Bulgaria

2.1 The Struggle for Suffrage

2.1.1 *The Congress of the Gypsies in Bulgaria*

Конгрес на циганите в България
Жертви на българската демокрация – Циганите и Берлинският конгрес –
Предварително събиране в цирк “България”

Карл Маркс бе казал отдавна, че руската революция ще бъде начало на най-великото гражданско движение в Европа, но той не е подозирал какво крупно участие ще вземат в него циганите. Със своята метода на социалистически материализъм той не би могъл да открие тия съкровени чувства на гражданственост, които са се криели в романтическата душа на циганите, и които трябваше да избухнат днес с една внушителна тържественост, която ще предизвика удивление на народите и ще увеличи грижите на Европа. Колкото до нас, българите, днешната манифестация е двойно важна: първо, защото бе изнесена наяве една вопиюща неправда, извършена от нашата демокрация върху едно антично племе; и второ, защото се установи от самите жертви, че сме нарушили с хладно съзнание една от свещените клаузи на Берлинския договор. Нека България да благодари на високия такт и на политическата мъдрост на циганите, че не повдигнаха своя въпрос, дорде траеше морската демонстрация, защото в този случай щяхме да видим международна ескадра пред Варна и Бургас. Но докато дипломатическата опасност е отстранена досега, нравственият наш престиж пред Европа е вече силно накърнен: защото всички цивилизовани хора, които мислят, че в нашата материалистическа епоха и в нашето монотонно съществуване, циганите представляват поезията на волния и безгрижен живот, и идеализма на фантазията, няма да ни простят, че сме се показали спрямо тях най-безсърдечни и несправедливи.

Жестокостта била извършена на повече от три години. През режима на г.г. Данев [и] Каравелов, циганите били лишени от своите изборителни права. Мина се времето и циганите мълчаха. Но за политическите престъпления нямаше давност. Те чакали, щото обществената съвест в България да се възмути и да им върне отнетите права, но, като видели, че техните надежди остават пусти, те се решили да почнат борба със собствени сили. Д-р Марко К. Марков, известният софийски адвокат, който между многобройните си начинания – като картеля му с разни милионери в Америка и планът му за един тръст на адвокатската професия – намира свободно време да воюва за великите хуманитарни принципи за всички угнетени във

вселената, смилил се към гражданската скръб на циганите; постави се на това чело и го повежда сега на една борба, която обещава да прибави един драматически епизод към всеобщата история на народа, воюващ за своето право.

Д-р Марков – трибун на циганите

Още от рано вчера ярки афиши, залепени на улиците, каняха гражданите да отидат на циганското събиране в цирк “България”. Към три часа преди обяд циганите бяха насядали вече във втората галерия. В залата беше тъмно. Вееше някакъв дъх на мухъл и пустота. Но скоро физиономията на насъбралите се съживи. Д-р Марков се яви на една маса и със звънък глас, с едно широко движение на ръката, с която сякаш отваряше нови хоризонти, се отправи към присъстващите: “Господа, цигани!” ...

Това обръщение предизвика сензация у циганите. Те се погледнаха някак очудено, заклатиха глава със знаменателен вид и приближиха се към оратора с дълбок интерес.

Той продължи:

“Славно коптско племе, дошло в тия земи в неизвестни времена ...”

Циганите зинаха с огромните си уста и бяха онемели от удивление.

Той поде:

“Граждани на свободна България!

Но вие не сте вече пълноправни граждани, защото вашите права са отнети ... Затова именно сме се събрали днес ... Ний не сме дошли тук с никакви субективни чувства (циганите: вярно-о-о!), а с повелитите норми на основния закон и на международното право (сенсации у циганите, жестикулации на одобрение). Вашето право е осветено от Сан-Стефанския договор, който няма да чета тук (викове: не, чети го!) и от чл. 7 на Берлинския трактат (вярнооо!). Но се намериха в България управници, които да посегнат на Конституцията и на договора. Това бе в режима на демократите и прогресивно-либералите. О tempora, о mores! (движение у циганите). О, ирония! Вземи едно шише, напълни го с оцет и му тури етикет – шампанско! Това е нашата демокрация (ръкоплескания у циганите, викове: вярнооо!). Но вие знаете френската пословица: *la plus belle fille du monde ne peut donner que ce qu'elle a*.

Това е тъй, но ние ще се борим. Това са нашите свещенни права, наш жизнен интерес. Латинската пословица казва: *primo vivere, deinde philosophari* (вярнооо! При всяка чужда пословица циганите изпадат в екстаз). Ние няма да се молим. Ние ще искаме това, което е наше.

Анланда сиври синек саздър – Анламаяна даул да зурна аздър (при тази турска пословица циганите ликуват. Те разбраха!). Нека се надяваме главно на себе си, защото ариф олан пиляф йер (викове: браво!).

Ораторът свърши посред една шумна овация на циганите. След това станаха някои разисквания, при които циганите изказаха енергически своите симпатии към г. д-р Маркова. Към 5 [часа] събранието се разпусна. Навън видях участващите:

това бяха циганите, които срещаме ежедневно в София като хамали, но с някаква особена тържественост на лице и някак сияющи в своето съзнание, че вършат подвиг. Те тръгнаха към циганската махала в пъстри и оживени редове, и [София] по улица “Мария Луиза” имаше физиономия на един град в навечерието на една революция.

Интервю с “корейския император”

На излизане към мене се приближи един едър циганин, със сипаничево лице и с малки гуреливи очи, и като отвори ризата си, показва могъщи гърди, обрасли с бурен от коса и се провикна:

– Видиш, господин, до какво дередже сме дошли! Ето, само за една чест живеем, а правителството ни взема и то.

Други, около него, дърти цигани с рошави бради, млади момчета, пригласяха.

– Само за една чест, господин!

Един се приближи и ми посочи уволнителен билет:

– Гледи, господин, ето билет. Служил съм в Четвърти артилерийски полк. То не е шега работа, четвърти на Н[егово] Ц[арско] Височество.

Циганите ме заобиколиха с викове и жестикулации. Всички ревяха на едно. Но затече се един циганин с чалма на главата, с остра, четинеста брада, почна[ла] да се белее, с нещо омъдрено, важно и повелително със своето бронзово лице, в което лъщяха обезпокоително огромни хитри очи; другите се оттеглиха почитателно.

– Аз ще ти кажа, господин!

– Кой сте вие? – попитах аз.

– Корейский император, – отговори той просто и добави: – Така ме наричат, ама аз съм мухтара Рамадан.

– Е добре, какво искате?

– Искаме граждански права. Ний всичкото платим, данок платим, войната ходим, а гражданското права не дава. Срамота за циганите. Не може да се търпим вече. За едно чест живеем, господин!

Решително, това е една лозунга: циганите живеят за една чест! България им я отнема.

В кафенето на Али Билялов

Стигнахме в циганската махала. Цялата тя е тревога. На вратите стояха жените и разпитваха с жив интерес. Някои от циганите им отговарят, други ги блъскат: очевидно феминизмът още не е разпространен у тях. Едно заведение, доста чистичко, но пълно с пушек; пред тезгяха една циганка, наконтена с кожух от морав атлаз и ярка забрадка. Това е кафенето на Али Билялов, втори мухтар. Донесоха ни кафе в огромни филджани. Али Билялов е млад, висок циганин, с обръснато симпатично лице и добри маниери. Той е пътувал много и знае няколко езици. Той ми дава обяснение за циганското движение. Циганите са решили да направят конгрес. Пратили са писма до двайсетина града в България. Делегатите ще пристигнат в София на

14-и този месец. Те ще пратят една депутация при княза начело с д-р Марков, и една депутация до Народното събрание.

– Само за една чест – казах аз.

– Да, господин, само за едното чест.

И многобройни могъщи гърла повтаряха в общ вик:

– За едното чест!

С[имеон] Радев

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A Congress of the Gypsies in Bulgaria
Victims of the Bulgarian democracy – Gypsies and the Berlin Congress –
Preliminary Meeting in Circus *Bulgaria*

Karl Marx has long ago said that the Russian Revolution will be the beginning of the greatest civil movement in Europe, however, he has not suspected the eminent participation of the Gypsies in it. With his method of socialistic materialism, he would not have been able to discover such dear feelings of wide popularity and general recognition hiding in the romantic soul of the Gypsies and which ought to have exploded today with an impressive ceremony which would incite the astonishment of nations and which would increase the preoccupation of Europe. As for us, the Bulgarians, today's manifestation is doubly important: firstly, because into the open came out a glaring injustice done by our democracy on an ancient tribe; and secondly, because it was recognised by the victims themselves that we have violated, with an indifferent conscience, one of the holy clauses of the Treaty of Berlin. Let Bulgaria give thanks to the high tact and the political wisdom of the Gypsies that they did not raise their matter while the naval demonstration was taking place [1] as in such a case we would have seen the international squadron in Varna and Burgas. However, while the political danger is until now ousted, our moral prestige before Europe is already majorly hurt: because all civilised people who think that in our material era and in our monotonous existence, the Gypsies represent the poetry of the independent and carefree life, and the idealism of the fantasy, they will not forgive us for having been most-heartless and unfair with them.

The cruelty has been done for more than three years. In the administration of Mr. Danev and Karavelov, Gypsies have been deprived from their rights to suffrage [2]. Time has passed and the Gypsies stayed silent. However, political injustice was unacceptable. They have been waiting for the civil consciousness of Bulgaria to stir and to give them back the rights they have been deprived from, however, when they saw their hopes have stayed barren, they decided to take their struggle in their own hands. Dr Marko K. Markov, the famous lawyer from Sofia, who among his many initiatives – such as his cartel with various millionaires in America and his plan for a Trust of the profession of the lawyer – does not have spare time to fight for the great humanitarian principles for all of those in the world who are oppressed, he got saddened by the civil sorrows of the Gypsies; he took

the lead and now he leads Gypsies towards a struggle which promises to add a dramatic episode to the general history of the nation fighting for its right. [...]

Dr Markov – Tribune of the Gypsies

Since early morning yesterday, flyers, hanging by the streets, were inviting residents to attend the Meeting of the Gypsies in Circus *Bulgaria* [3]. At around three o'clock before noon Gypsies have already been seated in the Second Gallery. In the Hall it was dark. There was a draft of some kind, smelling of mould and emptiness. However, soon the countenances of those gathered lightened up. Dr Markov appeared in a table and with a clear voice, with a wide movement of his hand, which as if made new horizons, addressed those who were present: "Gentlemen, Gypsies!"...

Such form of address stirred a sensation among the Gypsies. They curiously looked at each other, shook heads knowingly and neared the orator with a deep interest.

He continued:

"Honorary Copts' [4] tribe who has arrived in these lands in times unknown ..."

The Gypsies gaped with their big mouths and were speechless with astonishment.

He started:

"Citizens of free Bulgaria!

But you are no longer full citizens since your rights were stripped ... That is namely why we have gathered today ... We have not come here with whatever subjective feelings (the Gypsies: Correct-t-t!) but with the orderly norms of the Common Law and of the International Law (sensations among the Gypsies, gesticulations of approval). Your right is blessed by the Treaty of San Stefano which I will not read here (shouts: no, read it!) and by Art. 7 of the Treaty of Berlin (Correct-t-t!). However, in Bulgaria there could be found rulers who could disrespect the Constitution and the Treaty. That was during the rule of the democrats and the progressive-liberals. *O tempora, o mores!* [5] (movements among the Gypsies). Oh, irony! Take a bottle, fill it in with vinegar and put a label – Champagne! That is our democracy (applause from the Gypsies, shouts: Correct-t-t!). But you know the French saying: *la plus belle fille du monde ne peut donner que ce qu'elle a* [6].

That is so, but we will fight. These are our sacred rights, our vital interests. The Latin proverb says: *primo vivere, deinde philosophari* [7] (Correct-t-t! With each foreign saying, the Gypsies fall into ecstasies). We shall not beg. We shall ask for that which is ours.

Anlanda sivri sinek sandur – Anlamayana daul da zurna azdur [8] (with this Turkish proverb the Gypsies rejoice. They understood!). Let us count mainly on ourselves because *arif olan pilafier* [9] (shouts: Bravo!).

The orator finished in the middle of a loud cheering by the Gypsies. After that, some discussions took place among which Gypsies expressed energetically their sympathies towards Dr Markov. At around 5 o'clock, the meeting was over. Outside, I saw the participants: these were the Gypsies that we come across on a daily basis in Sofia working as porters, however, today with a special festivity on their faces which somehow radiated in their awareness as if they are doing a heroic deed. They headed towards the Gypsy

mahala [10] in colourful and lively rolls, and Sofia, on Maria Luiza street, resembled a town before the wake of a revolution.

