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NEWSLETTER

The President of the Republic of Hungary, László Sólyom, has awarded **Éva Veronika Huseby-Darvas** (University of Michigan-Dearborn) with the Knight's Cross Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary. The award is in recognition of her research and knowledge in contributing to the understanding of Hungarian historical, cultural and social development, as well as for her continuous efforts in promoting research cooperation between the U.S. and Hungary. István Mezei, Ph.D., the Consul General of the Consulate of the Republic of Hungary, decorated Dr. Huseby-Darvas in an awards ceremony in Chicago, IL, on March 16, 2008.

Congratulations from all of us!



I received the following article from Péter Hunčík, M.D. from Slovakia.

Roma soldiers in defense of Europe?

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At its early February 2008 meeting, the European Parliament urged the elaboration of an action plan supported by proper financial resources that would finally solve the social integration of the 10 million Roma living in the EU. The EU intends to adopt this Roma strategy and action plan by 2010.

In 1998, exactly 10 years ago, we introduced a plan in the Bratislava-located *Sándor Márai Foundation*, which meant to promote the social integration of some 350,000 Roma living in Slovakia. According to this plan we wanted to train 5,000-6,000 Roma assistants in different fields (to be employed by local government, in health care, in education, in public security, in housekeeping, by cultural organization, by religious organizations) through intensive courses

(using accurately described forms of positive discrimination). We planned 8-9 months long special courses, of a total duration of 400 hours, during which the participants would receive self-knowledge and communication training. In the third phase of the course they would be provided special theoretical and practical training based on the topic of the training. The training would be completed by a theoretical and practical exam. After the successful passing of the exam, the participant would receive the *Roma assistant degree*. After this, the assistants are supposed to be employed by the local government, school, and doctor, and they should carry out exactly defined work among the local Roma population.

The main point of positive discrimination described in the plan was that the participants receive the assistant's diploma, and the above-mentioned local organizations are obliged to employ them.

The essence of these restricted measures is that the "assistant's diploma" is only valid at local level. So the assistants' qualification is only valid if they return to work to the community they came from. (Thus, it would be possible to avoid the well-known phenomenon that most Roma graduates immediately after obtaining their diploma start working in a big city and break off all relations with their former communities, namely local Roma living in ghettos/settlements). Of course, we did not want assistants to experience long-term discrimination; therefore, we recommended that after 2 years of working within the local community, the assistants were eligible for "classical" college/university education in the given subject, in case they would like to continue their studies. And after obtaining their regular diploma, no restricted measures could apply to them.

As a response to prejudices against the so-called crash course, we drew attention to the fact that after deportations following WWII (1945-1948), when the Hungarian minority was actually left without intellectuals, indeed the Hungarian teachers and cultural organizers completing such crash courses "saved" the Hungarians in Slovakia from total assimilation after the communist takeover in 1948. Therefore, there is indeed precedence for such training in Slovakia (in the former Czechoslovakia).

Our aim was to create the Roma middle class, since 6,000 Roma assistants would make up almost 2% of the Roma living in Slovakia. As a result, not only one, but 6-7 Roma assistants would work on bigger settlements, and together with their families they would form the crystallization centre of the new intelligentsia. The local Roma elite would not be able to deal with them so easily if they were alone. Besides this, they could also serve as models for the others.

After the introduction of the plan, we organized two separate 7-month long courses about housekeeping and child-raising with the support of the British Embassy and the Open Society Fund. During these courses we acquired shocking experiences: the majority of applicants followed through the long training with discipline and without absence. Their accomplishments during the exams surprised not only outsiders, but also us, the trainers. The majority of them with good confidence, self assurance and attractive style presented the obtained knowledge in the field of child-raising, healthy eating and lifestyle, economics and other related topics of housekeeping, as well as first aid. (I remember vividly when during the exam one of the young

Roma women approached the reporter of a Slovak daily, checked his blood pressure and told the surprised reporter that “Sir, you have hypertension”).

Unfortunately, this plan was not fully carried out. It is true that limited number Roma assistants already work in public education, but in other areas recommended by us no changes have occurred since then. The critics mainly referred to constitutional problems, missing legal norms, as well as the question of responsibility. But at that time we thought that the main problem is stereotypes arising from negative prejudices.

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Looking back at the assistant program from the retrospect of 10 years, I must say self-critically that the plan failed not only because of bureaucratic obstacles and negative stereotypes. It had a serious shortcoming. Namely that it took no account of the motivational background of the majority society. In other words: it did not answer the question why this concept is important for the majority society. Instead of the real deal position it “only” talked about a vaguely outlined danger situation (“if we don’t solve this problem, we will be in a very difficult situation within 2-3 decades”). It disregarded the classical “supply – demand” legitimacy of the market. It did not specify what the Roma could provide for the society and in fact it only built on the altruism of the majority society.

