

ELNA UPDATE

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LINGUISTIC DISCRIMINATION

Slovakia bans other languages

The Slovak parliament passed a law November 15, 1995 banning other languages. This ban will seriously affect Hungarians, who make up more than 10 percent of Slovakia's population of 5.5 million. The law stipulates that all public servants must speak Slovak and all public ceremonies except weddings must be done in that language. All signs, advertisements and announcements must be made in "the state language". Penalties include fines up to \$2,000 for individuals and \$20,000 for businesses in a country where the average yearly wage is less than \$4,000. [*The Militant*, Dec. 4, 95]

This development provoked the following letter published in the *New York Times*, Nov. 20, 1995:

To the Editor:

The curbing of the Hungarian language in Slovakia is more than an administrative formality directed against Hungarians. The law that was approved Nov. 15 authorizes the use of the "language police" in Slovakia. This law makes it a criminal act for a rabbi to speak Yiddish or Hebrew in a synagogue. It could result in the jailing of an Italian opera singer for singing in Italian. And it would outlaw the total educational system of the 600,000 indigenous Hungarians, people who became minorities not by emigrating into Slovakia, but by staying in their towns and villages while borders were redrawn around them. Prime Minister Vladimir Meciar considers them a "problem to be solved" and instead of concentrating on the economic problems of his nation, he attempts to distract attention by whipping up ethnic hatred... The world should not tolerate "language police" in the middle of Europe at the end of the twentieth century. This is not only because we Americans respect human rights and the freedom of speech and religion. The use of language police should not be tolerated because of the tensions it creates in an already unstable part of the world.

NEWS FROM RUSSIA

[*The following is an official proclamation written and approved during the annual Congress of the Russian Esperantist Union*]

The Russian Esperantist Congress, taking place October 6-9, 1995 in Tyumen,

RECOGNIZES that during its 50-year existence the UN has contributed importantly to the support of peace, which cannot be ignored even in the light of several of the UN's failures;

NOTICES that the UN, declaring its support for human rights, peace and democracy, still has done rather little for equal communication between peoples, and instead practices support for the so-called "world languages"; [*Arabic, Chinese, English, French Russian and Spanish are the UN's official languages. -ed.*]

CALLS ATTENTION to the fact that for twice as long as the UN has existed, there has been a social movement using and spreading a model of more just and more effective international communication – a community of adherents of the neutral international language Esperanto; EMPHASIZES that for the realization of the ideals for which the UN strives, it is necessary that the UN and other international organizations consider the importance of equality between all languages in international communication, and accept the nondiscriminatory solution which is practiced by all speakers of Esperanto.

Russians support Harry Plan

In a communiqué sent to the Russian press on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations, the Russian Esperanto Union and the Esperanto Radical Association declared that, despite its proclamations, the UN has merely created an unjust language policy supporting the so-called "world languages" while ignoring the vast majority of the world's languages. In addition, this policy is quite costly, due to the required translation and interpretation. An alternative model to that of the UN is that of Esperanto, which solves both problems of justice and efficiency. To arouse the attention of their national institutions, Russian Esperantists organized an "Action Day" during which they requested their Minister for External Affairs to support the so-called "Harry Plan" [named for Australia's former UN ambassador Ralph Harry] which would introduce Esperanto as one of the UN's working languages. [*Heroldo de Esperanto*, 18 Jan. 96]

APPLIED ESPERANTO

Tourist brochure in Seattle

Esperantists visiting Seattle can now receive a tourists' guide-pamphlet explaining the sights and shops of the Fremont district of Seattle. This charming little brochure is available for free at the Seattle Tourist Bureau, or for fifty cents from the Fremonta Esperantista Organizeto. Please include a SASE when writing to them at 204 N 39th St., Seattle WA 98103.

World Record Soneteer

Between January 1 and November 3, 1995, Jan Stanisław Skorupski wrote a total of 732 sonnets in two languages – Polish and Esperanto. This feat established three world records:

- 1) quantity: this is the largest number of sonnets ever written by a single poet.
- 2) language: no other poet in the history of world literature has ever written a larger quantity of poems in parallel bilingual versions.
- 3) speed: this was the largest recorded creation of poems within a single year.