Interview with the Korean Emperor

On my way out, I was approached by a burly Gypsy with a pock-marked face and with small bleary eyes and when he opened his shirt, he showed powerful chest, full with thick hair and he cried out:

– Do you see, Mister, where we have reached to! There you go, we live for the sake of honour but the government takes even that.

Others, besides him, old Gypsies with dishevelled beards, young boys, chimed in.

– Mister, only for the sake of honour!

One of them came closer and he pointed a discharge ticket:

– Look, Mister, here's the ticket. I have served in the Fourth Artillery Regiment. This is no joke, the Fourth of His Royal Highness.

The Gypsies gathered around me with shouts and gesticulations. All of them cried out in one. However, one Gypsy, wearing a headscarf came quickly, with a spiky, sparse, silvering beard, with something wise, important and imposing with his bronze face in which shined worryingly big, cunning eyes; the rest of the people stepped aside respectfully.

– I will tell you, Mister!

– Who are you, I asked.

– A Korean Emperor, – he simply said and added: – That is how they call me but I am the *Muhtar* [11] Ramadan.

– So well, what do you want?

– We ask for civil rights. We pay for everything, pay taxes, we go to wars, however, they don't give us citizens' rights. That's a shame for the Gypsies. We cannot stand it anymore. We live for the sake of honour, Mister!

Certainly, that's a slogan: The Gypsies live for the sake of honour! Bulgaria takes it away from them ...

In the Café of Ali Bilyalov

We arrived in the Gypsy *mahala* [12]. The whole of it is under alarm. At the doors stood women and they were asking questions with real curiosity. Some of the Gypsies gave them answers while others pushed them away: seemingly, feminism is still not spread among them. One place, quite clean but filled with smoke; at the counter was standing a Gypsy woman, clad in a purple, satin coat and a colourful headscarf. That is the Café of Ali Bilyalov, a second *Muhtar*. They brought us coffee in big *fildzhani* [13]. Ali Bilyalov is a young, tall, Gypsy man with a shaven, pleasant face and good manners. He is well-travelled and knows several languages. He gives me an explanation about the Gypsy movement. The Gypsies have decided to organise a Congress. They have sent letters to about twenty towns in Bulgaria. The Delegates will be arriving in Sofia on the 14th of this month. They will send a delegation to the Royal Prince headed by Dr Markov and another delegation to the National Assembly.

- Only for the sake of an honour. – I said.
- Yes, Mister, only for the sake of honour.
- And many vociferous throats repeated in one voice:
- For the sake of an honour! [14]

Simeon Radev [15]

Notes

1. Here are meant the strained relations between the Great Powers and the Ottoman Empire that led to demonstrative naval maneuvers in the Aegean Sea in November 1905.
2. This concerns the government of Petko Karavelov and Stoyan Danev which emerged as a result of a coalition between the Democratic Party and the Progressive-Liberal Party (20.02.1901-22.12.1901); they adopted amendments to the Election Law that deprived Gypsy Muslims as well as nomadic Gypsies of voting rights (see below for more details).
3. The building of Circus *Bulgaria*, and later of the Theatre *Salza i smyah* (Tear and Laughter), was located on Maria Louiza Boulevard, near the site of today's *Hali* in Sofia.
4. In the administrative documents of the Ottoman Empire, Gypsies were often referred to as *Kıpti* (i.e. Copts, in the sense of the Egyptians). For centuries in the Balkans, Gypsies have been believed to originate from Egypt, a belief which can be found even today in the variety of folklore narratives (see more details in Chapter I).
5. Oh, the times! Oh, the customs! (from Latin).
6. The best girl in the world cannot give more than she already has (French idiom).
7. Act now, think later (from Latin).
8. For the one who understands, even the mosquito is a *saz* (musical instrument), for the one who does not understand, both the drum and the *zurna* are not enough (Turkish proverb). The meaning here is that the one who is able to understand will get the point even if they have little information, while the one who is not able will not get it regardless of what is done.
9. One who is respectful and well-mannered will eat pilaf (Turkish proverb), i.e. will earn the respect of people.
10. This refers to the so-called old mahala in Sofia. The Gypsy mahala at that time was located in the area of today's Kozloduy Street, between *Lavov Most* (Lion Bridge) and the Central Station in Sofia, on both sides of the road called *Lomsko shose* (Lom Highway). The term 'mahala' is a legacy of the Ottoman Empire, when it was used to designate separate ethnic neighbourhoods in the town districts. During the times of the independent Bulgarian State, the term continued to be used while gradually it referred mainly to the Gypsy (or other nationalities) neighbourhoods in towns and villages.
11. 'Muhtar' is an administrative term used in the Ottoman Empire in the sense of a leader/chieftain chosen by the inhabitants and endorsed by the authorities of a village or a town district. This practice continued, especially for the Gypsy mahalas in the cities also during the new independent Bulgarian State, unlike in the villages (where mayors were elected at local elections) and in the town districts.
12. This concerns the so-called *stara mahala* (old neighbourhood) which was populated by most of the Gypsies who were living in Sofia at the time.
13. 'Fildzhan' (Turkish) – a special type of coffee cup.
14. The phrase is in broken Bulgarian.
15. Simeon Radev (1879-1967) was a Bulgarian well-known journalist, publicist, diplomat and politician, at that time editor-in-chief of the Newspaper *Vecherna Poshta* (Evening Mail).

Source: Радев, С. (1905a). Конгрес на циганите в България. *Вечерна пошта*, 1905, December 14, p. 2.
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2.1.2 *The Gypsy Congress*

Цигански конгрес

Делегатите на конгреса – Ежедневен цигански вестник на френски и български –
Исканията на циганите

Според уверенията на учредителя на циганския конгрес г. д-р Марко К. Марков във висшите дипломатически и политически кръгове както у нас, така и в странство – има голяма заинтересованост към конгреса на циганите. Конгресът щял да бъде много по-сериозен, отколкото се мисли. Господин Марков бе тъй любезен да ни даде следните сведения по конгреса: очакват се да пристигнат делегати от главните центрове на Княжеството, в което има повече “копти” (цигани), за да извоюват конституционно отнетите им права.

Освен конгреса, циганите възнамеряват да издават един сериозен ежедневен вестник на френски и на български. На конгреса, който ще се състои тия дни, ще се държат стенографски дневници и същият още ден ще се отпечатват във вестника. Името на вестника ще бъде “Човешки права”. Конгресът ще бъде тия дни и на него ще може всякой български гражданин да си изкаже мнението, каквото и да било то, по циганския коптски въпрос. Циганите казват:

“Ние не се молим. Ние искаме права, гарантирани нам от Берлинския договор и Конституцията – стара и нова. Всеки здравомислещ и свободолюбив български гражданин трябва да ни съчувствува. В тази земя сме се родили и от свободни хора през 1901 г. обърнаха ни на парии. Училищен данък плащаме – училище нямаме. Обвиняват ни, че сме били некултурен народ. От где ще ни дойде културата? Дайте ни училища, възвърнете ни политическите права и тогава съдете за нас! И нашите съграждани, българите, бяха некултурен народ, но благодарение на училищата, днес вече започват да претендират за културност, а щом нашите изборителски права са отнети, то ние приличаме на хора без права – на роби. А българската конституция гласи, че робът щом премине границите на българското княжество, става свободен човек. Нашето дело трябва да успее, защото ние сме прави, а правият човек е всякога силен и с него мъчно могат да се борят.”

Вярваме, че читателите сами ще оценят великата международна значимост на горните изявления.

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The Gypsy Congress

The Delegates of the Congress – A Daily Gypsy Newspaper in French and Bulgarian –
The Demands of the Gypsies

In the opinion of the founder of the Gypsy Congress, Dr. Marko K. Markov, among the high diplomatic and political circles, both here and abroad, there is a huge interest in

the Congress of the Gypsies. The Congress would be much more serious than originally thought. Mr. Markov was so kind to give us the following news relating to the Congress: it is expected Delegates from the major centres of the Principality to attend, which has more 'Copts' (Gypsies), so that they could regain, constitutionally, their stripped rights.

Besides the Congress, Gypsies intend to issue a major Daily Newspaper in French and in Bulgarian. The Congress, which will take place these coming days, will have stenographer records and in the very same day they will be published in the Newspaper. The name of the Newspaper would be "Human Rights". The Congress will take place these days and each Bulgarian citizen will be allowed to express their opinions, no matter what it is, with regard to the Gypsy Copts question. The Gypsies say – "We do not beg. We want the rights, guaranteed to us by the Treaty of Berlin and the Constitution – the Old and the New ones. Each sound-minded and freedom-loving Bulgarian citizen ought to empathise with us. We were born on this land and of free people, in 1901 they turned us into pariahs. We pay school-tax – but we do not have a school. They blame us for being an uncultured nation. Where will our culture come from? Give us schools, give us back our political rights and then judge us! And our fellow-citizens, the Bulgarians, were an uncultured nation but thanks to the schools today, they already begin to lay calms towards culture and while our voting rights are repressed, we resemble a people who have no rights – slaves. The Bulgarian Constitution claims that once a slave crosses the borders of the Bulgarian Principality they become free. Our case must succeed because we are right and the people who are right are always strong and nobody can fight with them."

We believe that the readers will appreciate by themselves the great international significance of the above statements.

Source: [No Author]. (1905b). Цигански конгрес. *Вечерна поща*, 1905, December 15, p. 3. Prepared for publication by Elka Mincheva, Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov. Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.1.3 *The Gypsy Congress in Sofia*

Циганският конгрес в София

Утре, неделя, в два часа подир обяд, в салона на "Сан-Стефано" се отваря "коптски" (цигански) конгрес, в който ще държат речи по отнетите им граждански и политически права.

Пристигнали са от 40 до 50 души делегати от всички по-големи градове на Княжеството. Циганите са издали манифест към партиите да ги подкрепят с легална борба за извоюване на техните права.

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The Gypsy Congress in Sofia

Tomorrow, Sunday, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, in the Hall 'San-Stefano' will take place the "Copts" (Gypsy) Congress which will hold talks regarding their stripped civil and political rights.

Around 40 to 50 people, Delegates have arrived from the major towns of the Principality. Gypsies have issued a Manifesto to the political parties so that they could support them legally and that they could gain their rights back.

Source: [No Author]. (1905c). Циганският конгрес в София. *Вечерна поща*, 1905, December 15, p. 3. Prepared for publication by Elka Mincheva, Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov. Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.1.4 *The Gypsy Congress – The First Meeting*

Цигански конгрес [– Първо заседание]

Отваряне на конгреса – Речите на циганите и циганския трибун –
Телеграмите до княза

Към два часа след обяд в салона на локала "Сан-Стефано" бе заета от малобройна публика, в която имаше най-отбрано общество – адвокати, инженери, доктори, чиновници, народни представители и пр. Всички с нетърпение очакват пристигането на делегатите – цигани. В два и половина часа около 40-50 цигани, представители на коптското население в Княжеството, цветът на циганите от цяла България, начело с техния генерален пълномощник д-р Марко К. Марков, се явиха. При влизането им публиката радостно се раздвижи, направи място на делегатите да седат и ги посрещно с продължителни ръкоплескания. [...]

Качи се на трибуната кметът на столичните цигани Рамадан Алилов. Бурни ръкоплескания на делегати и на публика за господин кмета – мургав, едър, с шарена чалма на главата, с широк пояс през кръста и гайтанлия сетре на гола снага – направи три пъти ниски теманета и се обърна към делегатите на цигански език:

"Аллах ярдем еунъ! Добре дошли! Знаете ли, за какво сме се събрали тук? Ние имаме право да си избираме дорде бил Каравеловия, той го изгуби ... И ние служи данък, плащаме за войник ... Трябва имаме право ... (ръкоплескане ... гласове: Вярно ...)."

След г. кмета, трибуната зае помощник-кмета – Али Билялов, интелигентен, симпатичен циганин, с европейски дрехи, с голям червен пояс и високи, лъскави чизми. Направи три теманета и с ясен глас се обърна към делегатите на цигански:

"Братя, цигани! Да помолим господин д-р Марков, да направи он, каквото бехме си [решили], да станем ... Да сме сос права и да сме си свободни ... (ръкоплескания)."