In the years past I often thought about the question of the motivational background. The first thing was to find out what Slovakia’s (and other EU member states’) priorities (or problems to be solved) were at the beginning of the 21st century and whether these topics could be somehow connected with the Roma population.

The problems of the energy sector were in the first place. Well, this problem could hardly be solved with the help of the approximately 10 million Roma living in the EU. The second and third place belongs to a problem which could be solved with the help of the Roma. Their involvement could mean serious help to the society. We are talking about the question of security.

The EU member states made a great leap forward in the field of economic cooperation, free movement of people and goods, cultural cooperation, etc., but in the past decades there were hardly any steps taken in the question of cooperation guaranteeing the military security of the EU. In a few years, in maximum one decade, the most important task of the EU countries will be the defense of the external borders of the Union. (It is also possible that a Russian politician was right when during a private conversation 2 years ago made an ironical comment that “you will see that in 15 years the Union will engage the Russian army and private security services for the defense of its southern and eastern borders. Not you, but the Russians will defend the EU”).

After WWII Europeans suddenly realized that they are not able to defend themselves without the USA. They joined the NATO, maintained national armies, but their fighting mood faded. Forty-four years of Cold War passed by without real military conflict, and then after 1989 further 19 years passed by reminding the good old years of peace. Nowadays, the majority of people think that there is basically nothing to be afraid of since Europe does not want to wage war anymore. The establishment of a united military force would only mean unnecessary complications, waste

of money, and prestige problems for politicians. In the course of the last decades the feeling for danger decreased among the majority of people.

(In the meantime, they keep forgetting that the increasingly rich Europe attracts many groups of people from the poorest parts of the world like an electromagnet. In a better case “only” troops of migrants looking for means of subsistence, but in the worse case different groups of hostile and militant people with extreme thinking start on a journey towards us).

In other words, there have been big changes in the judgment of the security policy in Europe. Thanks to this, nowadays it is not so “fashionable” to choose a military profession. 25-30 years ago communities made fun of a young person if he was not recruited into the army for some reason, and today they laugh if someone wants to choose this “stupid” profession. During the 63 years following the war, especially since the second half of the sixties, serious value changes had occurred among Europe’s inhabitants. We have become much more selfish and comfortable and the sensitivity of our world of instincts has fallen. (This mental state reminds me of the European state of mind of the thirties. Sándor Márai wrote exactly and sensibly about this phenomenon in his book *Patrol in Kassa - Kassai őrzéskor*).

In my opinion, the Roma youth could get into the picture right here. European security should not be solved through mercenaries recruited from nearby regions, but by putting “own educated” young people with European background in the army.

Besides taking care of defense tasks, such a step could have other important results. It is well-known that in ethnically/religiously heterogenic societies the army (and other armed forces) can be regarded as the most effective integration institutions. The system of unified communication and stereotypes, unified thinking and values has been rapidly forming. Law and order is also unified. In other words, the problem of legal monism could also be solved!! Let’s remember the recent comment of a British bishop about the possibility of introducing certain measures of sharia for Muslims living in Great Britain. Let’s not forget how often the issue of revitalization of the traditional Roma lifestyle has come up in Slovakia as possible solution; for example, the question of reviving the system of *vaivode* and Roma courts.

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As early as in 1907, a French military specialist journal published an article about the necessity of creating the “*forcé noire*” (black power) in the country. According to the article-writing general, the creation of the *forcé noire* does not only have security policy reasons, but it would also solve the question of integration of colored people who moved from colonies to France. (N.B. The article was written in 1907!!)

In the USA, during WWII colored people served in separate units. It was the same during the Korean War. The big change, namely the creation of united, black and white battalions and regiments took place after the painful and long-lasting Vietnam War. Many white Americans only in the Vietnam jungle understood for the first time that their colored fellow-soldiers are just as American as they are. And the majority of colored American soldiers experienced the feeling of equality for the first time there, far away from their homeland. I know that my wording is

cruel, but things really happened just as said here. (It is evident that the sixties' civil rights movements also played an important role in the change of paradigm. It became clear for the white political elite that the only alternative for the militant policy announced by Malcolm X is the integration model announced by Martin L. King and taken up by the Kennedy brothers).

This model does not specifically mention the army as an integrating institution, but it is a fact that since the beginning of the seventies the armies (and other military forces) have become the most important step in the social adaptation and promotion of the African-American youth. I know it well that in this regard some regression occurred in past years; however, Colin Powell's career of a general serves as an example for many African Americans.

And if we, people in our fifties, think back to our obligatory two-year military service, we all can recall the case of our Roma fellow soldiers who during the 2 years spent in the army saw a toothbrush, used a fork and a knife, took a shower, used English WC for the first time in their life. They learned how to communicate clearly (often to read and write), and had the first non-Roma friend and confidant in their life. (And vice versa!) There were many of us who talked to a Roma for the first time in our life, and during a long night guard service or exhausting army exercises. It turned out that this Roma man thinks smartly about life issues and he is a bright, clever guy and a trustworthy comrade.

