking prompt measures in case of not observing the school law, that is, again in a repressive manner. Such an approach led to an almost absurd plan of forcibly taking the children of the nomadic Romanies away from their parents and placing them in the homes for children specially built for that purpose (the plan was not implemented in the end) (Jurová 1993, 56-58). Repressive methods were also used to enforce other measures of the state policy related to the Romanies, such as the concept of the dispersion of “the inhabitants of Gypsy origin”, planned and realized displacement to the Czech regions, or the liquidation of Romany settlements, and the following allocation of flats to backward Romany families in prefabricated housing estates: when such a family was moved from the Romany settlement, their house was demolished before their very eyes “just in case” to show them that they could not come back.

Special state organs, responsible for the realization of the particular legislative measures, followed the issues related to the schooling of the Romany children. In

the 1970s, special attention was devoted to preschool education: it was chiefly in the eastern Slovak districts that dozens of special kindergartens were established, often next to the Romany settlements: the Romany children were provided with food and accommodation free of charge. The Slovak government commission for the Gypsy inhabitants-related issues presented the statistics about the schooling and school achievements of the Romany children annually. Unfortunately, the approach of state organs was administrative and bureaucratic: the people working in the state administration mostly did not know the real situation and the problems associated with the education of the Romany children.

Teachers were probably the only representatives of the majority population, who were in everyday and immediate contact with the inhabitants of the isolated Romany settlements. In the first school years, they often met children, whose knowledge of the language of instruction was minimal, because they spoke only Romany at home. The work with such children was very demanding, particularly when there was no material about the Romanies and their culture available, there were no Romany dictionaries; quite the contrary: there was a ban on founding any Romany folklore or interest groups. Singing Romany songs was prohibited even during music lessons.

At that time, a director of a special school in eastern Slovakia practiced singing some Romany songs with Romany children: when a school inspector visited the school and the pupils sang such songs for him, the director “earned”, instead of praise, an official admonition for breaking school regulations (the absurdity of this story consists in the fact that the particular inspector was a Romany himself).

School attendance of the Romany children was often secured so that if a child did not come to school repeatedly, the teacher or headmaster, accompanied by a policeman, went to the Romany settlement to fetch him/her and bring him/her to school. Romany parents were warned to send their children to school on a regular basis; otherwise, they would not receive child benefits. Romany children were often placed in the so-called special schools, although there was no mental retardation that was at issue in many cases but a social retardation, which resulted from the deprived education in a little stimulating family setting. Romany pupils made up to 80% of children within special schools, becoming, in some regions, special “Gypsy schools” (Fliegel 1992, 20; Balabánová 1999, 336-337).

The pressure of the majority society on the Romany population really brought the expected results: today, there are Slovak villages, where the Romanies have naturally integrated with the majority society, and their way of life is not different from the others. This fact is often a result of the purposeful dissociation from their own ethnic origin (for example parents did not teach their children the Romany language, repudiated traditional habits, etc.), trying to copy the model of the way of life of the majority population. In such a case it is the process of targeted assimilation. It was as early as at the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries that the professional Romany musicians were the first to try it in the urban milieu. In most cases, the method of enforcing the cultural model of the majority society

brought quite the opposite effect: the Romanies living in one of the more than 300 settlements on the peripheries of villages and towns still existing in Slovakia began to defend themselves against the pressure from society by isolating themselves from the world around, receiving any initiative from state organs with automatic distrust and suspicion that the non-Romanies want to do them harm. The state policy with respect to the Romanies after WWII led to the devastation of their ethnic consciousness, the breakdown of the traditional social links, cultural and ethnic norms. Our Romanies lack the consciousness of common origin, knowledge of their history, but also the awareness of the positive values of their own culture (Mann 2000, 54). This fact was reflected, *inter alia*, in the 1991 and 2001 population censuses, when less than one third of the Romanies living in Slovakia declared their nationality to be Romany. It is understandable because the declaration of Romany nationality still means declaration of belonging to the socially backward stratum of inhabitants, which is, moreover, perceived by the majority society as an asocial group. Many Romanies see their ethnic origin as a handicap. The natural process of self-awareness after 1989 has also been complicated by the Romanies dividing into many political parties and interest organizations and often also the controversial opinions of particular Romany representatives (Mann 2000, 56-58).

