

WORLD LANGUAGE & WORLD LANGUAGE PROBLEMS

LANGUAGE STRIKE ON U.S. BASES

To protest layoffs, 4000 Italian employees who work on U.S. bases in Italy declared a half-day language strike in May. Although they are bilingual, the workers pretended not to understand or speak English in the American barracks.

Two events caused the protest. First, the replacement of Italian employees by American ones. Second, the end of additional pay for bilingual employees, pay which was generally applied in the private sector.

"Because our employers don't acknowledge our bilingualism, we'll speak only one language," the strikers declared. (*Heroldo de Esperanto*, 20 June 1991)

TRANSLATION COSTS AT THE UN

Documents which are written at the UN normally have to be translated into all of its seven working languages. The following example will give some idea of how much time and money are needed to translate documents into just these languages. To translate a 25-page document from the original language (English in this example) into all the working languages, 63.9 days are needed for translation, 22.9 for revision and 12 days for typing, 98.9 days in all. In 1980 the costs of the translations were: Arabic \$3220, Chinese \$4480, French \$2240, German \$5340, Spanish \$2240, Russian \$2436. The total: \$19,936. Costs are undoubtedly higher in 1991. (*La Brita Esperantisto*, #3, 1991)

LANGUAGE PROBLEMS IN AUSTRIA

Because Austria will soon be a member of the European Community, a course for office workers was planned to make them accustomed to the European style of administration. Although a nine-month

search for candidates for the course was made, no one was found to participate. One of the chief reasons: not even one candidate had enough knowledge of French, which was demanded (illegally) as a prerequisite. In Austria the first and mandatory foreign language in schools is English, and there generally isn't enough time to learn other languages. Because of this almost no one in Austria speaks Hungarian, Czech or Slovak, or can pronounce names or words from neighboring languages without errors. (*Monato*, May 1991)

IRISH LANGUAGE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Although Gaelic is the first official language of the Irish Republic, all daily Gaelic newspapers are published in Northern Ireland, where the only officially recognized language is English.

Recently a new daily newspaper appeared. *La (Day)* is now the only daily newspaper written completely in Gaelic. The newspaper is printed in Belfast, Northern Ireland. This is taken as further proof by some observers of growing interest in Gaelic in Northern Ireland.

Observers have noted that even Unionists, members of the monarchist Protestant party in Northern Ireland, who during recent years strongly opposed Irish, are now becoming more interested in the language. (*Monato*, Oct. 1990)

FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND ECONOMIC COMPETITION

Michael Armacost, U.S. Ambassador to Japan, in a commencement address delivered at The College of Wooster, Ohio, said that the U.S. must produce more students who are skilled in foreign languages if America is to maintain its global leadership and compete economically with other countries. "In my work in Tokyo," Armacost said, "I observe many trade barriers. But the linguistic barrier, in many respects, is the most formidable obstacle to a smoother relationship." Armacost went on to note that high schools in half the states don't require study of a foreign language, and 20 percent don't teach a foreign language at all. The U.S. is one of the few countries where a student can graduate from a top school without having achieved profi-

ciency in a foreign language. (San Francisco *Chronicle*, May, 1991)

TEACHING ENGLISH IN LOS ANGELES

More than 30% of the 600,000 students in the Los Angeles area don't speak English. 90% of them speak Spanish instead, while the rest speak one of 85 different languages, including Korean, Armenian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Serbo-Croatian, Urdu, etc.

To teach English to non-English speaking students the grade school of Roscoe adopted the "bilingual transitional education" method. The targeted children (two thirds of whom speak Spanish at home) learn subjects in their native language, get daily English lessons and have daily music lessons in English. The students transfer to classes completely in English only when they reach a satisfactory level in the language.

Finding bilingual teachers is the main problem: 2000 more are needed, even though bilingual teachers receive 5000 dollars more per year than other teachers. (*Heroldo de Esperanto*, 20 June 1991)

MAORI AND ENGLISH IN NEW ZEALAND

Members of the New Zealand parliament who don't understand Maori protested loudly when a minister responded in that language to a question in Parliament and did not provide a translation in English. The minister, Koro Wetere, apparently answered spontaneously in Maori, his native language.

Ministers demanded an immediate translation, but the minister refused, saying that Maori is an official language in New Zealand and he did not need to provide a translation. (English is not a legally official language in that country.)

This is not the first time that use of two languages in the New Zealand legislature has caused problems. Because parliament recorders do not understand Maori, they simply don't write down anything when an MP speaks in that language.

