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LINGUISTIC HUMAN RIGHTS

Robert Phillipson and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas

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Linguistic human rights are analyzed as one type of human rights, reflecting an inalienable norm. Rights are needed for speakers of dominated languages, who individually and collectively experience linguistic 'wrongs', marginalisation, and ultimately the extinction of the languages.

The article of Robert Phillipson and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas seeks to clarify the contours, scope and potential of the concept linguistic human rights. It considers to what extent language rights are well protected in existing supranational human rights covenants, at the 'universal' and 'European' levels, and in an example of recent state legislation aimed at empowering an indigenous people. It considers why the issue of linguistic human rights should be of concern to applied linguistics, and argues for the formulation and ratification of a Universal Declaration of Linguistic Human Rights.

The starting-point of the authors is that is axiomatic that: a) linguistic rights are one type of human rights; b) depriving people of their human rights leads to conflict.

Fernand de Varennes

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In the opinion of the author, human rights today are more than an 'interesting idea': they constitute an integral part of the moral fabric of the international community to which Europe and its constituent States belong. But because the appearance of international human rights is a relatively young phenomenon in historical terms, it also means that every aspect of their application is fully understood or appreciated. This is especially true for issues involving minorities, including use of language. There is a continuing process going on to define more clearly how various international human rights standards, such as freedom of expression and non-discrimination, among others, may affect the private and public use of language by persons belonging to minorities, as well as government language restrictions or preferences. This process finds inspiration in values of tolerance, coexistence and integration that are part of the very foundation of a modern democratic State.

Distinctions that represent a proportionate balance between the different interests are seen in international law as being reasonable, and therefore not discriminatory. However, this means that if a State language preference or restrictions is 'unreasonable', such as when the government refuses to provide public services in regions and localities where persons belonging to a national minority are present in significant numbers, then such a language distinction is discriminatory and unacceptable.

In general, and so far as possible, policy and law should be elaborated and applied with a view to ensuring full and equal opportunities for all persons, including persons belonging to linguistic minorities.

Marya DuMont

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Despite a worldwide movement towards modernity and its concomitant purported elimination of interpersonal and ethnic differences in the wake of economic efficiency, the ubiquity of ethnic and linguistic minority movements is striking. The frequency of language use as a symbol of ethnicity is also clear; the great number of human languages,

coupled with a remarkably low number of linguistically homogenous states, yields a global prevalence of linguistic minorities, many of whom are bent on demanding autonomy on the basis of their distinctive languages.

Within the geographical territory of France, despite its confident projection of linguistic unity, at least seven groups (Alsacien, Basque, Breton, Catalan, Corsican, Flemish and Occitan) might claim legitimacy as indigenous linguistic and cultural minorities. France's particularly stringent monolingualism points to a unique need for justification of ethnic demands in terms of internationally recognized rights to one's 'mother tongue'; it thus comes as little surprise that the Occitan movement has sought to further its demands largely in terms of language rights.

By the author, the demands of linguistic minorities do not, however, necessarily extend as far as independence or secession. Nonetheless, western European nation-states, especially France, fear the 'Balkanization of Europe'; they maintain that if they were to grant autonomy to each minority that presented its claims on the national government, the resultant political instability among so many splinter states would be ripe for continued conflict.

ANALYSIS

Mihai Chioveanu

From the Racial State to the Final Solution

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In spite of more than a half a century distance from the tragic events of the Second World War and from the significant number of published studies, the Holocaust continues to remain one of the big 'mysteries' of history. The same thing can be said about historiography where, by the particularly sensitive nature of the subject, due if not mostly, but anyway considerably to the motivations and political stakes based on various reasons, it has imposed, sadly almost permanently, limits to the researcher preoccupied with study of the events and/or the undertaking of theoretical analysis.

Mihai Chioveanu's study proposes in the first place a brief approach of the main theories developed around the Holocaust, its scholasticism and finally, a general presentation of the evolution of this subject in the western political and academical life.

DIALOGUE

Tîrgu-Mureş — March 2000

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Between 23-24 March, in the framework of the sixth edition of Week of Tolerance, organized by the Intercultural Centre of the Pro Europa League, had taken place the debate 'Tîrgu-Mureş — March 2000', dedicated to the analyses of the interethnic conflict from March '90 in Tîrgu-Mureş.