A similar situation can also be observed in the area of education. Children, who were brought up in a Romany settlement, enter a milieu where a foreign language is spoken: the language of instruction does not only use different words but also different grammar (for example, both Slovak and Czech have three different noun genders, Romany has only two) (Žlnayová 1995, 1-18; Šotolová 2000, 25-34). They are acquainted with a foreign culture in a foreign language: during history lessons they learn the history of foreign nations but they do not learn anything about their own ethnic group, which often becomes an insignificant group not worth mentioning. During literature lessons they learn about foreign writers, the heroes are exclusively non-Romanies. Since their experiences with the representatives of the majority society are not very good (the same stereotype being valid as in the relation between the non-Romanies and Romanies), the positive identification with such literary heroes is then problematic. In addition, during music lessons they only sing Slovak folk songs. We realize that these circumstances lead, in many cases, to the frustration of the Romany pupils, making them feel inferior in relation to non-Romany classmates, and to the complete distrust and apathy with respect to all they have to face at school. These feelings are, without doubt, influenced by the opinions of their parents. In his monograph of the second half of the eighteenth century "Gypsies in Hungary", Samuel Augustini ab Hortis, wrote:

They dote on their children, and their love goes so far that they do not send them to school, do not tell them how to behave themselves, they give them complete freedom from an early age, and they allow them to do whatever they like (Augustini ab Hortis 1995, 39).

Information from Bartolomej Krpelec of 1935 about the relation of the Romanies to a Bardejov school, is of similar character:

Today... their children are schooled by the power of law. Parents, who do not send their children to school regularly, are penalized, usually arrested. Many a Gypsy boasts that he had already sown such and such amount of wood in the district office for his children (Krpelec 1935, 254).

Even today it is possible to meet parents in eastern Slovakia, who are convinced that the education of their children is not needed and that their children are humiliated and mistreated at school. For that reason, many parents prefer a "special school" to the standard elementary school, which is much less demanding, in spite of the fact that there are less opportunities for such school leavers for further education and for finding jobs.

Research conducted among the Romanies by the Slovak Statistical Office in 1994 showed that 8% of the respondents said that the Romanies are satisfied with the ability to read, write and calculate: 11% said it is necessary to finish at least the eight classes of elementary school; 49% were convinced that it is necessary to get trained in a particular trade; 20% declared the necessity to finish secondary school; and 2% said that "a Romany is able to live even without any education" (Štatistické analýzy 1995, 9).

Romany children often cope with such a situation by disobedience, increased aggressiveness against their classmates and teachers, which is then reflected in disciplinary sanctions—chiefly in poor marks for behaviour. Romany pupils often finish the compulsory nine-year school attendance in lower classes. It is known that some Romany boys finished the elementary school in that way, and after entering the mandatory military service, it was found that they were partially or completely illiterate.

There are two strongly different views of contemporary elementary school teachers in Slovakia on the effectiveness of the teaching of Romany children. A large group of teachers want stricter legislative measures to force Romany parents to send their children to school and to allow a stricter punishment for the violation of the school discipline. The second group of teachers realize that "repression" cannot lead to desirable results and they see "motivation" as the crucial condition for the successful education of Romany children. There were such teachers as early as in the mid-1980s: they themselves compiled Romany-Slovak vocabularies with basic words and phrases necessary for the communication with the youngest children: in order to keep their attention, they sang Romany songs and danced Romany dances at school, making the lessons shorter and allowing the Romany pupils more physical activities, actually breaking the then valid regulations and directives. They devotedly worked in children's summer camps, where they helped the Romany children to cope with the problem of learning, to learn basic hygienic habits, develop their physical fitness, skills, and creativity.