This triple-record is now recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records. [*Eventoj* 2, Jan. 96]

[By the way, this is at least the second listing of Esperanto in the Guinness Book of World Records. It has long been mentioned as the language with the least irregular verbs: *none!*]

ESPERANTO AS METAPHOR

The computer software company Sun Microsystems has recently released a new programming language called Java. According to the New York *Times*' internet document server Java allows programmers to write an application just once and have it work on a variety of computer systems... There is a different Java interpreter for Windows, Macintosh and Unix, and these interpreters translate the Esperanto of Java into the babel of machine languages.

[<http://www.nytimes.com/web/docsroot/library/cyber/0119freed.html>]

[I am bemused by the fact that most software engineers recognize the obvious advantages of using a neutral language which serves as a bridge between already-existing machine languages, yet so few see the parallel advantages of a neutral spoken language, such as Esperanto. -ed.]

AMUSING MISUNDERSTANDINGS

In Vietnam photographer Mike Yamashita saw ducks everywhere – in fields, in yards, crated in trucks. But every time he tried to order roast duck, his local translator told him, "Not on the menu." Then at one meal Mike asked a U.S.-educated Vietnamese agronomist, who pointed to an entry. Queried further, Mike's translator said, "Oh, I thought you said 'dog'". [*National Geographic*, Dec. 1995]

A busload of British tourists rolled into a town in Southern Spain en route to the Costa del Sol. Three of them sat down and asked the waiter for "coffee with milk". Of course, the waiter did not understand, so they decided to try another language and asked for "café au lait". When the waiter said "café?", they replied "au lait, au lait!". They couldn't understand why the waiter suddenly became quite unfriendly: he thought they were ridiculing the Spanish exclamation "Olé!".

EUROPEAN MPs ADDRESS THE LANGUAGE PROBLEM

Approximately 7% of the members of the European Parliament have gone on record as favoring an official investigation into the potential increased use of Esperanto within Europe. The following comments from members of the EP were written in response to a letter sent to all MEPs by G. Pirlot of Belgium [*Heroldo de Esperanto*, 18 Dec. 1995].

Anne van Lancker: Relative to the use of Esperanto in international affairs, I am of the opinion that it is extremely important to obstinately defend, as a democratic right, the use of one's own language within the context of the European Parliament. I believe that at some time it will become necessary to find a solution to the language problems in European relations. Esperanto may be an appropriate resource. However, I believe that Esperanto must enter into the normal life of everybody. To this goal schools especially must do everything in their power.

Magda Aelvoet: In the European Union, and especially in the European Parliament, the presense of so many languages regularly causes practical problems. However, this cannot be an excuse to limit the use of "minor" languages. This does not mean that Esperanto, as a neutral enough supranational language, cannot prove itself useful in several fields of the life of the community. From this viewpoint, support of further development of Esperanto is an interesting and useful project.

Gerard Deprez: Esperanto's neutrality allows us to propose it as a completely valuable alternative. But I believe that it might thrust itself forward as a solution to the problems which have been created by linguistic diversity in Europe, especially in the current context. However, the

prospect of 25 member-states requires us to think about the most appropriate manner to solve the linguistic difficulties. Consequently I firmly support its use; I am also completely ready to encourage collective financing and the realization of pilot projects aiming to improve Esperanto education within the Union.

Jean Kol: I am convinced that the spread of the European Union risks creating problems about the use of languages, but I am of the opinion that the solution would be to decrease the number of languages used. In regards to the introduction of a neutral language, such as Esperanto, in my opinion it is necessary to make a specific exploration of the related "cost-effectiveness" which this use would imply within the various institutions.

Maria Thyssen: If the language policy requires modification, it should happen only after very careful and deep consideration. In my opinion, this should not result in a systematic expulsion of the smaller languages, but by respecting all languages. I believe that we should consider all solutions which fulfill this condition. Therefore, I do not exclude the use of a neutral language, such as Esperanto. A thorough exploration of all possibilities is not a superfluous luxury.