And now let's look at the Roma motivation background. Military career (and the officer's rank) could mean permanent workplace, secure living, social promotion and acquisition of education. The military officer is regarded as an exceptionally all-round educated person. Let's not forget, that at modern military academies they no longer teach ballroom-dancing and duel rules, but biology and chemistry, information technology and mathematics, foreign languages and atom physics.

I do not have to detail about the connection between the uniform, the rank, social respect, self-evaluation and self-realization. This interaction is even stronger among people who used to live on the periphery of the society.

In my opinion the army could be the institution that could solve the complex task of Roma integration within relatively short time and without extra financial expenditures (!).

For the realization of this plan it is "all in all" necessary for the European political elite to face the stark reality and make adequate steps. In other words, they should assist in the involvement and promotion of Roma youth during recruitment into the professional army; ensure sensitivity and selectivity (even legislative ease) at military academies and colleges.

I mentioned European and not Slovak political elite because I am confident that there is no separate Slovak (Hungarian, Czech, Romanian, etc.) model for the solution of this problem. Only all-European cooperation will help. And after the Schengen border opening the western part of Europe is obliged to participate in the solution of the problem that used to be regarded as an exclusively Eastern-European problem.

(Comment: naturally, this plan does not question the reason for the existence of the Roma assistant program. On the contrary, it intends to give a boost to all efforts aiming at the creation of the Roma middle class and through this the earliest possible solution of Roma integration).



The following article appeared in the June 2nd issue of *Népszabadság*

Lázongó hungarológusok

Rózsa Mihály

A magyar kulturális kormányzatnak nincs stratégiája a hungarológia jövőjéről, ezért külföldön dolgozó szakemberek egy csoportja tervezetet készít a diszciplína megújításának lehetőségéről.

Az Ausztriából, Hollandiából, Olaszországból, Romániából, Franciaországból és Magyarországról érkezett egyetemi tanárok párizsi találkozóján elhangzott, hogy magyar hivatalos részről sem elképzelés, sem pénz nincs a külföldi hungarológiai műhelyek méltó támogatására.

Ez azért is aggasztó, mert a bolognai rendszer bevezetése után számos egyetem megszüntette vagy magas tanulói létszámhoz kötötte az ún. kis nyelvek oktatását. Bizonyos esetekben - így például Párizsban - Budapest a rendelkezésre álló kevés pénzt nem az eredményesség alapján, hanem régi beidegződések és baráti kapcsolatok alapján osztja szét.

A csoport szóvivője, *Töttössy Beatrix*, a firenzei egyetem professzora elmondta, hogy csak akkor van esély sikeres hungarológiai képzésre, ha sikerül túllépni a sok évtizede működő, az irodalomtudományon és a nyelvészen alapuló rendszeren, és a XXI. század - és a diákok - igényeinek megfelelő képzés jön létre. Újra kell definiálni a hungarológus fogalmát: erre Firenzében egy több éve kidolgozott és működő modell keretében tettek kísérletet.

A kísérleti képzés alapja az elméleti stúdiumok melletti állandó gyakorlati ismeretek - média, fordítás, menedzsment - elsajátítása, különös tekintettel az internet nyújtotta lehetőségekre. Öt év alatt a hungarológián belül szakosodott hallgatók nagyon sok mindent kipróbálhatnak, tanulmányaik végén humán informatikusi és online könyvkiadói végzettségre is szert tesznek. A Firenzei Egyetem és az ELTE együttműködik ebben a programban, az így végző, több nyelvet beszélő interkulturális szakemberek közös diplomát kapnak.



Publications by our members:

Istvan Deak, “Did Hitler Plan to Kidnap the Pope?” a review of Dan Kurzman’s *A Special Mission: Hitler's Secret Plot to Seize the Vatican and Kidnap Pope Pius XII* in the June 12, 2008 issue of the *New York Review of Books*.

Barnabas Racz, *Hungary and the United Nations 1956 1962: A Legal and Political Analysis*. Published by the United Nations Association of Hungary, 2007.



Hungary passes bill needed for US visa waiver (<http://www.caboodle.hu/>)

By: **All Hungary News**
2008-06-03 12:58

The Hungarian parliament has passed a bill mandating the exchange of data with the United States that may help identify terrorists, *hetek.hu* reports.

The bill was considered a precondition for the visa free travel by Hungarians to the USA.

As part of the run-up to offering visa waivers to Hungary and several other countries, the US instituted a range of other conditions, including a visa rejection rate ceiling, and better airport security.

While the terrorism database in question is managed by the United States, Imre Iváncsik of the prime minister's office stressed that the data would also be available to Hungary.



Announcements:

Jenő Thassy
(1920 – 2008)

Ferenc Fejtő, (François Fejtő)
(August 31, 1909 – June 2, 2008)

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Thank you!

Susan