The new political situation after 1989 created conditions for a new qualitative approach to the issue of education of Romany children. The solution to the problem began to be sought on the federal level: on October 3, 1991, the government

adopted provision No. 619 and approved the “Principles of the Czech-Slovak Federal Government policy on the Romany minority.” It contained a demand to create in the school system space for respecting ethnic, cultural and social differences of all children, including the Romany, and a demand to create conditions for the functioning of multicultural school system (Sulitka 1999, 225-230). After the disintegration of Czechoslovakia, further development was implemented separately in each republic.

The “Principles of the government policy in relation to the Romanies” became the legislative prerequisite and the state guarantee for seeking the new approaches in education of the Romany children in Slovakia. They were approved by the Slovak Government resolution No. 513 on April 9, 1991 (Fliegel 1992, 17-25). In accordance with this document, the Department of Romany culture was established at the University of Constantine Philosopher at Nitra in 1991, where elementary school teachers and cultural and public education workers are trained for working with Romany pupils. A club for teachers of Romany children was established in Košice for seeking new, more effective forms of education for Romany children. The 1992-93 project of the so-called preparatory classes was successfully tested. The aim of the preparatory classes was to prepare Romany children from the socially little stimulating setting to enter the first class of the standard elementary school (Šotolová 2000, 52-55). Unfortunately, the project has not gained the necessary support from the Ministry of Education, but has been implemented on an experimental basis in several schools coordinated by the non-governmental foundation “School Wide Open” (Balabánová, Molčan, Sajko 2001, 174-175). In the school year 1992/1993, a secondary school of arts was opened in Košice, where young Romanies study acting, dance and drama. Two Romany readers “Romano hangoro” and “Genibarica” were published in 1993. Non-governmental organizations are also active, for example Foundation for the Romany Child, which, in addition to providing financial support for Romany students has run several kindergartens preparing children for elementary school in eastern Slovakia since 1994.

In spite of the fact that the absolute number and proportion of the Romanies is substantially lower in the Czech Republic than in Slovakia (about 250-300,000), much greater attention is devoted to the education of Romany children. From 1991 there is a “Movement of cooperating schools R”, which gathers teachers of the Romany children and provides a forum for the exchange of experiences, organizing annual conferences, publishing conference proceedings (so far, eleven were published), organizing trips to Romany settlements in Slovakia, often the birthplaces of parents and grandparents of the Romany children. From the school year 1993/94, experimental verifications of the preparatory classes have taken place in several districts. A significant shift in solving the Romany question was brought by the Czech Government resolution No. 686/1997, which became known as Bratinka’s report (having been submitted to the government by Minister Bratinka). The report was a basis for the Ministry of Education to secure the expansion of the network of

preparatory classes for Romany children and codify the work of Romany assistants (Sulitka 1999, 236-237). A Romany educational assistant was defined as an assistant educational worker, who worked individually with children under the supervision of the class teacher, helping the children to cope with the linguistic and other educational difficulties and seeking to arrange cooperation between the Romany community and school, pupils' parents in particular. Passing an eighty-hour course of the educational minimum is a necessary condition for an assistant to do such a job (Šotolová 2000, 40-45; Balabánová 1999, 344-347). The participation of the Romany assistants has proved right, and the school sector is providing for the improvement of the qualification in further education courses. In the school year 1998/1999 a Romany secondary social school started to operate in Kolín. It prepares Romany students for the job of Romany assistant or social worker. The history and culture of the Romanies and basic Romany language are taught at some teacher training colleges (in Prague, Olomouc, Ustí nad Labem). There are several textbooks available for teachers, for example *Amari abeceda—Naše abeceda* (Amari alphabet—our alphabet), a handbook of Romany history (Horváthová 1998) and a textbook *Romský dějepis* (Romany history; Mann 2001) for elementary school pupils (this textbook has not been available in Slovakia). In recent years, there has been an ongoing discussion among educational psychologists, the inter-sector commission for the affairs of the Romany community at the Government office of the Czech Republic and some Romany organizations on the complete abolition of special schools, which are sometimes regarded as discriminatory.

