

ELNA UPDATE

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ESPERANTO IN 1997

More than a third of the mail sent to Radio Poland was addressed to the Esperanto section, more than any other foreign language section.

During the first year after its acceptance, the Manifesto of Prague (see *ELNA Update* 1996/3) collected more than ten thousand signatures. As a follow-up to this Manifesto, *Kampanjo 2000* was launched to concretize and continue the ideas therein expressed.

Serious lobbying was begun by UEA and the Transnational Radical Party to induce the Economic and Social Council of the UN to officially investigate language issues.

A coalition was founded of UN-associated Non-Government Organizations in favor of an international language.

The Center for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems conducted a conference in the New York office of Unesco.

The UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights agreed to support a seminar about the linguistic dimensions of human rights, which UEA will arrange at the end of April of this year at the UN headquarters in Geneva.

117 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) of the total 626 (18.7%) expressed their support of an official study of Esperanto. Two MEPs attended the European Esperanto Congress in Germany.

The University of Amsterdam named a professor of interlinguistics and Esperanto.

Esperanto stamps and telephone cards were printed in Croatia in recognition of the TEJO congress to be held there this summer.

The International Railroad Union printed a series of 13 volumes of standardized terms of the railroad business, each printed bilingually – in Esperanto and one national language.

The ELNA-supported video course *Pasporto al la tuta mondo* was launched and one-third completed. The project also received official support from UEA.

The editors of *Eventoj* introduced a new e-mail service which keeps all editors of Esperanto periodicals informed about news in Esperanto-land.

ELNA made its debut on the World-Wide Web at

www.esperanto-usa.org where our home-page joined the hundreds of other Esperanto-based home-pages of periodicals, clubs, individuals, etc. (compiled by Aleksander Korzhenkov and posted to *Eventoj*'s e-mail list)

Also worth mentioning is the first Universala Kongreso ever held in Oceania last summer. Although only about 1,000 people participated, it was considered a great success by all who were there.

Esperanto was used for background public-address announcements in the Hollywood film *Gattaca*. Although the voices were only barely audible, ELNA got a full-screen reference during the credits.

A Japanese group made an Esperanto film of Chekhov's *In a Summer Villa*. It is slated for release this summer during the UK in Montpellier.

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR ESPERANTO

When Esperanto was created over a century ago, the biggest language problem in the world was the lack of understanding between various nations due to the different languages. For this reason Zamenhof created Esperanto, intending to facilitate linguistic communication between different nations.

The non-sameness of national languages is still the basic language problem in the world. But the modern world language problem is the tendency of the world's languages to unify into one ethnic language, namely English, or more precisely, the American language. In fact the English language has become the unofficial but actual international language, not only between individuals and for commerce, but also in inter-state organizations. In principle, the UN uses six official languages for formal official meetings, but for practical everyday administration, "working languages" (mainly English) are used.

The spread of English as world communal language is caused mainly by the political, economic, technological and mass-media strengths of the USA. In the modern world the English language almost monopolizes the world's mass media, especially satellite TV stations and computer programs. The popularity of

satellite TV and the computer internet facilitates the spread of English as a world language.

The intrusion of English as de facto common language brings up several problems. This ethnic language brings along the culture and life-style of the USA, and this has a tendency to replace the culture of the nation which accepts English.

But the most important destructive problem is that the use of an ethnic language in this role is cannibalistic. The English language eats the other national languages in the fields of international meetings, commerce, science, technology and tourism. For effective international discussion, successful commercial trade, serious scientific dissertations, discussions about technology and guided tourism for mixed-nation participants, one most often uses the English language. Even citizens of the same country must sometimes resort to English to express precise scientific and technological notions. Soon ethnic languages will be spoken only at home and in cafes! This is a symptom of the beginning of the death of a national language. Even British English is being eaten by American English!

The problem of the language-eating and culture-eating tendencies of the English language has caused politically strong languages to defend themselves. France already forbids the use of English in commercial advertisements. As of last September the Minister for External Affairs of China no longer uses English during his weekly press conferences. Russia's President Yeltsin, noticing that all of Moscow was plastered with English-language advertisements, announced that he intends to forbid the use of English in advertising. The new Hong Kong government announced that instruction by means of the English language will no longer be allowed.

The contemporary world language problem provides opportunities, favorable chances for a neutral, constructed (that is, without an ethnic culture) international common auxiliary language to show its usefulness, not only due to the differences between world languages but also due to the universal tendency among [the world's peoples] toward the use of only one ethnic language.