След това стана пловдивският делегат Али Мутишев. След като се обърна към събранието с думите "Яшасънъ княз Фердинанд", прочете своята доста дълга реч на турски, от която даваме следните извадки:

“Нашето събрание тук свидетелствува за свободата и справедливостта в България. Тук всеки има право да говори само за това, което сме се събрали. Между копти и цигани има разлика. Коптите са тези, които са дошли от Египет, а цигани – най-долния слой от обществото. В Египет коптите заемат участие в управлението, защото са добили образование. Затова коптите в България трябва да се стараят да добият образование. Коптите в България в градовете упражняват различни занаяти, минават за мюсюлмани. Според закона, лишаваха се от изборителни права циганите, т.е. онези копти, които нямаха редовни средства за живеене. Обаче по партизански причини, които властта иска да има на страната си изборители, дава им името турци, а когато иска да ги отстрани – провъзгласява ги за цигани. Понеже това е несправедливо, ние искаме правата си, защото и като мюсюлмани – изпълняваме всички обряди на религията, и като граждани – всички задължения към държавата. Според турския вестник “Икдам”, когато стана преброяването в Турция – циганите бидоха причислени към турската народност, а в България – за да могат турците да разполагат с джамиите и вакуфиите, искат да отстранят от ислямството циганите.”

След това той направи някои славословия за България, княза и правителството. При всеки пасаж от речта си, той даваше обяснения на циганите. Речта му бе изслушана с най-голямо внимание от циганите при нови, бурни ръкоплескания.

Появи се генералния цигански пълномощник господин д-р Марко К. Марков с няколко грамадни томове книги под мишница, слага ги на трибуната, изглежда важно и весело събранието, и почна:

“Господа! Аз благодаря на циганите за доверието им към мене, да ме натоварят с ръководните техни политически борби за отстояване на човешките им права, защото циганите са хора. Нека господа делегатите да изберат за мои подпредседатели: Али Мутишев, Али Билялов, Илия Узунов, Али Молла, Ристе Мустафа, Икономов (гласове: Приемаме!); за касиер Ибрахим Исмаилов, деловодител Иван Параскевов.”

Иван Параскевов: “Благодаря на коптското население, че ме избра в бюрото си. С отнемане на политическите и гражданските права на циганското население е нанесено петно на нашата страна, което плътено ще се мъчим да измием. От душа и сърце ще работим, докато видим овенчано и добито това право ...”

Д-р Марко Марков (ръкоплескания):

– Почитаемо събрание! Ще проверим първо имената на делегатите (проверяват ги). [...]

Господа, цигани!

Вие сте събрани тук, за да извоювате своите така брутално отнети права. Всички се отзоваха благоприятно на нашата справедлива кауза. Само партийните вестници нищо не казаха. Те чакат да научат от берлинските вестници, че в София имало цигански конгрес. Партийните вестници по скоро ще пишат за балната фуста на госпожа Драдафулова, за шапката ѝ, за чепиците ѝ, а за нашата циганска кауза – нищо не пишат! Циганското племе до вечни времена ще бъде признателно

на вестник “Вечерна поща”, който единствен се застъпи за циганските интереси. Най-много благодарности дължим на господина Симеон Радев. Той и сега е тука (обръща се към г-н Симеон Радев, който съзре в редовете измежду многобройната публика).

Господин Радев, обичате ли да помогнете и вие в тази работа? (Общ смех. Г-н Радев е обладан от неудържим смех). Аз съм длъжен да изкажа на господина Радева искрената и сърдечна благодарност на онеправданото коптско племе. Той ни направи отраднo впечатление с много близкото до сърдцето си вземане на въпроса на тези български парии (смех и ръкоплескания). Аз моля от името на циганското население в България г-на Радева да продължава и да не се стряска, да защитава тази кауза (ръкоплескания и общ смях). [...]

Аз получих многобройни поздравителни телеграми от разни градове (чете ги).

Видин: “... И пари да изпратим, делегата не може да стигне, защото късно приехме писмото ...” (смех).

Силистра: “По повод статията във ‘Веч[ерна] поща’, днес събрани цигани в Силистра на брой 200 души решихме и избрахме за делегат г-н Марков.”

На тези всички телеграми е отговорно желанието на тези истински приятели на онеправданите цигани, конгресът да трае три дни.

Варна: “Да ви запозная с моята фамилия Юрдан Атанасов. Аз съм по народопис циганин. Свършил съм трети к[лас] и съм бариерчик.”

Те, циганите, господа, така са се предали на въпроса, че ще дадат права на другите, които са се ползували с просвещението, “денят се познава от сутринта”, те ще научат нас българите, как да вършим своята работа. [...]

Има две мнения за произхождението на циганите: едното е, че те са от Индия, едно от арийските племена; друго е – че те са египтяни или копти, затова в Македония ги наричат “гюпци”. Този народ е обърнал внимание на съвременните учени [...], тях възпяват много от съвременните поети, особено унгарските и руските, защото поетите намират в циганския живот нещо по-добро, отколкото в нашия живот. Те са дошли на Балканския полуостров в 870 г., преди 11 века, във времето на император Никифор Византийски.

Езикът им благодарение на средата, в която живеят, е претърпял известни влияния и днес има 13 наречия. Има такива цигани, че едните като говорят [на своето наречие] – не се разбират с другите [цигани, които говорят на друго наречие]. [...]

От граждански и политически права се лишават у нас само с присъда влязла в законна сила, а П[етко] Каравелов лиши от законни права циганите за цели поколения, с шарлатански аргументи; защо да лишават от права само цигани-нехристияни. Защо? Заслуга ли е, че човек се е родил българин; престъпно ли е, че се е родил циганин, майка му го е родила такъв ... А дали се моля на икона или на някоя красива мома – то е моя работа ... (смех). Тука няма ratio legis (ръкоплескания).

Като отиде някой наш министър при някой чужд дипломат, то дипломатът ще каже – той няма да го каже, защото дипломатите са лисици, та повече с мълчание

приказват – но има право да каже “Дайте свобода на вашите цигани, че тогаз елате да дадем и на вас [нашето] доверие ...”

Циганите данък плащат, пък не им дават училища. Защо? След Французката революция карлеме гелмезлер позор е да вземаме парите на циганите, а да не им даваме училища. Les dots les gens изискват всички да вземат участие в държавните работи, но анлаяна сиври синек саздъръ, анлама анламаяна даулта зурна аздъръ (смех).

Понеже, господа, сме си малко цигане, ще ми позволите да запаля цигара, да пуша, да си приказвам ... (ръкоплескания).

“Замъчила се планината и родила мишка” ... Така е нашата работа: не вървят изборите, защото циганите си продавали гласа ... А бе, аланкоолу! Хвани го за ухото и го дай под съд ... И гърци, и евреи, и всички български граждани си продават гласа. Къде е тука логиката? – Oleum sersemicum! (ръкоплескания).

Петко Каравелов [каза], че циганите били нисша раса. Ой ана асана, а’м че ние кога станаме висша раса? Гледате ме, така облечен в европейски дрехи, ама дедо ми ходеше с потури; аз говоря и пиша из езика, а пък дедо ми салким не знаеше нито един език (смех). Да ме извините вие, че циганите са нисша раса. Циганите са дали хора на науката ... Произхождението на П[етко] Каравелов е от каракачаните – циганин е! (ръкоплескания). Имаме министри, шефове на гари, генерали в нашата армия, на които произхождението е циганско, и те са достигнали да носят еполетите си. При Сливница е паднал един офицер – поручик Кочов, циганин. Но серсемин е бил той, защото се е бил, а не е бегал; а сега да отнемат правата на неговите сънародници.

Нашите [политически] партии не се застъпиха за циганите знаете ли защо? А? Да ви кажа ли? (гласове: Кажи де?) Ще ви кажа: защо са патриоти (прави знакове из въздуха, лови нещо и пъха ръцете си в джобовете – смех). Защото има безусловни фондове за зор, заман ичим, но в тия фондове има и цигански пари ариф улан аниасан (ръкоплескания). Лишиха циганите от избирателни права, за да ни тръгнат работите по мед и масло и ние цъфнахме, та не вързахме. А сега по-свободни ли са изборите – бош лаф; Бог да те прости, бай Петко Каравелов, уважавам те, ала с ваше позволение ще му препиша пак на Oleum sersemicum (смех). Знаете ли вие, че писателят Васил Стоянов, който в революционното време учреди Българското книжовно дружество, е от циганско произхождение. Той е от Жеравна. А ми знаете как свирят жеравненските гайдарджии! – те са майстори в музиката и това показва, че от тях ще излезе нещо. Какво искате повече от тях? Да изнамерят нова Америка ли? Ама бъркали на изборите – краставици за зелен хайвер ... Ама били чергари и скитали, та да не им дават права нукаре жамата ... (смех). За болшинството от XI Об[икновенно] Н[ародно] събрание ще предпиша Oleum sersemicum. Крали циганите, та да не им дават права; това говорят нашите управници. А бе, таранкоолу, “Не е луд Кольо, че изял пет зелника, а е луд, който му ги дава.” Серсеми сме ние, българите: а бе хей, серсемоглу, серсем, който краде – хвани го за ухото – та в затвора, ой анасане ... (смех). Казват, че “честните” хора били истински вагабонти, има и

честни хора, но те са по кюшетата. Така сигурно за мене говорят някои в “Червен рак” – “а бе остави го там – сакънтията, той е луд.” – Е добре бе, джанъм, ходих три пъти в Болницата и докторът ми каза – “Ти, ако влезеш, мене ще изкараш луд. Не те ща” (смех), е? Крив ли съм аз?

Ще ви кажа нещо ... Тука нали всички сме мъже, нека да си говорим по-свободно ... Жени няма ли? (Гласове: Няма!) Е, ще ви кажа сега една история ... Един, някой си Х. – да не ви го казвам, вие си го знаете, направил едно таквозинкана преступление – хванали го; направил нещо ... чуруклия. Кой го е направил – пак Х. (ръкоплескания, гласове: Верно) Е, защо не дават училища на циганите? Та те не са ли хора: сиздеджам, бизде бадла джанмол? Че на хора, които скитат не се дават права, че и на наш’те цигани. Но: *comparaison n'est pas raison* (гласове: вярнооо).

Свършвам, господа. А ми, ако се изселят, да кажем, циганите, кой ще калайдисва тенджерите по селата? Кой ще прави хамалък в столицата? (гласове: вярно). Циганите, господа, са производителен народ и ние сме длъжни да им възстановим отнетите права ... (ръкоплескания).”

Илия Узунов: “Честит бях, да бъда избран за подпредседател на циганското племе. Ние се грижим да върнем отнетите права на циганите” (ръкоплескания). [...]

Д-р Марков: “Понеже нашият конгрес е от политически характер, молим ви да приемем следующата резолюция:

1. Телеграма до Н[егово] Ц[арско] В[исочество] – София:

“Делегатите на коптското население от България се събраха днес на първи коптски конгрес в София с цел – да извоюват и получат обратно своите потъпкани права в 1901 г., въпреки постановленията на Берлинския договор, въпреки постановленията на Конституцията, имат надежда, че В[аше] Ц[арско] В[исочество] под чието ръководство г.г. министри управляват Княжеството, ще благоволите и обърнете внимание на господин Министър-председателя да направи нужното в Нар[одното] събрание, за да ни се възстановят човешките права. Ние даваме войници, плащаме всички тегоби и какво? – изключение не се прави за задълженията ни, а права нямаме никакви. Желали бихме да се учим – училища нямаме. Исканията ни са законни и ние се надяваме, че В[аше] Ц[арско] В[исочество] ще употреби влиянието си, за да не живеем като парии в свободна и конституционна България. Да живее Н[егово] Ц[арско] В[исочество]!”

2. Телеграма до господина Добровича – началник на княжеската канцелария – Дворецът:

“Първият цигански конгрес реши единодушно, да помоли Н[егово] Ц[арско] В[исочество] да благоволи да приеме петчленна депутация, за да изложи на Господаря устно законните искания на циганското население в България. Молим за отговор.”

3. Да се изпрати една депеша на председателя на Нар[одното] събрание:

“Благоволете, Г-н Председателю, да ни отговорите, ще можете ли да ни приемете утре, като делегати на Първия цигански конгрес, за да изложим пред вас едно свое законно искане.”

Заседанието се вдига утре в два часа, макар да е работен ден. Заповядайте всички, защото въпросът не е само цигански, а общочовешки (браво!).

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The Gypsy Congress – The First Meeting

The opening of the Congress – The speeches of the Gypsies and the Gypsy Tribune – Telegrams to the Royal Prince

At around 2 o'clock in the afternoon, in the public house 'San-Stefano', there was a small crowd, composed from members of the most distinguished communities – lawyers, engineers, doctors, office clerks, Deputies to the National Assembly and others. All of them eagerly await the arrival of the Delegates – Gypsies. At around half past two, there appeared around 40-50 Gypsies, representatives of the Copts population in the Principality, the essence of the Gypsies all across Bulgaria, headed by their general representative Dr. Marko K. Markov. With their arrival, the crowd stirred happily, made space to seat the Delegates and welcomed them with a continuous applause. [...]