The aim of the educational approach to Romany children is to make the necessary elementary education accessible to them and to create conditions for earning qualifications as a precondition for their full integration into life. Successful education of Romany children mainly depends on the acceptance of the two basic prerequisites: the first is to change the overall approach—repression should be replaced by motivation; the second condition is the professional qualification and moral qualities of the teacher. Both these preconditions are closely interconnected and the aim cannot be reached without one of them.

The motivation of Romany children, that is, arousing their interest in the work at school, is most important in the period of the first contact with the school setting, that is, in the first classes. It is an immense intervention in the carefree life of children from the socially little stimulating background, where they had only minimum duties. If the relation of a Romany child to school becomes negative at the very beginning, it will be difficult to change it later. Remarkable results in motivating Romany children were achieved by Košice teachers in the above-mentioned experiment with the preparatory classes. According to the initiator of this project, Mária Maczejková, the teacher seeks to hold the attention of the children by involving them continuously in the activities, making use of their natural skills of singing, dancing, and text dramatization. When the attentiveness of the pupils is weakened, ignoring the school bell, the teacher can interrupt the work and according to his/her

own deliberation s/he can insert short physical activities (short relaxations using the elements of yoga were shown to be equally suitable). The positive results achieved in Košice are also supported by the experiences of the teachers from similar school institutions in the Czech Lands, for example in Brno, Praha-Žižkov, or Ostrava (Šotolová 2000, 46-49; Balabánová 1995, 1-27).

A significant handicap for a Romany pupil is insufficient knowledge of the language of instruction. For such cases, the preparatory classes and the Romany educational assistants were a success in both the Slovak and the Czech republics. The Romany folklore, songs and dances, which are close to Romany children, can serve as a successful motivation and not only in preparatory classes (a significant success was achieved by the private Přemysl Pitter school in Ostrava) (Balabánová 1995, 14, 23). Any activities of the Romany children that can be positively presented not only at school but also outside it are motivational. The elementary school teacher Anna Pástorová from the Košice housing estate Luník 9 has long-term positive experiences with the dramatic ensemble "Hviezdička". The Romany nun Atanázia opened up a completely new world to the children from the Romany community in Bardejov by founding a chorus *Devleskejre Čhave* (Children of God), successful also abroad. But there are also other motivational activities, which would not be expected among Romany children coming from a backward environment: Ján Sajko, an elementary school teacher from Jarovnica (district Prešov) aroused among his pupils an interest in creative art. The original works of the pupils with the themes from the Romany life won international awards, for example in India and Japan (Sajko 1995, 26-34). The work of Eva Hricová, a teacher from the village of Bystrany (district Spišská Nová Ves) should not be overlooked: she created more than twenty non-traditional teaching aids, which help to keep the attention of the Romany pupils and thus to cope with the handicaps when learning the first letters or the basic mathematical calculations.

The application of the principle of motivation on Romany pupils is not enough; active cooperation of their parents is also necessary, because the parents' relationship to the school often has a decisive influence on the attitude of their child. In addition to the experiences of the Club for teachers of Romany children, this principle has met with an exceptionally positive response in pre-school establishments run by the Foundation for the Romany child in the villages of the Prešov district. Mothers are at school with their children, they experience the instruction together with their children, solving the assignments together and rejoicing in their achievements. Director of the elementary school in Petrová (district Bardejov), Martin Molčan founded a children's folklore ensemble, involving parents in different school activities: within the project of children's gardens they cultivate agricultural plants together, mainly potatoes, organize cooking courses for mothers and children; the celebrations of Children's Day include the cultural programme, dance and a football match of parents and children (Balabánová, Molčan, Sajko 2001, 175-177).