Jaak van de Meulebroucke: In my opinion, the European Union must use all available means to guarantee the survival into the future of all of our official languages. In this relation Esperanto can more than likely play the part of bridge language. In this way not only will we guarantee the continued use of our own languages, but also communication will be made easier.

LANGUAGE AND LAW

Swiss Constitution

On March 10, 1996 the citizens of Switzerland approved a constitutional amendment which declared that the four main languages used in that country (German, French, Italian and Romansch) are "national languages of Switzerland". However, some of these languages are more equal than others: the list of "official languages" excludes Romansch, which also has lost special status in government communication and education.

French Education

A law has been proposed in the French National Assembly which will allow Esperanto as an officially accepted topic of education at all levels, and to allow foreign language examinations to be given in Esperanto. Even if this law is not finally accepted, it will generate some interesting and useful discussion!

NEW FROM THE BOOK SERVICE

ESPERANTO STUDIES: AN OVERVIEW, *Humphrey TONKIN & Mark Fettes*. This little pamphlet deals with the context of Esperanto studies; the relation of this field to related fields; recent developments and trends. The seven-page bibliography alone makes this a necessary acquisition for any serious student of Esperanto. Number 43 in the Esperanto Documents series. 1996, 16p. 215x140. Paper. Netherlands-USA. ISSN 0167-2575

EDA043

\$2.90

ETIMOLOGIA VORTARO DE ESPERANTO, Vol. 4 (N-R), *Ebbe VILBORG*. This latest installment in the series continues the expected high-quality scholarship and professional appearance of earlier volumes. 1995, 124p. 240x170. Paper. Sweden. ISBN 91 85288 22 5

ETI004

\$23.50/\$22.30

PATRO MIA LACA • L' AVANTAĜO DE L' VERTEBROJ, *Gellu NAUM*. Trans. Sasha VLAD & Ionel ONEȚ. Two long poems from the surrealist school of Romania. The first weaves a dream-like web of shifting linguistic images; the second presents a multimedia spectacle of a catalog of garments with wry commentary. 1995, 44p. 215x170. Paper. USA. ISBN 1-882251-15-6

PAT007

\$7.05/\$6.70

PORDOJ, *Stefan MacGILL*. This collection of amusing short dramatic sketches shows enough variety to suit most circumstances. Includes exercises, word-lists and notes for teachers/directors. Illustrations by Katie KEATES. Second edition 1987. 84p. 215x145. Paper. Belgium.

POR004

TBA

TRI URSOJ, LA. Adapted by Hanna HUTCHINSON. Trans. David CROWELL. The classic fairy tale is presented in proper format to be read with a child. Cute cartoon illustrations by Edward NOFZIGER. 1995, 24p. 175x210. Paper. USA. ISBN 0-922852-40-5

TRI007

\$3.10/\$2.95

1996 ELNA BOOK SERVICE CATALOG

This 28-page catalog details every item available from the ELNA Book Service. The Book Service catalog is sent to members and "Friends of Esperanto" at no cost. Non-members should send \$2.00 to ELNA Book Service. Those purchasing the catalog will receive a coupon worth \$2.00 off their next order.

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<p>ELNA Membership Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A bi-monthly newsletter keeping you up to date on issues of importance to Esperantists • The ELNA Book and Tape Service catalogs and the ELNA Membership List • Discounts on most items carried by the ELNA Book and Tape Services • The quarterly <i>ELNA Update</i> with information on the world language problem and Esperanto as a possible solution • The satisfaction of contributing materially to the propagation of Esperanto in the U.S.A. 	<p>Non-Member "Friend of Esperanto"</p> <p>A "Friend of Esperanto" is not a dues-paying member of ELNA and therefore not eligible for the regular membership benefits. Instead, a "Friend" offers encouragement to the Esperanto movement by providing financial support. A "Friend" receives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four issues of the <i>ELNA Update</i> via first-class mail. <i>ELNA Update</i> keeps you abreast of the world language problem and Esperanto as a possible solution • The ELNA Book and Tape Service catalogs
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1996 ELNA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please show the type of membership or support by an **X** in the appropriate brackets. All memberships are on a calendar-year basis, January 1st - December 31st. For items marked (*) we must have your birthdate.

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