On the tribune came up the Mayor of the Gypsies from the Capital [1], Ramadan Alilov. There were energetic rounds of applause from Delegates and from the public for Mr. Mayor – swarthy, stout, with a colourful turban on his head, a wide waist-band around his back and on naked body jacket with plaits – made three low bows and turned towards the Delegates in Gypsy language [2]:

"Allah yardem eun! [3] Welcome! Do you know why have we gathered here? We used to have the right to vote up until Karavelov appeared; he took our rights away ... And we serve taxes, pay for the soldiers ... We ought to have right ... (applause ... voices: Correct ...)."

After Mr. Mayor, the tribune was taken by the Deputy-Mayor – Ali Bilyalov, intelligent, amiable Gypsy, with European clothes, wearing a big, red waistband and tall, shiny boots. He made three low bows and with a clear voice addressed the Delegates in Gypsy:

"Brothers, Gypsies! Let's ask Mr. Markov to do what we have originally wanted to become ... To have rights and to be free ... (applause)."

Then, came up the Delegate Ali Mutishev from Plovdiv. He addressed everyone with the words *"Yashasun Royal Prince Ferdinand"* [4] and then he read his long speech in Turkish from which we give the following excerpts:

"Our meeting here signifies the freedom and the justice in Bulgaria. Here, everyone has the right to speak only about the subject for which we have gathered. There is a difference between Copts and Gypsies. Copts are those who have come from Egypt while the Gypsies – the lowest segment of the society. In Egypt, the Copts take part in the government because they have acquired education. That is why, the Copts ought to strive to acquire education in Bulgaria. In Bulgaria, Copts exercise different trades in the towns, and they pass as Muslims. According to the law, the Gypsies were deprived from their rights to suffrage, in other words, those Copts who did not have regular means to

live by. However, due political reasons, that the political administration wants to have access to votes at its disposal, it assigns them the name Turks while when it wants to oust them – proclaims them as Gypsies. As this is unfair, we ask for our rights because also as Muslims – we observe all the rites of the religion while as citizens – all our obligations to the country. According to the Turkish Newspaper *Ikdam* [5], when the Census in Turkey took place – the Gypsies were counted as part of the Turkish nation, while in Bulgaria – so that Turks could have Mosques and Waqfs [6] at their disposal, they want to eliminate Gypsies from the Islam community.”

Then, he gave several eulogies for Bulgaria, the Royal Prince and the Government. With each passage, he gave explanation to the Gypsies. His speech was listened out intently by the Gypsies and then followed by new, energetic applauses.

There appears the General Representative, Mr. Dr. Marko Markov carrying a few heavy books under his arms; he puts them on the tribune, looks around importantly and merrily towards the crowd and begins:

“Gentlemen! I give thanks to the Gypsies for trusting me and for burdening me with their political struggles which insist for their human rights because Gypsies are humans. Let the Delegates elect as my deputies: Ali Mutishev, Ali Bilyalov, Iliya Uzunov, Ali Molla, Riste Mustafa, Ikonomov (voices: we accept!); for cashier Ibrahim Ismailov, secretary – Ivan Paraskevov.”

Ivan Paraskevov: “I thank the Copts’ nation for electing me in their bureau. Stripping the political and civil rights of the Gypsy population leaves a stain in our country which we will unceasingly struggle to get rid of it. We will work with our souls and hearts until we witness the gaining of this dear right ...”

Dr. Marko Markov (applause):

– Dear Assembly! We shall firstly check the names of the Delegates (they check them). [...]

– Gentlemen, Gypsies!

You have gathered here to gain back your brutally stripped rights. Everyone was in favour of our just cause. It was only the Party’s newspapers that did not say anything. They are waiting to learn from the Berlin’s newspapers that there has been a Gypsy Congress in Sofia. More likely, the Party’s newspapers will write about the ballroom dress of Ms. Dradafulova, about her hat and her shoes while for our, Gypsy, cause – they do not write anything. The Gypsy tribe will be forever thankful to the Newspaper *Vecherna Poshta* (Evening Mail) which solely sided with the Gypsy’s interests. We owe many thanks to Mr. Simeon Radev. He is also here now (he turns towards Mr. Simeon Radev, who he saw somewhere in the rolls among the heavy crowd).

Mr. Radev, would you like to also help in this affair? (Laughter among everyone. Mr. Radev is obsessed with uncontrollable laughter). I am obliged to express the sincere and cordial thanks to Mr. Radev on behalf of the unjustified Copts’ tribe. He made us a pleasant impression with his cordial appreciation of the matter of these Bulgarian pariahs (laughter and applause). I ask, on behalf of the Gypsy population in Bulgaria, Mr. Radev to continue this cause and not to be startled (applause and total laughter). [...]

I received many greeting telegrams from various towns (he reads them out).

Vidin: "... Even if we send money, the Delegate cannot reach because we received the letter too late ..." (laughter).

Silistra: "Regarding the article in *Vecherna Poshta* (Evening Mail), the gathered Gypsies in Silistra today, numbering 200, we decided and elected as a Delegate – Mr. Markov."

To all of these telegrams, it is sensible for the requests of these true friends of the wronged Gypsies, the Congress to last for three days.

Varna: "Let me introduce you to my family Yurdan Atanasov. By nationality, I am a Gypsy. I have attended school for three years and I work as a barrier-man."

They, the Gypsies, gentlemen, are so dedicated to this matter that they will allow others who have been enlightened, "the day is known by the morning" [7], they will teach us, Bulgarians, how to do our jobs. [...]

There are two theories about the descent of the Gypsies: the first one is that they are from India, one of the Arian tribes; the other is that they are Egyptians or Copts and that is why in Macedonia they are called *Gyuptsi*. This people has drawn the attention of today's scholars [...], and many contemporary poets were inspired through them, especially the Hungarian and the Russian ones, as the poets find something better in the life of the Gypsies compared to ours. They have arrived at the Balkan Peninsula in 870 AD, before 11 centuries, during the reign of Emperor Nikephoros [8].

Their language, due to the places they Gypsies occupy, has undergone through several influences and today there are 13 dialects. There are Gypsies that some speak their own dialect – they do not understand other Gypsies who speak another dialect. [...]

Those who do not have civil and political rights in this country are those who have been legally convicted, however, Petko Karavelov deprived the Gypsies from having legal rights, which lasted generations on, by giving charlatan arguments; why should they deprive from their rights only non-Christian Gypsies. Why? Is it a merit that somebody has been born a Bulgarian; is it a crime he has been born as a Gypsy, his mother gave birth to him so ... Whether I pray to an icon or to a beautiful lady – that is my own business ... (laughter). There is no *ratio legis* [9] here (applauses).

When one of our Ministers visits a foreign Diplomat, the Diplomat will say – in fact he will not say anything, because the diplomats are cunning like foxes, they communicate more through silence – however, he has the right to say "Give freedom to your Gypsies and then you can come so that we can give you our trust too ..."

Gypsies pay taxes but they don't give them schools. Why? After the French Revolution, *karleme gelmezler* [10] it is a shame to take money from Gypsies and at the same time not to give them schools. *Les dots les gens* [11] require all to take part in state jobs, however, *anlayana sivri sinek sazduuru, anlama anlamayana daulta zurna azduuru* [12] (laughter).

Since, gentlemen, we all here are some kind Gypsies, you will allow me to light a cigarette, to smoke, and to speak ... (applause).

The mountain made an effort and it gave birth to a mouse [13] ... Our matter is similar: elections are not good because Gypsies supposedly sell their votes ... Hey, *alankoolu!* [14]

Grab him by his ear and bring him to court ... Greeks, Jews and all Bulgarian citizens alike sell their votes. Where is the logic here? – *Oleum sersemicum!* [15] (applause).

Petko Karavelov say, that the Gypsies were an inferior race. *Oi ana asana* [16], well, by the way when did we become a superior race? You see me so, clad in European clothes, however, my granddad walked about wearing full-bottomed breeches; I speak and write 13 languages, but in the end my granddad didn't know even one. (laughter). May you excuse me for Gypsies being supposedly an inferior race. Gypsies have given scholars to the world ... By origin Petko Karavelov is Sarakatsani – he is a Gypsy! [17] (applause). We have Ministers who are of Gypsy origin, Chiefs of train stations, Generals in our Army whose origins are Gypsy and they have deserved to carry their epaulettes. An Officer died at Slivnitsa [18] – Lieutenant Kochov, a Gypsy. However, he has been silly for having fought and not ran away; now they are taking away the rights of his compatriots.

Our political parties have not taken the side of the Gypsies do you know why? Ah? Should I tell you? (voices: Do tell us?) I will tell you: because they are patriots (he makes signs in the air, catches something and puts his hands in his pockets – laughter). Why are there unconditional funds just in case, *zor, zaman achim* [19], however, in these funds there are Gypsy money too *arif ulan aniasan* [20] (applause). They deprived the Gypsies from rights to suffrage, so that our affairs should prosper and so we blossomed. And are elections more free now – *bosh laf* [21]; May God forgive you, Petko Karavelov, I do respect you, however, with your permission I shall again prescribe to him *Oleum sersemicum* (laughter). Are you aware that Vasil Stoyanov [22], who during the time of the Revolution founded the Bulgarian Literary Society, is of Gypsy origins? He is from Zheravna. Well, you do know how the bagpipers from Zheravna play! – they are maestros in music and that shows that something good will come out of them. What else do you want from them? To discover a new America? Well, they say [Gypsies] make mistakes during elections – [a saying] “cucumbers for green caviar” [23] ... But [they say Gypsies] were nomads and wanderers, and that is why they don't give them rights “*nukare zhamata*” [24] ... (laughter). For the majority of the XI National Assembly, I shall prescribe *Oleum sersemicum*. [They say] the Gypsies stole and that is why they do not give them rights; that is what our leaders speak about. Hey, *tarankoolu* [25], “It is not Kolyo who is insane for having eaten five *zelniks* [26] but the one who has given them to him”. We, the Bulgarians, are naïve: hey you, *sersemoglu, sersem* [27], that one who steals – catch him by his ear – and send him in jail, *ai anasane* [28] ... (laughter). They say of the “honest” people to be the true villains; there are truly honest people, however, are hiding. Probably, that is what they say about me in *Cherven Rak* (Red Crab) [29] – “Leave him there – *Sakantiyata* [30] he is insane.” – Fair enough, *dzhanum* [31], I went trice to the hospital and the doctor told me – “If you come in here, you are going to be the one proclaiming me as insane. I do not want you” (laughter). Well? Am I wrong?

I shall tell you something ... We are all men here, let's talk more openly ... Are there no women? (Voices: There are none!) Well, I will tell you now a story ... Someone, called X. – even if I don't tell you who he is, you know him, has made a sort of a crime – they caught him; he has done something ... *churukliya* [32]. Who has done it – again X. (applause,

voices: True). Well, why don't they give schools to the Gypsies? Are they not human beings: *sizededzham, bizde badla dzhanmol?* [33] Since people who are wandering are not given rights, so [they do the same] to our Gypsies as well. But: *comparaison n'est pas raison* [34] (voices: that's right-t-t).

I am concluding, gentlemen. If, for example, the Gypsies move out from these lands completely, who will mend the pots in the villages? Who will be the porters in the Capital? (voices: That's right). Gypsies, gentlemen, are a productive nation and we are obliged to re-establish their stripped rights ..." (applause).

Iliya Uzunov: "I am honoured for being elected as a vice-chair of the Gypsy tribe. We make sure to give back the stripped rights of the Gypsies." (applause). [...]

Dr Markov:

– Since our Congress has a political character, we ask for the approval of the following Resolution:

1. A Telegram to High Royal Highness – Sofia:

"The Delegates of the Copts population in Bulgaria have gathered today in the First Copts Congress in Sofia with the aim – to gain and get back their repressed rights in 1901, ignoring the ordinances of the Treaty of Berlin and the ordinances of the Constitution; they have the hope that Your Highness, under whose management Ministers govern the Principality, you will be so kind and bring the attention of the Prime Minister to make what is necessary in the National Assembly so that our human rights are restored. We provide soldiers, we pay all our duties and so what? – there are no exceptions made for our duties, however, we have no rights. We would like to study – schools we do not have. Our demands are lawful and we hope that Your Royal Highness will use his influence so that we do not live as pariahs in a free and constitutional Bulgaria. Long live His Royal Highness!"

2. A telegram to Mr. Dobrovich – Head of Office of the Principality – The Palace:

"The first Gypsy Congress decided unilaterally to ask His Royal Highness to be so kind and to accept a Delegation of five members which would present verbally to the Master the wishes of the Gypsy tribe in Bulgaria. We ask for an answer."

3. To send a telegram to the Chair of the National Assembly:

"Condescend, Mr. Chair, to give us an answer, will you be able to accept us tomorrow, as delegates of the First Gypsy Congress, so that we present to you one of our lawful requests."