In 2000 a textbook *Rómsky dejepis* (Romany history) was published in Slovakia, its Czech version appeared in Prague in 2001 (Mann 2001). Its aim was

to introduce to Romany children their ethnic origin, history, and cultural values, the notable Romany personalities, and thus to encourage the process of their positive ethnic identification. The author of the textbook believes that the self-knowledge will help the Romanies accelerate the process of coping with the negative self-assessment (the feeling of social inferiority) and will create conditions for the process towards gradual achievement of equality with the majority society. Another aim of the textbook is to address non-Romany pupils and to awaken their interest in their Romany classmates, to blunt the stereotyped attitudes of social superiority, and to contribute to mutual inter-ethnic tolerance.

The inclusion of the particular chapters on the Romany history in the history teaching is not always without problems. At the 1994 Council of Europe international seminar on the education of Romany pupils in Spišská Nová Ves, an Austrian ethnographer Claudia Mayerhofer said that not all Romany children take an interest in their own history. It is understandable when affiliation to the Romany ethnic group is perceived as a handicap, their own past serving as evidence of backwardness, which is not worth returning to; therefore some Romany children in Austria refused to learn about their history together with their non-Romany classmates (Mayerhofer 1994, 8, 11-12). A year later, Mária Maczejková spoke about a similar case: a Romany entrepreneur spoke out against a Košice teacher, who included the issues of Romany history in history teaching and protested that the teacher should not speak about Romanies at all in the presence of the white classmates. A third case was described by the elementary school teachers from Zlaté Klasy (district Dunajská Streda) in 1995: at the beginning of the school-year, Romany children had obtained Romany readers, the following day their outraged parents went to school bringing back the readers and declaring that their children are the same as the others and they do not wish to teach them something different; that deed was not premeditated by teachers and the unprepared parents perceived it as segregation. The above examples show that mainly in the regions, where the Romanies seek to conform themselves to the majority population and not to differ from them, the “enforcement” of Romany history can play a negative role. By contrast, we can expect that if there is an active relation to their own culture (for example if there is a folklore group, or some individuals try to write literary or dramatic works in the Romany language), the teaching of Romany history will unambiguously play a positive role.

Another example from Austria provides an instruction how to awaken the interest of the Romany children in their history and culture. A teacher in Vienna devoted herself to the Romany children: she had a special diary to put down authentic experiences from the life of the local Romanies; although it was not a success at the beginning, she visited the pupils’ parents and recorded their fates. After some time she earned the respect of the pupils, who, now grown-up, return and cooperate with her till today. It was shown that the basis of the interest in their own history and culture is the interest in autobiography—in the “microhistory” of their own family, of the local community (Mayerhofer 1994, 8-10).

To obtain basic information on the past of the local Romanies, the teacher can use the local chronicles, especially if there is one written in the interwar period. The regional press from that period can also serve as a source, because records can be found there on the performances of Romany musicians, as well as on extraordinary events in the life of the Romany community (epidemics, fires), photographs can also be found there. In such cases it is appropriate to refer to the district archives and libraries. In cooperation with a registrar, it is possible to find information about the Romany ancestors, their occupation and to try to compile a family tree of the authentic Romany families; the generations of current children and their parents can be completed and drawn by the pupils themselves. Interesting information on the origin of some families can be obtained on the basis of the incidence of the Romany surnames: some surnames recorded as early as in the eighteenth century are frequent in the same regions of Slovakia till today. In the case of other surnames we can observe a "motion" due to marriages, or their spread within the region (here is a possibility of cooperation between the elementary schools from the neighbouring villages). Teachers from the Czech Republic have the opportunity to make contacts with schools in the areas of Slovakia, where parents and grandparents of the Romany children come from and help to find out information on distant family members.