In New Zealand interest is growing in Maori. A record number of people, mainly children, are now studying the language. One third of Maori children attend so-called "language nests." But many Maori protest that the government does not give enough money to the language nests. Several have already closed.

In a related development, this year all government

ministries adopted Maori equivalents of their names, several geographical names were changed to their original Maori forms, and even interisland ships which were reequipped recently now have Maori names. (*Monato*, Sept.1990)

INTERNATIONAL ESPERANTO NEWS

ESPERANTO OPENS BARRIERS IN ALBANIA

The Albanians, whose struggle to open their country to the outside world has been front page news recently, have had another means of international contact since March, 1991. The first national Albanian Esperanto organization was founded on the 9th of March.

With this step Albania is following the example of Romania (see article below), where the formerly banned Romanian Esperanto Association was revived one year ago. In fact, great interest about Esperanto has existed for decades in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In most countries in the region—Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria—Esperanto organizations were able to find a place among state structures. Only in Romania and Albania did the Esperanto movement remain banned until the recent political and social changes.

The new Albanian Esperanto League already has 192 members. That is a remarkable achievement, considering that for decades in Albania it wasn't possible to publicly teach Esperanto, organize meetings of Esperanto students or speakers, or maintain contacts with the international Esperanto movement. In Albania, as in Romania, Esperantists acted secretly, copying textbooks and dictionaries by hand, passing on rare copies of books and periodicals, meeting in small groups in their homes. There are documented cases of political persecution, when someone lost privileges, a job or even his freedom because of Esperanto activities.

And the situation in both countries is still very difficult. The Albanian Esperanto League writes: "We have many organizational and material problems. The difficulties are growing because of the general economic and financial crisis which grips our country. We don't even have foreign currency to pay for

subscriptions (as you can tell, we don't even have a typewriter). We need Esperanto literature, because, as you probably know, we are an isolated country which can't buy foreign books.

"We did preliminary work by translating a few books from Albanian into Esperanto. We have prepared an Esperanto textbook and Albanian-Esperanto and Esperanto-Albanian dictionaries, but they're all in manuscript form. We are also planning to publish a review (or bulletin), 'Albanian Esperantist'. But we don't have the financial means now."

The World Esperanto Association is now undertaking steps for educational and cultural aid to the new association, as it did one year ago for the Romanian association. Initiatives are also coming from Italian and Yugoslavian Esperantists, among others. The appearance of Albania in the international Esperanto movement is a clear sign of the continuing reintegration of that country into the world community. (*Internaciaj Novaĵoj* Bulteno 8, Universala Esperanto-Asocio, 12 April 1991)

ESPERANTO TAUGHT AGAIN IN ROMANIA

After many years of suppression, Romanian teachers of Esperanto were able to meet with colleagues from abroad during a week-long seminar on teaching methodology. The delegates were welcomed by the mayor of the Transylvanian town of Odorheiu Secuiesc. Romanian professors told of radio courses and university programs being reestablished and classes in primary schools.

The seminar was held under the auspices of the International League of Esperantist Teachers which hopes to add a new Romanian affiliate to its thirty existing ones. In the seminar much needed teaching equipment and texts were made available. ILEI's international examination was offered for the first time in Romania. (*Gazetara Komunikoj*, Internacia Ligo de Esperantistaj Instruistoj, 17 April, 1991)

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NATIONAL ESPERANTO NEWS

ESPERANTISTS IN THE NEWS

The latest poetry collection by Julius Balbin, a well-known Esperanto poet, was reviewed recently in *World Literature Today* (Winter, 1991). The book, *Imperio de l' Koroj (Empire of Hearts)*, is divided into two sections. The first deals with Balbin's life in the U.S., the second with his experiences in Nazi concentration camps, where he managed to survive for four years, although the other members of his family died there.

Another book by Balbin was published recently. *The Bitch of Buchenwald* is a bilingual collection of poems which also come from Balbin's experiences in Nazi concentration camps. In this book Balbin's Esperanto poems have English-language translations done by Charlz Rizzuto on the facing pages. (*World Literature Today*, Winter 1991, *Esperanto*, Jan. 1991).

Composer Lou Harrison recently won a lifetime achievement award in the San Francisco Bay *Guardian's* "Goldie" awards, given for music. Harrison, whose music shows strong Asian influences, was also the New York *Herald Tribune's* music critic for many years. Harrison is best known to Esperantists for *La Koro Sutro*, a cantata in Esperanto and English which was also the first compact disc to appear in Esperanto. (The San Francisco Bay *Guardian*, June 5, 1991).

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