The meeting is scheduled for tomorrow at 2 o'clock, even though it is a workday. You are all welcome as this matter concerns not only Gypsies but all humans (Bravo!).

Notes

1. It means the *Muhtar* of the so-called old Gypsy Mahala in Sofia.
2. Here (as below), it is explicitly emphasised that some of the speeches in the congress were in the Gypsy language. However, the question arises as to what extend the reporter covering the congress has been able in such cases to understand what it was being talked about, and why they conveyed these statements in broken Bulgarian.
3. Here, and several times bellow, the phrases in broken Turkish which the journalist perceived as incomprehensible for the readers are repeated in Bulgarian.

4. Long live Prince Ferdinand! (Turkish). At that time, the head of the Principality of Bulgaria is Prince Ferdinand I of Bulgaria.
5. The newspaper *İkdam* (Effort), founded in 1894 and published in Istanbul, has been the most popular newspaper of the time in the Ottoman Empire.
6. 'Waqf' is a charitable endowment under Islamic law, which typically involves a building, plot of land or other assets for Muslim religious or charitable purposes.
7. A Bulgarian proverb which says that the morning can tell what the day will be like.
8. It refers here to the Byzantine Emperor Nikephoros I (802-811) who died in the battle during his march against the Bulgarian State. There has been a legend, already reflected by Petko R. Slaveykov (Славейков, 1866, p. 3), that the Gypsies were the blacksmiths who coated the Emperor's skulls with gold and silver and made from it a cup with which the Bulgarian Khan Krum drank toast in the feasts he organised. This legend has been preserved among the Roma in Bulgaria to this day.
9. The meaning of the law (Latin).
10. An incomprehensible phrase.
11. Fr. (confused): Les lois de gens – People's laws
12. See above, 2.1.1., note 8.
13. The mountain made an effort and it gave birth to a mouse – a Bulgarian proverb which means that huge efforts have been put while the result is insignificant.
14. A contemptuous address from the Turkish *yalan* 'lie' and *oğlu* 'son', i.e. son of a liar.
15. *Oleum sersemicum!* The speaker's pun (Dr. Marko Markov), a combination between the Latin *oleum* and the Turkish *sersem* and could be translated as 'balm for fools'.
16. Turk. (confused): *Oi anlasana* – O, understand. Cf. 20, 28 below.
17. The confusing of the Sarakatsani (Greek-speaking pastoral population in the Balkans) with the Gypsies is a common occurrence, which can be encountered to this day. Also ascribing a Gypsy origin to celebrities is a fairly common practice in the Balkans. The number of famous Bulgarians who, on various occasions (most often to be offended or humiliated), have been attributed by their contemporaries to an alleged Gypsy origin, is too high, among them Todor Zhivkov, who was General Secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party and was the de-facto leader of the People's Republic of Bulgaria from 1956 until 1989 and this even includes some contemporary Bulgarian politicians. However, in other cases ascribing Gypsy origin to famous personalities by Roma themselves is with a positive meaning and nowadays the number of such renowned personalities with alleged Roma origin is constantly increasing.
18. It refers to the Battle of Slivnitsa on November 17-19, 1885 during the Serbo-Bulgarian War.
19. During difficult times (Turkish).
20. An incomprehensible phrase.
21. Fudge/empty words (Turkish).
22. Vassil D. Stoyanov (1839-1910) is a public known, educated figure, one of the founders of the Bulgarian Literary Society in Braila (Romania) in 1869, which eventually grew in 1911 into the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. There is nothing to suggest about his "Gypsy" descent.
23. A Bulgarian idiom meaning to lie to somebody.
24. An incomprehensible phrase.
25. Bulgarianised form of 'alankoolu' (see above note 14).
26. Traditional Bulgarian cabbage pie.
27. Son of a fool, a fool (Turkish).
28. An incomprehensible phrase.
29. A popular locale in Sofia at the time.
30. The 'Sakantiya' (from the Turkish 'sakın'– do not) is the public nickname of Dr Marko Markov. In this case, it was used in the sense of 'trouble-maker'.
31. A 'soul', 'heart' (Turkish), in this case may be understood as 'dear'.
32. Literally 'rotten' (Turkish), in the sense that he has committed immoral acts.

33. Something like “you, guys, we have souls too” (Turk.).

34. Comparisons are misleading (French).

Source: [No Author]. (1905d). Цигански конгрес. *Вечерна поща*, 1905, December 20, p. 2.

Prepared for publication by Elka Mincheva, Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

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2.1.5 *The Gypsy Congress – The Second Meeting*

Цигански конгрес – Второ заседание

Циганите, с прости турски облекла, с фесове и чалми, заели местата си в салона на “Сан-Стефано”. Те с дълбоко внимание изслушват всички оратори. Облаци дим се носят над главите им от запущени лули и чибуци, но нито шум, нито глъч, нито думичка издават те, когато на трибуната говори някой. Те с голямо смирение изслушват всички убедени, че вършат нещо свято, че се борят за брутално отнетото им право. Циганите, които в обикновения живот минават за кавгаджии, сега в техни първи конгрес са тъй тихи – до богобоязливост.

Председателят на конгреса, генералният цигански пълномощник, д-р Марко К. Марков, поканва интелигенцията на събранието да се изкаже по циганския въпрос. Никой от присъстващите не поисква да се нагърби с дебатирането на този толкова важен цигански въпрос.

Тогава стана най-интелигентния от циганите Мустафа Рабан – редактор на вестник “Ферат” и на турски каза една реч, с която покани циганите да издават един цигански орган (вестник), списуван на български и на френски. Циганските делегати обаче отхвърлиха това предложение. Д-р М[арко] К. Марков каза още една реч в защита на циганската кауза. След него Али Билялов се обърна към делегатите цигани с една кратка реч на български:

“Братя, цигани!

Ние трябва защити наше право. Ние ходи войник и трябва има право на избор циганско население. Ние има циганин офицер, бил се на Сливница за българско население, трябва и нази права да избираме. Ние даваме войник, а нямаме училища ...” (гласове: Вярнооо).

След това се избра депутация от д-р М[арко] К. Марков, Али Билялов, Р. Мустафов, И[лия] Узунув, Али Мустафов, Али Махмудов, Хасан Алиев, Ибрахим Исмаилов, Емил Юмеров и Еф. Икономов, които него пред обед се представиха на председателите на Народното събрание и са поднесли молбата си за изменение на чл. 2 от Избирателния закон, като съдържащ противозаконно разпореждане – “циганите не-християни да нямат избирателни права.”

Подпредседателят г-н Добри Петков казал, че ще сезира Народното събрание по празниците по този въпрос. След това депутацията с файтони отива при кореспондента на вестник “Times” г-н Баучър, живущ в хотел “България”, за дето е поместил една статия във вестник “Times” за циганския въпрос. Понеже г-н Баучър отсъствувал от хотела и циганите не носели със себе си визитните си

картички, викнали хотелиера и на него изказали високата си благодарност, която дължели към Баучера. След това дойдоха в нашата редакция да изкажат своята благодарност.

След закриването на конгреса вчера, циганите са поздравили телеграфически княза по случай Н[овата] година.

Днес конгресистите са получили телеграма от Двореца, с която им благодарят за поздравленията.

Циганите делегати се разотидоха по домовете си.

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The Gypsy Congress – The Second Meeting

The Gypsies, clad in simple Turkish clothes, wearing fez caps and turbans, take their places in the Hall of *San-Stefano*. They listen attentively to all speakers. Clouds of fumes move above their heads which comes from the smoking pipes and chibouks, however, they make no noise nor clamour, they don't speak even a word when somebody speaks from the tribune. With great humility, they listen to everyone and they are convinced that they do something sacred, that they fight for their brutally stolen right. The Gypsies, who ordinarily are considered as quarrelsome, now in their first Congress are quiet – even pious.

The Chair of the Congress, the Chief Gypsy Executive, Dr. Marko Markov, invites the intelligentsia of the meeting to say a word on the Gypsy question. Nobody who is among the present wants to be burdened with the discussion of this so important Gypsy matter.

Then, the most intelligent among the Gypsies, Mustafa Raban, stood up – the editor of Newspaper *Ferat* [1] who gave a speech in Turkish which invited the Gypsies to publish a Gypsy publication (newspaper) in Bulgarian and French. The Gypsy Delegates, however, declined that suggestion. Dr. Marko K. Markov gave also another speech in defence of the Gypsy cause. After that, Ali Bilyalov turned towards the Gypsy Delegates with a short speech in Bulgarian:

“Brothers, Gypsies

We ought to defend our right. We serve as soldiers and the Gypsy population ought to have voting rights. We have a Gypsy Officer who fought at Slivnitsa for the Bulgarian nation; we too ought to have voting rights. We provide soldiers, however, we do not have schools [2] ...” (voices: Correct).

After that, a Deputation was chosen, composed by Dr. Marko K. Markov, Ali Bilyalov, Riste Mustafov, Ilya Uzunov, Ali Mustafov, Ali Mahmudov, Hasan Aliev, Ibrahim Ismailov, Emil Yumerov and Ef[tim] Ikonov, and was presented before noon to the Members of the National Assembly and it submitted an application for the modification of Art. 2 of the Suffrage Law, which contains the unlawful ordinance – “Non-Christian Gypsies should not have the right to suffrage.”

The Vice Chair, Mr. Dobri Petkov [3] has said that he will censure the National Assembly during the holidays regarding this matter. After that, the Delegation heads off with phaetons to the Correspondent of *Times* Magazine Mr. Bouchier [4], living in Hotel *Bulgaria*. Since Mr. Bouchier was away from his hotel and as the Gypsies did not bring their business cards with them, they called to speak with the hotel Manager and to him they expressed their high gratitude which they owed to Bouchier. Then, they came to our Editing Office to express their appreciation.

After the Congress was closed yesterday, the Gypsies have sent their greetings through a telegram to the Royal Prince regarding New Year.

Today, the Congressmen received a telegram from the Palace which thanked them for their greetings.

The Gypsies went away to their homes.

Notes

1. In all likelihood, here it is meant Mustafa Ragap, editor-in-chief of Newspaper *Feryat* (Scream), published in Sofia in 1905-1906 by an immigrant Young Turks organisation (Иванчев, 1969, Vol. 3, p. 43; Ялъмов, 1998, p. 57).
2. The speech of Ali Bilyalov is presented in a very broken Bulgarian language.
3. Dobri Petkov (1860-1932) was a Bulgarian public figure and politician, at that time deputy Chairman of the Bulgarian National Assembly.
4. Here, it refers to the famous journalist James David Bouchier (1850-1920) who has been a long-time Balkan correspondent for the Newspaper *Times* and lived in Bulgaria (1894-1915).

Source: [No Author]. (1905e). Цигански конгрес. *Вечерна поща*, 1905, December 21, p. 2. Prepared for publication by Elka Mincheva, Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov. Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.1.6 A Telegram from the Gypsies to the Royal Prince

Телеграма на циганите до княза

На 19 т[ози] м[есец] бюрото на циганския конгрес изпрати следната телеграма по случай Григорианската Нова година:

“До Н[егово] Ц[арско] В[исочество] Фердинанд I – Княз Български.

В[аше] Ц[арско] В[исочество], любими ни Господарю, делегатите на цялото българско коптско циганско население на събрание на конгреса в столицата за издействуване въстановлението на политическите изборителни права на коптското население ви поздравяваме по случай Новата ви година. Чест ни е да поднесем пред стъпките на Ваше Царско Височество израз на най-сърдечните честитавания и поздравления, като молителствуваме пред Всевишного Бога, да ви дарува дълголетно щастие и благоденствувано царуване, вам и на В[аше] Ц[арско] В[исочество] Престонаследника – княз Борис Търновски, и на цялата ви Династия, за славата на България и за преуспяване на милото ни Отечество.

Най-верни и искренни предани поданници на Ваше Царско Височество.

Предствители на коптското население в България.”

Следват подписите на 50 делегати от Циганския конгрес.

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A Telegram from the Gypsies to the Royal Prince

On the 19th of this month, the Office of the Gypsy Congress sent the following telegram on occasion of the Gregorian New Year [1]:

“To His Royal Highness Ferdinand I – Bulgarian Royal Prince.

Your Royal Highness, our favourite Master, the Delegates of the whole Bulgarian Copts Gypsy population having gathered in a meeting in the Capital for the purpose of regaining the Copts’ political rights to suffrage, we send you greetings with regard to the New Year. It is our honour to offer to Your Royal Highness a gesture of most-cordial congratulations and greetings as we beg the Almighty God to grand you many years of joy and a blessed reign, to you and to Royal Highness the Heir – Royal Prince Boris Turnovski, and to your whole Dynasty, for the glory of Bulgaria and for the prosperity of our beloved Homeland.