The recording of oral personal narrative is an interesting and attractive method for children to obtain information: pupils speak with their parents or grandparents, but also with non-Romany people under the supervision of their teacher (teachers in retirement, who taught the parents of the present Romany pupils, with a midwife, who knew the life of the Romanies familiarly, with older people, who employed the Romanies or godparents of the Romany children). The talks can be about the already extinct traditional Romany trades (smithery, basketwork, charcoal burning, production of unbaked bricks), about adventurous musicians' experiences, gripping descriptions of the experiences from the period of World War II. The tape-recorded dialogues (this method is almost necessary for recording the vanishing Romany songs, fairy tales and proverbs) are listened to and discussed collectively in the classroom—the approach of the teacher and his/her interpretation of the records are here very important—and then they are transcribed. Such a Romany chronicle also contains the written records of the important events from the life of the contemporary local Romany community and photos documenting the current life can be included. Romany "microhistory" is gradually placed in wider connections—regional or the so-called national history. (Using the mentioned sources for history teaching has also been recommended by the 1995 Council of Europe seminar on "Local history and minorities" in Častá Papiernička; Heuss 1995, 8-12.)

There are several ways how the teacher can address and motivate the Romany pupils during teaching: in addition to the mentioned history, traditional culture can also be used in literature lessons (fairy tales, song texts), music lessons (comparison of melody, rhythm, dance figures, mentioning famous Romany musicians), art edu-

cation (on the theme of traditional and current life of the Romanies), civic and ethical education (traditional morals among the Romanies and their reflection in Romany proverbs, relations in a Romany family) but also during physical education (pointing out the excellent Romany sportspersons: footballers, body builders, boxers). There are also opportunities during the art education or a so-called work education, for example weaving the “Gypsy laces” on an archaic machine called “loom” (its production is very easy: it is actually a plate of 13 x 22 cm with alternating holes and notches), weaving is not demanding and is very popular among children, particularly among girls. According to the material used (unicolour or multicolour threads, cord of different quality and thickness) a variety of patterns and of laces can be obtained. During the warm months, production of bricks can also be attempted. The proper clay, some cut straw, water and a simple mould made of four plates at least 1.5-2 cm thick are needed. If the Romanies produced such bricks in the particular locality in the past, there would certainly be someone to “train” them. Similarly, a basket maker can also be asked to give children basic instruction in wickerwork.

There is no hope for a success of any modern non-traditional educational method to be used for teaching Romany children unless the particular instruction is provided by a competent and a morally equipped teacher, as has already been notified by some authors (Balvín 1995, 3-7; Balabánová 1995, 5, 19-21; Šotolová 2000, 40, 42). In general, non-Romany teachers teach Romany children. Jaroslav Balvín has noted that they do not place their abilities at the service of the education of the children of this nation, but use mostly the cultural means produced by the majority society, so that their participation in the development of genuine Romany culture is minimal or entirely lacking (Balvín 1995, 5). A particular teacher, as a member of the majority population, was raised in a particular environment, which influenced him/her by its deep-rooted stereotypes. Moreover, as Martin Molčan alerted, their work at the “Gypsy school” was often not voluntary: teachers were usually sent to teach in the schools with a predominance of Romany pupils as a “punishment” for some offence against the authorities (Balabánová, Molčan, Sajko 2001, 173, 177). Professional preparation for specific work with Romany pupils (basic knowledge of the Romany history, culture, and language) can minimize many prejudices, but some of them (such as the idea of the inborn inclination of the Romanies to asocial behaviour or criminality) often survive in a latent form; they even can deepen, for example, if the teacher does not see long-term results of his/her work, but the other way round, s/he learns about the criminal or moral delicts of his/her pupils (which can then lead to the formation of a new stereotype in terms of “nothing will ever come of them”). The teacher has to be able to realize and critically assess his/her own subjective preconditions for the demanding work of a teacher.