Prestigious personalities of the Romanian-Hungarian dialogue from Romania and Hungary presented their address regarding the causes, consequences and moral of the tragic event.

DOCUMENT

Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights

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As it is stated in the Declaration — signed by numerous institutions and nongovernmental organizations — in the Preamble, the situation of each language is the result of the convergence and interaction of a wide range of factors of a political and legal, ideological and historical, demographic and territorial, economic and social, cultural, linguistic and sociolinguistic, interlinguistic and subjective nature. Language communities are currently threatened by a lack of self-government, a limited population or one that is partially or wholly dispersed, a fragile economy, an uncodified language, or a cultural model opposed to the dominant one, which make it impossible for many languages to survive and develop unless the following basic goals are taken into account: a) In a political perspective, the goal of conceiving a way of organizing linguistic diversity so as to permit the effective participation of language communities in this new growth model; b) In a cultural perspective, the goal of rendering the worldwide communications space compatible with the equitable participation of all peoples, language communities and

individuals in the development process; c) In an economic perspective, the goal of fostering sustainable development based on the participation of all and on respect for the ecological balance of societies and for equitable relationships between all languages and cultures. For all these reasons, the Declaration takes language communities and not states as its point of departure and is to be viewed in the context of the reinforcement of international institutions capable of guaranteeing sustainable and equitable development for the whole of humanity. For these reasons also it aims to encourage the creation of a political framework for linguistic diversity based upon respect, harmonious coexistence and mutual benefit.

István Haller

A Document of Reference

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The article offers a comparison between the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights and other international documents that guarantees the respect of linguistical rights.

CASE STUDY

Eugen Patraş

The Romanian Community in Ukraine

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The study analyses the situation of Romanians in Ukraine. The authors's conclusion states that the Romanian minority from Ukraine, inspite of the fact that is an autochtonous minority and is the second largest, after the Russians, between the country's minorities, it has been subject of political, economical, social, cultural and national marginalisation during the totalitarian soviet regime, and also after 1990, had facing a methodical discrimination against the majority, or sometimes against other minorities, numerically almost equal with them. All these failures create the premises of forced assimilation, against the will of the members of the community.

TRANSYLVANIAN CONVERGENCIES

Constantin Iordachi and Marius Turda

Political Reconciliation versus Historical Speech: the Perception of
Romanian Historiography, 1989-1999

Hungary in the

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The fall of the communism and the end of the cold war, as well as the general political democratization and integration process in the economical and Western security institution, generated a more and more intense political collaboration of the states from Central and South-Eastern Europe. In spite of all these, the transformation of identity and reconstruction of social imaginary in this region does not provoke yet considerable changes in the perception of the other: the myths, prejudices and negative stereotypes, as well the symbolically exclusion of some states belonging to the former communist block from Europe, preempted as an elitist-exclusivist and normativ-hegemonic political concept, continues to characterize the mental collective geographies from Central and South-Eastern Europe.

The study follows the changes suffered by the interpretation of Hungary's history in the Romanian historiography in the last decade, trying to explore some components of Hungary's imagine in the Romanian academic space. The Romanian-Hungarian state relations in the last decade had cross a spectacular politically evolution, from an intense diplomacy conflict to cooperation și political-military partnership. Surpassing the acute ideological confrontation regarding the statute of the Hungarian minority in Romania in the second part of the eighteens, the interethnic violence from Tirgu-Mureş in 1990, as well as the lack of political contacts in the years 1990-1994, Romania and Hungary constructed, starting with 1996, a mechanism of political reconciliation and partnership, unanimously considered as 'a model for Europe and the whole world'.

RESTITUTIO

Mihály Sebestyén-Spielmann

Contributions to the History of Printeries in the 18th Century.

The Case of Transylvania

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The study intends to be a contribution to the knowledge about the printing and editorial activity in Transylvania throughout the whole century.

Among the years 1701-1800 there had been functioning printing presses in fourteen localities from Transylvania; the 39 printeries have published 4073 titles; namely an average of 40 titles per year.

The author is analyzing these publications pointing out that in the 18th century there has been in progress a mature editorial activity.

REVIEWS

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