Most loyal and sincerely dedicated citizens of Your Royal Highness.

Representatives of the Copts population of Bulgaria.”

Following are the signatures of 50 Delegates of the Gypsy Congress.

Note

1. Bulgaria changed its official Julian Calendar (the so-called ‘old style’) with the Gregorian Calendar (the so-called ‘new style’) in 1916, but the Bulgarian Orthodox Church continued to use the Julian Calendar until 1968. The Roma in Bulgaria however prefer to use old style calendar until nowadays, and the date of 14 January is considered the ‘Gypsy New Year’.

Source: [No Author]. (1905f). Телеграма на циганите до княза. *Вечерна поща*, 1905, December 22, p. 3.

Prepared for publication by Elka Mincheva, Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.1.7 The Gypsy Movement

Циганско движение

Софийският адвокат г-н д-р М[арко] К. Марков, председател на Първия коптски конгрес, след празниците ще държи публични речи в Ихтиман, Т[атар] Пазарджик и Пловдив по циганския въпрос. Коптското движение се усилва и д-р Марков всеки ден получава насърчителни писма от влиятелни и интелигентни цигани. Американският писател и кореспондент г-н Алберт Сонкисен също така се заинтересувал от коптското движение и тая сутрин, придружен от д-р Марков посетил циганите в новата махала.

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The Gypsy Movement

The lawyer from Sofia, Mr. Dr. M. K. Markov, Chair of the First Copts Congress, after the holidays will give public speeches in Ihtiman, Tatar Pazardzhik and Plovdiv regarding the Gypsy question. The Copts movement is gaining momentum and Dr. Markov receives daily encouraging letters from influential and intelligent Gypsies. The American writer and Correspondent Mr. Albert Sankisen [1] was also interested in the Copts Movement and this morning, accompanied by Dr. Markov, he visited the Gypsies in the New Mahala [2].

Notes

1. This refers to Albert Sonnichsen (1878-1931), an American journalist who, in 1906, joined the Bulgarian armed detachments in Macedonia (at that time part of the Ottoman Empire).
2. The gradual displacement of the so-called old mahala farther from the center of Sofia began after 1888, in the locality of Konyovitsa, where the city meadow was then located. In 1905-1907, the so-called new mahala (*Konyovitsa* and *Tatarli*) was already formed and gradually grew in the following years while the old mahala disappeared (Marushiakova & Popov, 2007a, pp. 128-129).

Source: [No Author]. (1905g). Циганско движение. *Вечерна поща*, 1905, December 25, p. 3. Prepared for publication by Elka Mincheva, Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov. Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.1.8 Dr. Marko Markov in Plovdiv

[Д-р Марко Марков в Пловдив]

Циганските права се е заел да защитава д-р М. Марков, който събира и цигански конгрес в София. Миналата седмица той държа реч у [Театър] "Люксембург" пред много цигани в Пловдив. Не желаем да влизаме във въпроса дали е време и е полезно да се възстановят правата на циганите, но ще кажем тук, че доколкото ние видяхме и чухме, види ни се като подигравка на конституцията по правата да се защитават тез, с този начин. Види ни се чист фарс!

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Dr. Marko Markov in Plovdiv

The affair of defending the Gypsy rights was taken by Dr. M. Markov who also organises a Gypsy Congress in Sofia. Last week, he gave a speech in Theatre *Luxemburg* [1] in front of many Gypsies in Plovdiv. We are not willing to discuss the matter whether it is the right time or if it is beneficial the rights of the Gypsies to be given back, however, we will say here that as far as we could see and hear, it appears to us as a mockery to the Constitution that these people's rights are defended and in that a fashion. It appears to us as a pure farce!

Source: [No Author]. (1906). [No Title]. *Зорница*, 1906, January 12, p. 3.
 Prepared for publication by Elka Mincheva, Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.
 Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.1.9 *The Gypsy Meeting in Varna*

Цигански събор в град Варна

Г-н Ф-в ни пише от Варна:

Неумолимият Марко К. Марков, нарицаем още “Сакънтията”, в своя прочут поход против потъпкваните права на циганите, или коптите, [реша] незабавно да посети града ни. С обявления, по дълги, отколкото неразделният му другар бастуна “Конституцията”, той канеше гражданите от името на “вашите братя по рождение” (sic.) да покажат доблест и съдействие, като почетат с присъствието си събора. Види се, по здравословни причини, съборът не можа да стане в някои от градските салони, та се откри на стъгдата пред старата болница. Заседанието почна с циганска точност: на часа три, вместо в един и половина, както беше обявено. Това закъснение циганите – облечени в пъстри дрехи – доброволно понесоха, защото по тая причина се възползуваха от сиромашкото лято и пушейки страстно своите дули, размениха си сладки приказки за щастливо бъдеще ... Най сетне чуха се гласове “Идат, идат!”. Генералният коптски щаб начело с М[арко] Марков, с бавни стъпки пристигнаха на мястото, поздравявани с темане от циганите. Веднага М[арко] Марков се покачи на масата, определена за трибуна, и – с калпак на главата – след като хвърли внушителни погледи на всички страни, започна да развива своя лекция по общественото, международното и българското конституционно право в свръзка с циганския въпрос. От съдържанието по обявлението за събора се знаеше предварително – нали хубавия ден се познава от сутринта? – че речта на М. Марков ще бъде свободна от сакънтия, че тя ще представлява изобилно словоизлияние, окичено с бисери от народната циганска словесност ...

“Господа граждани, – провикна се ораторът – преди пет години едно велико престъпление се извърши над коптското население в Княжеството. За срам и позор на съвременното човечество, отне се най-свещенното им право – изборителното! Прокламацията на о Бозе почившия Цар Освободител, Берлинският договор, българската конституция ... Време е, трябва час по-скоро с общи сили да измием това петно, хвърлено върху политическата чест на мила и хубава България!” ...

Тогава зимното слънце, което срамежливо криеше лицето си зад облаците, усмихнато погледно и освети гъстите и сключени вежди на късия борец за отнетите права на циганите. Коптите, макар да не разбираха думите, пак със зяпнали уста слушаха самозвания защитник, който в продължение на повече от един час, поддържаше напрегнатото им внимание с възклицателни изрази и поговорки; последните му думи бяха придружени с гръмогласния им поздрав: “Яша, яша, бин, яша!”

По реда си говори по турски, доста увлекателно, интеллигентният коптянин Мустафа Рагеб-бей, а подир него взе думата Еф. Икономов, който – между другото – каза, че велика Русия е проляла кръвта на своите мили синове за свободата не само на нас – българите, а и за всички други народности, живущи в Княжеството. Ив. Корчев, общинският билиотекар, кротко, но ясно доказва неверността на Икономовото твърдение, още [повече], че циганите са недостойни за изборително право, понеже през Освободителната война се биха против освободителите си и че в бъдеще пак няма да бъдат верни български граждани.

Съдържателните речи на Станчо Ж. Мутафов и Ан. Чифутов, които отговаряха на М. Марков и с-ие, раздразниха духовете на присъстващите копти, щото едвам можа да се избегне сбиването, с което оплакващите копти, пред очите на своя leader-а, щяха да докажат, че действително още не са зрели за свобода – че мъдра е мерката, взета преди няколко години от правителството, което отне от циганите изборителното им право. Около часа шест циганският събор гласува да се изпрати телеграма до Н[егово] Ц[арско] В[исочество] Княза от името на варненските копти и “другите жители на град Варна”. От своя страна гражданите не от коптски произход, присъстващи на събора от любопитство, по предложение на Ф. Христов, взеха решение с телеграма до Княза да съобщят че първата телеграма не изказва желанието на варненските жители, освен на циганите. Очаквайки по-добър прием другаде, М. Марков засега се утешава, разумява се с туй, че поне мъчнотията му за пари поолекна, защото той благоволил да приеме, научава се, скромната сума от 20 000 лева (цяла министерска заплата, без никакви удръжки) за възнаграждение на труда си по възстановяване потъпканото право на коптите. Без съмнение циганите в България са предоволни от своя смел вожд, който се води от поучението: *audacem fortuna juvat!* – просто преведено значи: бъди нахален, не се бой! Обаче тесната дейност на М[арко] Марков възмуцава две съсловия в Княжеството: свещеническото и военното, които също не се ползват от изборителното право. Не по-малко негодуват македоно-одринчаните. Вече чухме неколцина от последните да разсъждават така: законът не позволява да се избира бащата, но по външността си Марко К. Марков, он же доктор на някакво си Право, личи да е българин; следователно ако целта му с шумната дейност по циганския въпрос е чиста от съблазни мира сего, т.е. намерението му не е [за] лична него[ва] облага, защо – бе, брате – негова милост, сакънтията, не се завземе да ги приложат в Македония и Одринско правата, предвидени в Берлинския договор (за чието изпълнение толкова милее!), или поне да се възстановят отнетите на тамошното население [права], с които се ползваше до скоро време, например да избира съдебни заседатели? Наистина може много нещо да се каже върху поривите, що са накарали М. Марков да плаче върху чуждия гроб. Засега ще му припомним любимия съвет, който той дава на слушателите си, а именно: аннмаяна сиври синекъ сазъ дъръ, аннмаяна даулъ да зурла азъ дъръ ...

Ф-в

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A Gypsy Meeting in the city of Varna

Mr. F-v writes to us from Varna:

The unrelenting Marko K. Markov, also known as the *Sakantiya*, in his famous crusade against the infringed rights of the Gypsies, or the *Copts*, should promptly visit our town. With flyers, longer than his inseparable friend, the walking stick the “Constitution” [1], he was inviting all citizens on behalf of “your brothers *by birth*” (sic.) to show valour and to cooperate by giving respect to the meeting with their presence. It is apparent, that due to health concerns, the meeting cannot take place in one of the Halls in the town, so it took place at the square in front of the old hospital. The meeting began with Gypsy accuracy: at 3 o'clock, instead of half past one as it was originally planned. The delay was happily endured by the Gypsies – clad in colourful clothes, as in this way they took advantage of the warm weather and while passionately smoking their pipes, they exchanged pleasant words about the prosperous future ... In the end, voices were heard “They come, they come!”. The General Staff of the Copts, headed by Marko Markov, came with their slow pace while they were greeted with short bows by the Gypsies. Promptly, Marko Markov climbed on the table, fixed to serve as a tribune, and – wearing a cap on his head – after throwing imposing glances at all sides, he began to deliver his own lecture on the theme of the society, the international and Bulgarian constitutional law regarding the Gypsy matter. By the contents in the notice about the meeting it was known in advance – a beautiful day is known from the morning, isn't it? – that the speech of M. Markov will be free of *sakantiya* and that it will be an abundant verbiage accompanied with pearls from the Gypsy national speech ...

“Gentlemen, citizens, – the speaker shouted out – five years ago, a grave crime was made on the Copts population in the Principality. Shame and disgrace of modern humankind as their most sacred right was taken away – the suffrage. The proclamation of the deceased Tsar the Liberator, God rest his soul [2], the Treaty of Berlin, the Bulgarian Constitution ... It is time, urgently, with common efforts, we ought to clear up that stain which rests on the political honour of our dear and beautiful Bulgaria!” ...

Then, the winter sun which was hiding shyly its face behind the clouds peaked with a smile and illuminated the thick and joined eyebrows of the short fighter for the sake of the stolen rights of the Gypsies. The Copts, even though they did not understand his words, gazed with their mouths open the self-proclaimed defender who for more than an hour kept their tense attentions with the expressions of saying and proverbs; his last words were accompanied with their loud greeting: *Yasha, yasha, bin, yasha!* [3].

As scheduled, the intelligent Copt, Mustafa Rageb-bey fascinatingly spoke in Turkish and after him spoke Ef. Ikonov who – by the way – said that Great Russia has spared the blood of her dear sons soldiers for the sake of the freedom of not only us, Bulgarians, but also all other nationalities who live in the Principality. Ivan Korchev, the Chief Librarian of the district, proved gently but clearly the wrong statement of Ikonov and

added that Gypsies are unworthy of the right to suffrage because during the Liberation War they fought against their Liberators and that they will again be unfaithful Bulgarian citizens in the future.