Every teacher aspires to be an authority for his/her pupils, to win their trust and respect. The winning of sympathies of the Romany pupils is more difficult if there

are also non-Romany children in the classroom. Romany children are sensitive to and critical of the teacher's attitude to ethnically different groups of pupils. Several teachers in Slovakia as well as in the Czech Lands confirmed the experience of the Viennese teacher already mentioned. After the initial distrust, the approach of this female teacher earned her the respect and admiration of the Romany children completely. The children even began to suspect that she was a Romany herself. She wanted to be honest and therefore she stressed that she was "white". The pupils were probably not satisfied with it and looked for other explanations. *Maybe you are not a Romany, but your father is, or Although you are only a half-Romany, you can visit us at home, or You say you are not a Gypsy, but my brother says you are and he is always right!* (Mayerhofer 1994, 10). Romany children tried in their relation to their teacher to cope with the deeply rooted stereotype, which is distrust towards the non-Romanies. (Several Slovak and Czech teachers confirmed a similar experience.) A non-Romany teacher has, therefore, to reckon with the fact that for his/her Romany children and their parents he is "only" a *gádžo* (that is, non-Romany).

Demands are sometimes heard from the representatives of the Romany parties and movements that Romany children should have Romany teachers. Regardless of the persisting low percentage of qualified Romany teachers we could say that the position of the Romany teacher is not always simple and unequivocal in the Romany milieu. There are in principle two different model situations. The position of a Romany teacher is much more difficult in the backward Romany setting; the Romanies, seeing such a teacher as a sort of renegade, accuse him/her of haughtiness, of playing the master. For the Romany teacher it is also difficult to cope with the negative features of the backward Romany setting (their arrogance, insufficient hygiene, deprivation, alcoholism, etc.). A non-Romany teacher has a much better chance to exert positive influence in such a milieu. On the other hand, in a socially more developed Romany milieu, pupils are proud of their Romany teacher (still more, if s/he also teaches non-Romany pupils) and such a teacher is motivating for their work at school. Also this is the reason why it is necessary to increase the number of qualified Romany teachers.

As I have already indicated, the inclusion of the Romany history in history lessons can, on the one hand, be motivating for some Romany pupils but, on the other hand, it raises disagreement and grievance. There is no universal reply to the question when and how to use elements of the Romany culture in the process of teaching. It again depends on the teacher, his/her sensitive approach and taking account of several important facts, for example:

- particular social status of the local Romanies and their relation to the non-Romany fellow citizens;
- the degree of ethnic identification (romipen) of the local Romanies, their relation to their own past and traditional culture;
- the proportion of the Romany and non-Romany pupils in the classroom and the relations between them;

- the age of the Romany pupils and their previous activities related to their own culture (a member of children's ensemble, a drama group, literary or creative works).

Moreover, the teacher has to be prepared to cope with the unexpected situations, for example, when during the description of the Romany holocaust, a non-Romany pupil, seeking to be original and "witty", shows a racist attitude (such a case happened in a Košice school several years ago).

The contemporary world is primarily dominated by economic thinking. Society prefers to invest in such projects, which bring a particular measurable result and effect in a particular short time. Investments in education definitely do not bring such results. The education and teaching of the people living on the periphery of society for centuries, their motivation for education and the improvement of their qualification is a complex and long-term process. Moreover, we can never be sure in advance how effective a chosen method will be, or how much energy, patience and time will be needed to implement the method. A positive shift in the attitudes, thought and feelings of humans is sometimes observable in the following generation. It is also shown by a personal experience of one female teacher from Spišská Nová Ves. In spite of the fact that a lot of effort had gone into teaching her Romany pupils, they were passive during lessons, they did not cooperate, they left school in lower classes with poor results. Her efforts were shown not to be in vain ten years later, when children of her former pupils came to her class: they went to school regularly, were tidy and their marks were also better. As parents, her former pupils changed their approach to the education of their children: they showed interest in their achievements, they cooperated with the teacher, invited her to visit their families. This is why I think that investments in support of the all-round spiritual growth of the Romany inhabitants—to which education belongs in the first place—are not useless.

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