These are opportunities for Esperanto!

The most important opportunity for Esperanto is that politically and linguistically strong countries such as France, Russia and China also sense the destructive threat of the incursion of the English language and have begun to defend their own languages. In fact now all languages need a protective shield against the invasion of the culture- and language-eating English language. A constructed, ethnically and culturally neutral language can well serve this protective goal.

During the last century, Esperanto has demonstrated and proven its effectiveness as a neutral language, and as a linguistic shield against the invasion of other ethnic languages.

The most immediate and practical opportunity for Esperanto is in the European Union. The unification of Europe in economic, monetary and political realms will not succeed without linguistic unification. Now in principle, languages of all members of the European Union must be officially used equally. According to this principle, eleven languages must be used officially in the EU. Imagine the problems of simultaneous translation between eleven languages when MEPs speak in the EU parliament!

This non-sameness is only a surface problem. A more important problem is the tendency toward linguistic monopoly. Also in the EU the practical working languages are most often English and sometimes French. A common auxiliary language without an ethnic culture is needed for the European Union not only for internal communication but also to defend its linguistic diversity.

The language problem is the most important key to the success of the unification of Europe, much more important than economic or monetary unification. Therefore in the EU there are often serious official discussions about language problems. During the coming year there will be two international conferences about language problems within the European Union arranged under the auspices of the European parliament to recommend a language policy for the European Council and the European Union. There are indications that more than twenty percent of the 627 MEPs support considering Esperanto as common international auxiliary language.

I would like to say that if any inter-state organization were to adopt Esperanto as its international auxiliary language, probably the European Union would be the first. In this sense, Europe is a strategic location for the Esperanto movement.

A similar language problem exists in the United Nations, due not only to the existence of so many national languages, but also the language-eating power of English. The problem is that the UN does not want to recognize the existence of its language problem, or more accurately said, does not want to touch the language problem, because it is a "political bomb". This year the UN is discussing its reorganization plans for more efficient and economical functioning. But the committee has not touched the language problem, because "it does not exist". Now the translation costs of the official six languages are paid by all member-states, including the countries whose languages are not official. The delegates are all able to

use English to some level [remember that they all live in or near New York! –ed.]: the translation is done for mostly political reasons. If they were to officially use only the English language, this would solve economic and practical problems, but would cause even bigger problems of linguistic hegemony and language-eating. Everybody knows this, but nobody dares raise the issue. In the sphere of the UN and other international organizations, there are opportunities for Esperanto as a non-ethnic international auxiliary language.

Next year the UN will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The UN has done much in the sphere of human rights, especially in the realm of political refugees. But the UN has yet to address the linguistic aspects of human rights. Many people cannot defend their own rights in a foreign country because they do not know the local language. Many refugees, recent immigrants, and tourists suffer because of language problems. All of these represent opportunities for Esperanto!

If Esperanto has opportunities to solve the world's current language problem, how can we take advantage of these opportunities? There must be a two-level approach: international organizations and international citizens.

Firstly, at the level of interstate organizations, we must insist that they recognize that they have language problems, and that they include "International Auxiliary Language" as one of the items of the agenda during some official meeting, and that they seriously discuss the issue. If an official discussion begins, this will be the first step on the way to a solution. State representatives from politically and economically influential countries, such as China, Germany, Japan and Italy, can influence the UN [and other international organizations] to discuss their internal language problems.

Secondly, to demonstrate the practical usefulness of Esperanto as a living language and to demonstrate its practical propaedeutic value in learning ethnic languages, we must initiate experimental instruction of Esperanto as a tool for more easily learning other languages. In this way we can begin to teach Esperanto as a tool, and then afterwards it can become a goal.

The recently launched "Campaign 2000" aims at addressing these challenges. Esperanto needs the support and active participation of every Esperantist and member of our community. [UEA President LEE Chong-Yeong, from *Eventoj* 2, Oct 1997]

NEW ZAMENHOF STREET

They're still naming streets after the creator of Esperanto!

In addition to the 655 streets and plazas already dedicated to Ludwig Zamenhof, as listed in *Monumente pri Esperanto*, a new Zamenhof Street has just been built in St. Briuc, capitol of the department of France called Cotes d'Armor in the Breton region. At least seven streets have been named for Zamenhof since the publication of *Monumente* a year and a half ago. And the Zamenhof Square in Białystok Poland has been given a face-lift. Several dozen old and sickly poplar trees were removed and replaced by attractive flowering shrubs and ornamental trees. Also the tiles of the central square were replaced. So the bust of Białystok famous son is now in more fitting surroundings!