The meaningful speeches of Stancho Zh. Mutafov and An. Chifutov, who were responding to M. Markov and the rest, irritated the spirits of the present Copts as it was hardly possible to avoid a fight with which the complaining Copts, in the mere presence of their leader [4], were going to prove that truly they are not yet ready for freedom – that the government's measure which took away from the Gypsies their rights to suffrage several years ago was wise indeed. At around 6 o'clock, the Gypsy Assembly voted to send a telegram to His Royal Highness, the Prince on behalf of the Copts from Varna and "the other citizens of the city of Varna". On the other hand, those citizens of non-Copts origin who were present at the meeting out of curiosity, as suggested by F. Hristov, took the decision to announce to the Royal Prince with a telegram that the first telegram does not represent the wants of the residents of Varna but only these of the Gypsies. Hoping for a better reception somewhere else, M. Markov seeks to console himself for the time being. It has been learnt that since his need of money has been slightly eased as he *has been so kind* to accept the sum of 20,000 leva (the whole salary of a government minister without any deductions) as a remuneration for his efforts in regaining the infringed rights of the Copts. Undoubtedly, Gypsies in Bulgaria are more than satisfied with their brave leader who goes by the teaching: *audacem fortuna juvat!* [5] – translated in simple words this means: be insolent, do not be afraid! The peculiar business of Marko Markov, nevertheless, rouses the indignation of two estates of people in the Principality: the clergy and the military who also do not have the right to suffrage. Neither less is the resentment of the people of Macedonia and the Edirne region either. We have already heard from the latter to deliberate in the following way: the law does not allow the father to be chosen, however, by his appearance, Marko K. Markov, a Doctor in whatever law, seems to be a Bulgarian; therefore, if his aim around the sensational Gypsy affair is sincere, in other words, his intent is not for his own benefits, why – Oh, brother – his honour, the *Sakantiya*, does not endeavour to apply this in Macedonia and the region of Odrin, as envisaged in the Bulgarian Constitution (for which he so dearly cares for!), or simply to give these rights to suffrage to those who live there and who until recently used to have rights for example to elect Members of the Judiciary? Truly, many things may be said for the reasons that have made M. Markov to shed tears on some else's grave. For now, we shall remind him about a favourite advice which he himself gives to his listeners and namely: *annmayana sivri sinek saz dur, annmayana daul da zurla az dur* [6] ...

Notes

1. According to his contemporaries, Dr. Marko Markov had been widely known to the Bulgarian society for his long cane which bore the big inscription 'Constitution' (Каназирски-Верин, 1947, p. 79). In this way, he had penetrated the socio-political morals at a time when canes were often the last argument in political struggles.
2. It refers here to the Russian Emperor Alexander II the Liberator, called 'Tsar, the Liberator' which in Russia refers to his reform for the emancipation of serfs, but in Bulgaria, it points the

so-called Liberation War (1877-78) between the Russian and Ottoman Empires, which resulted in Bulgaria becoming an independent state.

3. Long live, long live, long live thousands of times (Turkish).

4. In the text, 'leader' is written in English which gives it a mocking sense.

5. Fortune favours the bold (Latin).

6. See 2.1.1, note 8. For the one who understands, even the mosquito is a *saz* (musical instrument), for the one who does not understand, both the drum and the *zurna* are not enough (Turkish proverb).

Source: Ф-в. (1906). Цигански събор в град Варна. *Вечерна поща*, 1906, January 28, p. 2.

Note: This is the second newspaper bearing the same title with editor-in-chief Stoyan Shangov.

Prepared for publication by Elka Mincheva, Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.1.10 A Gypsy Protest

Цигански протест

В Министерството на външните работи – Церибашията иска аудиенция

Циганите в Царството са се силно разтревожили. Те отново ще повдигат въпроса за отнетите им граждански права. В по-големите градове вече те са взели своите решения. Същото са сторили и софийските цигани, които с циганията си развалят цялата работа.

Вместо да чакат общото решение на циганската партия, се явяват вчера в Министерството на външните работи и манифестирали вчера чрез особена врява своите искания пред министър Паприков. Коридорите на Външното министерство добили параден изглед: едно голямо число представители на фараонското племе смиреномудрено чака да ги приеме министърът на аудиенция. Разсилните вместо да поканят в чакалната зала тия фараонов дворяни, почнали да ги тласкат и пъдят.

Вдига се ужасна врява:

– Господин разсилено, сакаме го на правото! – се звери церибашията на един от разсилните.

– Министър, министър! Бащице ... сакън, ааа ...

В два [часа] министър-разсилните изтласкаха депутацията, която тръгна да търси по-голяма порта ...

∴

A Gypsy Protest

In the Ministry of External Affairs. – The Mayor Asks for an Audience

Gypsies in the Kingdom are quite worried. They will again raise the question regarding their deprived civil rights. In the major towns, they have already made up their minds. The same have also done the Gypsies from Sofia who in their Gypsy way ruin the whole affair.

Instead of waiting for the general decision of the Gypsy Party, they appeared yesterday in the Ministry of External Affairs and manifested, by kicking up a racket, their demands to the Minister Paprikov [1]. The corridors of the Ministry of External Affairs began to

resemble a parade: a big number of the representatives of the Pharaoh's tribe [2] waited with humility to be seen by the Minister. The ushers, instead of inviting these Pharaoh's noblemen in the waiting room, began to push and chase them.

A horrible uproar is being raised:

– Mister usher, we're asking for a right! – the *Tseribashi* [3] irritatingly says to one of the ushers.

– Minster, Minister! Father ... *sakan* [4], aaa ...

At around 2 o'clock the ushers pushed the Delegation out, which in return began to look for a bigger gate ...

Notes

1. Stefan Paprikov (1858-1920), was a well-known Bulgarian politician, at that time Minister of Foreign Affairs.
2. Pharaoh tribe – in almost all chapters there is reference to the link between Gypsies and Pharaoh.
3. 'Tseribashi' misspelled 'Cheri-bashi' (Turkish). In the Ottoman Empire, the term used to refer to the leaders of nomadic Gypsy groups who were designated by the authorities and were responsible for paying the taxes. In the independent Bulgarian State, this term acquired the meaning of 'a leader of the Gypsies' in the Gypsy mahalas in towns.
3. Do not (Turkish).

Source: [No Author]. (1908). Цигански протест. *Вечерна поща*, 1908, November 26, p. 3.
Prepared for publication by Elka Mincheva, Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.
Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

Comments

The published above block of materials reveals the emergence and first steps in organising the Gypsy civil rights movement in Bulgaria. Moreover, considered on a global scale, this is the first event of this character in the history of the Gypsies.

After the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of new ethno-national states in the Balkans, the aspirations of Roma, now as citizens of the newly established states, for civic emancipation were further boosted. As a result of the war between the Russian and the Ottoman Empires in 1877-1878, the subsequent San Stefano Peace Treaty, the Berlin Congress, and the adoption of the Constitution (known as the Tarnovo Constitution) in April 1879 in the city of Tarnovo, a new Bulgarian State was created. The Tarnovo Constitution promulgated citizenship and equality for all inhabitants of the country (i.e. including Gypsies) – Art. 57 "All Bulgarian subjects are equal before the law", and Art. 86 "Voters are all Bulgarian subjects above 21, who have civil rights and political rights" (Конституция 1945). At least from a legislative point of view, all Bulgarian citizens were declared equal, but only about two decades later, it becomes clear that the new state did not perceive all citizens as equal (especially Gypsies), and this was also reflected in the legislation.

On the 3rd of May 1901, a law for the amendment of the Election Law was debated and voted by the 11th National Assembly (at 61st extraordinary session). The amendment was

proposed by the Government, headed by Petko Karavelov (till December 1901) and after that by Stoyan Danev, which came into power as a coalition between the Democratic Party and the Progressive-Liberal Party and is known in Bulgarian history as a progressive one. According to the provisions of this law, Item 2 under Art. 4 and Art. 7 “Who is banned from voting” a text ran as follows: “In that number the Gypsies non-Christians, as well as all those Gypsies without any fixed abode” (Държавен вестник, 1901, p. 3). In this way, Muslim Gypsies were deprived of voting rights (at that time the majority of Gypsies in Bulgaria), as well as nomadic Gypsies (more exactly, those without administrative registration). As it became clear from the discussion in the parliament, the reason for proposing this amendment was the general practice of ‘vote-buying’ of Gypsy votes at elections, and the perception of Gypsies as people with “low-culture” and with an “aversion to work”. The proposal was that the right to vote should remain only for those Gypsies who “do not differ from Bulgarians”, which was considered as the defining sign of integration. This was followed by a heated discussion about where in the country “undercover Gypsies” were living.

The debates and the very inclusion of the cited amendments to the election law are the clearest indications for the reluctance of the Bulgarian political elite to accept Gypsies as an integral part of Bulgarian society and of the Bulgarian nation. During the continuous debates on the passing of this amendment (in the presence of the Prime Minister Petko Karavelov and all Bulgarian political leaders at the time), only a handful left-wing deputies (e.g. Yanko Zabunov from Bulgarian Agrarian Peoples Union, Todor Vlaikov from the governing Democratic Party) spoke against such discriminatory and anti-constitutional limitations of the rights of the Gypsies (Стенографски дневници, 1901, pp. 258-260). The discussion lasted for about an hour, and in its final speech Prime Minister Petko Karavelov put forward the final argument in defense of the proposed legislative draft:

A few words more I will say for clarification. [...] We do not need voters from a nation with low culture. If they leave the country, they will do very well for us. If a USA nation does not allow such a thing for the Chinese people, then we will do well too if we remove the Gypsies who are not capable of any work. (Ibid., p. 259).

The comparison with the USA was decisive. The law was voted almost unanimously, with 90 votes for out of 96 present (Ibid., p. 260). Only the representatives of the left-wing political parties voted against, including the Bulgarian Workers Social-Democratic Party (the future Communist Party). The new law for the amendment of the Election Law immediately came into force by Decree No 271 of Prince Ferdinand I (Държавен вестник, 1901, p. 3).

The mere adoption of these amendments to the Election Law clearly demonstrates the reluctance of the Bulgarian political class (and of the Bulgarian society as a whole) to accept the Gypsies as an integral and, above all, equal part of the Bulgarian civil nation. The reaction of the Gypsies, however, surprised Bulgarian society. Immediately after the adoption of the amendment to the electoral law, an improvised Gypsy conference was

held in 1901 in Vidin where the protest against the limitation in the electoral rights of Gypsies was voiced (Marushiakova & Popov, 1997, p. 29). Even more surprising was that Gypsies commenced a real campaign rejecting of the adopted amendments. They were supported in this by Dr. Marko Markov, an ethnic Bulgarian, a lawyer and famous and eccentric public figure at that time. He was born in Tulcea (now in Romania), studied at Robert College in Istanbul, and continued with law studies at the Universities of Bern and Zürich. Subsequently, he defended his doctoral thesis at the University of Liege. In the 1880s he was one of the forerunners of the future communist movement in Bulgaria (Стоянов, 1966, pp. 213-220). According to the memoirs of his contemporaries, he was exceptionally educated, knew many languages, and was correspondent of many West European newspapers (Каназирски-Верин, 1946, p. 79).

The idea of the need for the civic emancipation of Roma and their struggle for equal civil rights should not be considered to have been brought in “from the outside” by non-Roma. Along with Dr. Marko Markov, other leaders of the protest initiative were Gypsy men – Ramadan Ali, a *Muhtar* (representative of the Mayor for the Gypsy mahala, appointed by the municipal authorities) in the Sofia and Ali Bilyalov, his assistant (second *Muhtar*). Ramadan Ali has held this post for almost two decades, since 1888, when he used to be a deputy of the former *Muhtar*, Ibrahim Mustafov, and has been elected unanimously (by 230 votes) by the Gypsies in the mahala as their leader (DA Sofia, f. 1 K, op. 2, a.e. 1848, l. 1-15). The statements of the Gypsies themselves during the congress (as well as those quoted in the press before) make it clear that they are well aware of what has been going on and Ramadan Ali appears to be not the original initiator but because of his better education, he was the main public speaker of their ideas.

In the newspapers, the Congress in Sofia was referred to as ‘Tsiganski’ (‘Gypsy’ in Bulgarian), while the organisers themselves spoke of it as a ‘Coptic’ congress, and the speakers called themselves ‘Copts’ and ‘Coptic population’. This is easy to understand, considering the dominant idea in the Bulgarian society (among Roma as well) at that time that Gypsies have originated in Egypt and are descendants of the ancient Copts, which is directly related to the most commonly used designation of Gypsies as ‘Kipti’ (i.e. Copts) in the official records from the Ottoman Empire (Marushiakova & Popov, 2001, p. 19). The congress itself was attended by “40 to 50 delegates” who came from “all major cities of the Principality” (in fact, apart from the participants from Sofia, there was present only a delegation from Plovdiv). The organisers had previously sent letters to about 20 cities and small towns in Bulgaria but during the congress, some supporting telegrams were sent by Gypsies from other cities too (Vidin, Silistra, Varna) who had learned from the newspapers about the congress (i.e. among the Gypsies in Bulgaria there were already people who follow the print). Among the delegates, judging by their names, there were not only Muslims but also Christians who did not happen to bear the brunt of the amendments to the Election Law, i.e. the congress has been founded not on a religious but on a common ethnic basis. It is significant also that there were more than once references about Gypsy soldiers, which, however, do not apply to Muslim Gypsies because under the legislation at that time, Muslims were released from military service. All this

makes it clear that there had been already an idea of a unified community and for the existence of common problems and goals, at least among its elite. It is not clear, however, whether among the delegates there have been representatives of nomadic Gypsies. Most likely, this was not the case because in the debates they had not been mentioned even once. This sense of unity of the community is seemingly not yet comprehensive and the process is not complete.