ESPERANTO MUSEUM ON-LINE

The International Esperanto Museum in Vienna, Austria, is one of the few state recognised and state financed Esperanto libraries. It is a part of the Austrian Library, which as of March 1998 offers internet access to the new catalog, which is called Trovanto (Finder). The search language of Trovanto is exclusively Esperanto. It includes books, manuscripts, non-commercial literature, cassettes, disks, electronic publications, etc. and even lists individual articles in science and literary books. One can search the documents according to many categories, for example by author, title, theme, etc. so it is quite a useful instrument for any kind of search and study. All documents acquired by the IEM since 1996 are now fully catalogued, and little by little the complete collection will be computerized. The address of Trovanto is www.onb.ac.at/online_s/esperanto/espdb.htm. Pay them a visit; check it out. Online visits help the Museum's statistics; good statistics help their state support.

CANADIAN VALENTINES

On the fourteenth of February, on Valentine's Day, Esperantists from Victoria, the capitol of the Western Canadian province of British Columbia organised a variety show for 100-150 spectators on the theme "Amu la Teron" (Love the Earth). The program, organised by Wally du Temple, was a mixture of art and amusement. There was harping and singing and various groups performed skits. There was dancing and poems were read and slides of Nature preserves

were shown. The citizens of Victoria learned about Esperanto thanks to this show. Posters and press releases sent to 200 organizations and the local press all mentioned that the event was sponsored by the Canadian Esperanto Association. An article which appeared in the Victoria "Times-Colonist" emphasized the fact that for du Temple Esperanto was an "edzperanto" (marriage arranger): Wally and Olga du Temple are one of the two couples in Victoria who met by means of Esperanto. (From the *Eventoj* newswire)

1998 CALENDAR

☞ North-Western Esperanto Gathering, Olympia WA, May 29-31, 1998. ☐ Ellen M Eddy, PO Box 4055 Tumwater WA 98501; ☎ 360/754-4563.

☞ Summer Esperanto Workshop, San Francisco State University, Jul 6-24, 1998. ☐ Cathy Schulze, 410 Darrell Rd, Hillsborough CA 94010; ☎ 650/342-1796.

☞ ELNA Annual Convention, Montréal Canada, Jul 25-27, 1998. ☐ ELNA, PO Box 1129, El Cerrito CA 94530; ☎ 510/653-009.

☞ International Youth Esperanto Convention, Rijeka Croatia, Jul 25 - Aug 1, 1998; ☐ TEJO, Nieuwe Binnenweg 176, NL-3015 BJ Rotterdam, Netherlands; ☎ +31/10/4361044.

☞ World Esperanto Convention, Montpellier France, Aug 1-8, 1998; ☐ UEA, Nieuwe Binnenweg 176, NL-3015 BJ Rotterdam, Netherlands; ☎ +31/10/4361044.

INTERNET CALENDAR

The site maintained by the magazine *Eventoj* is the best source of a comprehensive calendar of Esperanto-based events throughout the world. So whether you are planning to travel, or if you simply wish to see the richness of ongoing activities, take a look at www.hungary.net/esperanto/kalendar.htm

LITERARY SUPPLEMENT COMING

Ionel Oneț, editor of the main ELNA newsletter *Esperanto-USA*, has issued a call for submissions for the *Literatura Suplemento*, which will go to press this summer for the first time since 1991. Poems, short stories and all other forms of literature are welcome in Esperanto or as translations from Esperanto. The deadline is June 26, 1998, but you are encouraged to send your works in earlier. Send submissions to ionel@esperanto-usa.org or to the address on the letterhead.

1998 ELNA BOOK SERVICE CATALOG

This 28-page catalog details every item available from the ELNA Book Service. The catalog is sent to ELNA members and "Friends of Esperanto" at no cost. Non-members should send \$2.00 to: ELNA PO Box 1129, El Cerrito CA 94530. Those purchasing the catalog will receive a coupon worth \$2.00 off their next order.

Esperanto League for North America
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IN THIS ISSUE...

- ◆ Esperanto in 1997
- ◆ Esperanto in 1998
- ◆ Esperanto Museum
- ◆ Esperanto Valentine
- ◆ Words from the Prez