The messages that were being conveyed during the Congress, as well as the main arguments which sought to defend these ideas, have been clearly formulated and they reflect the main goals pursued by the Gypsy elite at the time. In fact, there is one general goal – to achieve full social equality for the Gypsies, which, at least in theory, has been guaranteed to them as citizens of Bulgaria – while the specific goals are to repeal the discriminatory amendments to the Election Law.

The arguments for the need for this repeal are also clear – these amendments violate the Constitution, Gypsies fulfill their civic obligations (they pay taxes and serve in the army), and therefore they must enjoy full civil rights, like all other Bulgarian subjects. In this way, it becomes clear that the Gypsies in Bulgaria, along with their community ethnic identity, already have a civic consciousness and a civil national identity which serves as the foundation for their struggle for civic emancipation. It is natural that the emergence of these ideas takes place precisely in the Balkans, where Gypsies have lived for centuries, many of them permanently settled. Under the Ottoman Empire, the Gypsies were integrated into the society of the time. That is why the violation of the status established in the new Bulgarian state and the restriction of their civil rights is perceived so painful and provokes the convening of the Congress in response.

In his speech, the delegate from Plovdiv, Ali Mutishev, makes a not-so-clear attempt to distinguish between ‘Copts’ and ‘Gypsies’ – in his opinion, there is a difference between the two, and later on, he goes on to say that Gypsies are poor Copts. This statement also raises issues that have had an impact on the Roma movement in Bulgaria for decades and continue to be relevant today. It is about the so-called ‘turchene’ (the public demonstration of a Turkish ethnic identity) of large sections of Turkish-speaking Muslim Gypsies, as well as the prohibition of Gypsies (even if they declare themselves publicly to be ‘Turks’) to manage Islamic properties, including in the cases when there are no ‘real’ (i.e. ethnic) Turks in a certain place (about the development of this problem over the years and its impact on the process of civic emancipation of the Roma see below).

In this context, interesting is the reaction of Turks in Bulgarian and in particular of their civil and political elite. When discriminatory restrictions on Muslim Gypsies were adopted in 1901 in the amendments to the Electoral Law, none of the Turkish deputies spoke or voted against. Two years later, in 1903, these same 12 Turkish deputies, however, petitioned for the return of the voting rights of Muslim Gypsies (Ulusoy, 2013, p. 99). During the congress in Sofia in 1905, materials in support of the demands of the Gypsies appeared in the Turkish newspaper *Tuna* (Danube), published in Ruse (Ibid., p. 100). The following year, Mustafa Ragıp (his surname is transcribed in the Bulgarian press also as Raban, Ragap, Rageb), a journalist from the Turkish newspaper *Feryat*, undertook together

with Dr. Marko Markov and Eftim Ikonov tour of the country. They visited Plovdiv, Haskovo, Burgas, Aytos, Varna, Dobrich), where they organised public presentations of the Muslim Gypsies' demands for the return of their rights to vote (Ibid., p. 101). In the letter from Varna published here, Mustafa Ragıp Efendi is described as an "intelligent Copt". He was an active member of the *İttihad Terakki Party* (the so-called Young Turks), and was called by his contemporaries *Kartallı Çingene Mustafa* (the Gypsy Eagle Mustafa).

The development of civic consciousness among the Gypsies in Bulgaria is only one side of the process of their social integration. However, in order to successfully end this long process, a move in the same direction from the other side is also necessary, i.e. Bulgarian society to be open towards Gypsies and towards their aspirations for equal status within the Bulgarian nation. In the case of the violated civil rights of the Gypsies, the reaction of politicians, the media and the Bulgarian public opinion as a whole, point to something quite clear – the entirely legitimate citizenship demands of Gypsies are not simply rejected and not taken seriously at all but also ridiculed. That is why there was no response from state institutions (National Assembly and the Prince) to the petition approved by the Congress and there was no reaction by the Bulgarian Parliament or to the telegram sent to the Palace.

The main (and in fact the only) discourse which the printed press reflects concerning the Congress itself is the irony, and the tune has been set within the first article on the topic, by Simeon Radev himself, a famous public figure, publicist and editor-in-chief of one of the most popular newspapers at the time, *Vecherna Poshta* (Evening Mail). He begins his article with a fictional quote by Karl Marx (who had died more than two decades before the Russian Revolution in 1905) and about the role of the Gypsies in the world revolution, and the international dimension of the forthcoming congress in Sofia.

Within this ironic discourse, there remains the whole further reflection of the congress itself, including even the deliberate presentation of the speeches of Gypsies participating in it in a quite corrupted Bulgarian language. To the personal calls of Dr. Marko Markov to Simeon Radev to help the Gypsies in their struggles to regain their stripped civil rights, the latter responded with "irresistible laughter".

This discourse continues to remain the same even later, in the attempts of Dr. Marko Markov to organise a public campaign in the country in support of the demands of the congress. Only in Varna, was the reaction of the public opinion a little different, and along with the mocking tone of the article which presents his visit to the city, the reasons for this attitude were revealed. For the Bulgarian society at that time, the main problem in the construction of the new nation was the fate of the Bulgarian population in Macedonia and region of Edirne, while the situation of the Gypsies in the country was not perceived as a problem at all and, therefore, it was not worth paying attention to. Even if there were violations of the Constitution, it should not be assumed that its norms should apply to the Gypsies because they do not deserve it (i.e. Gypsies are not perceived by the Bulgarian society as equal citizens).

In fact, this public reaction is a typical illustration of the Bulgarian (and in general, the Balkan) attitude towards the Gypsies. In the public consciousness, the view of the Gypsies

as part of the Bulgarian nation is permanently established, but with its special place within the categorical-axiological terms. Gypsies continue to be perceived as a collective unity, with a certain categorial status, but now with new axiological dimensions – in the eyes of the Bulgarian masses, Gypsies are unequal citizens. Moreover, this inequality is of a different order as compared to the attitude towards other ethnic communities – even though all others are ‘foreign’ and some are even ‘enemies’, they are still comparable as a category to the Bulgarians. Gypsies, on the other hand, are a community of another kind that is known *a priori* to be inferior and not comparable to the Bulgarians. Insofar as Gypsies are subjected to any value assessments at all, the opinion towards them is often rather disparaging (at least, as far as they know “their own place” in the Bulgarian society and do not seek to escape from it). That is why the civic aspirations of the Gypsies remain without seriously considering and nobody care to discuss whether or not their constitutional rights to vote are truly violated.

The roots of this attitude towards the Gypsies are laid in the so-called traditional culture of the Bulgarians, formed in the pre-modern era, during the Ottoman Empire. Gypsies have their place in the common models of the world and have been an integral part of the society of that time, they fulfill certain and necessary social functions but their place is not particularly enviable. They were never equal, never perceived as a community with the same value ranks equal to those of the Bulgarians, and Gypsies were always defined as ‘lower’. The fact that they were involved in many life situations and even in ethnically charged Bulgarian rituals, or that several times a year there is an exchange of sacral food, these inequalities were never eliminated in the inter-ethnic relations between the Gypsies and their surrounding population in the Balkans. The best illustration of this initial inequality could be found in Simeon Radev’s memoirs about his childhood in the town of Resen (today in the Republic of Northern Macedonia):

There were some wealthy people among the Gypsies. The Zizovtsi family lived not far from us. At Easter, we sent them red eggs; on St George’s Day, we used to receive from them a piece of roast lamb. This put my mother in great difficulty. We the kids didn’t want to eat meat sent by Gypsies. My mother used to say that it was a shame and a sin to throw it to the dogs (Радев, 1994, pp. 222-223).

The attitudes of the public opinion in Bulgaria towards Dr. Marko Markov was indicative of this – he was subject to constant ridicule, or at the best refined irony, and he was given the sobriquet ‘The Gypsy King’. The press expressed doubts about his mental state, which forced him in 1908 to call Krastyo Stanchev, the editor of the *Kambana* newspaper, to a duel (the duel did not take place) (Каназирски-Верин, 1946, p. 79). Eventually, Dr. Marko Markov could no longer endure this and left the capital Sofia to settle in Ruse. In 1915, Andreas Scott Macfie (Mui Shuko) met him there and described him in his famous book *With Gypsies in Bulgaria* (Mui Shuko, 1916, p. 138). After the First World War, Dr. Marko Markov withdrew from active public affairs and died in Ruse in 1939.

Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, we have not been able to find the Manifesto which has been issued and linked with the civil struggle seeking to restore the voting

rights of the Gypsies, given by Dr. Markov to Andreas Scott Macfie (Ibid.). It remains to be hoped that it has not disappeared irrevocably as it would be an important source in understanding the first steps in the process of Roma civic emancipation.

Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov

2.2 Local Organisations

2.2.1 *The Statute of the Egyptian Nationality in the Town of Vidin*

Устав на Египтянската народност в гр[ад] Видин

Глава I. § 1. Наименование, уредба, задача и седалище.

Чл. 1. По силата на стария обичай на гореспоменатата народност, в града Видин се установи реда за право-отношенията ѝ в обществото и между себе.

Чл. 2. Правилата и разпоредбите по смисъла на настоящия устав се простират и за всичките Цигани в околията, без разлика на вероизповеданията им. Ако в съседните околийски центрове няма подобна групировка, това с право се отнася за целия окръг. Малските и селски церибаши (малебаши) по надлежност за сведения, съдействия и пр. се отнасят към градския общински мухтар.

§ 2. Състав, управление и способ.

Чл. 3. За спазване и изпълнение на наредбите се натоварва един главатар наречен "Мухтар", който се избира за неопределено време по жребие, измежду 9 души малки старейшини – първенци, определени с тайно гласуване (с билотинки) от имеющите граждански и политически права. Предпочитателно за избиратели и избираеми се допускат вписаните в общинските изборни списъци.

Чл. 4. Едновременно с провъзгласяването на мухтара, избира се и един за разпоредител – негов помощник, с явно гласуване, също и един за касиер, а другите 6 души остават за съветници. В съвета не може да влизат роднини от първа степен.

Чл. 5. При распределяване на длъжностите ако коцката (жребие) падне некому, който не желае да бъде мухтар, той може същевременно да упълномощи другиго измежду деветех души, без право на повращения. В случай пак че помощника не желае да поемне длъжността, мухтара има право сам да си избере такъв и вън от избраните членове.

Чл. 6. Когато някои от постоянния състав би искал да се откаже от длъжността за винаги, или иска отпуск за по дълго време, той трябва да заяви пред съвета с един месец напред, които може да одобри или не.

Чл. 7. Заседанията на съвета са закони когато присъствуват повече от половината членове, а въпросите се решават по вишегласие на присъствающите. За секо заседание се държи протокол, който се подписва от всичките участвуещи. На съветниците длъжността е почетна, следователно за това те контролират действията на постоянния състав.

Чл. 8. Съвета е върховно началство, той може да разрешава всякакви въпроси от частен и обществен характер. Всеки член от съвета има право да внася предложения и да прави запитвания касаещи се за добрия вървеж на работите и във всяко време, когато намери за нужно, да покани членовете в комисия за да ревизират и прегледат сметките на касиера.

Чл. 9. Всяка година през месец май се произвежда избор за попълване на вакантните места в съвета, които може да станат: по причина на смърт; изселване от града; или от бламиране на някого за доказана нередовност.

Чл. 10. Права и длъжност на мухтаря е:

а) Да представлява групата пред органите на държавата, пред всички обществени учреждения, разни дружества и трети лица; б) Да свиква членовете от съвета на събиране, да определя дневния ред и да ръководи разискванията, така също да произвежда избори за разни длъжности и при равногласие има решающ глас; в) Да пази общите морални и материялни интереси на сънародниците си, да ги закрепва и да иска законна защита по отделно и въобще за всички, като уравнява произлезлите распри между тях; г) Да буди гражданско съзнание в хората си, като се старее сам или задружно, да се прокарват всички мерки и наредби, които са необходими за по-сносен и порядъчен техен човешки живот; д) Да се грижи за намиране работа на бедните, и в случай на нужда да им указва първа помощ, като се старее още да развие у тях почитание, съчувствие и послушност; е) Да следи за доброто умствено, здравословно и обществено възпитание на не възрастните, за да могат сами с достойнство и пълно умение да защитават своите интереси и да погодяват помежду си възникналите недоразумения; ж) Да бди за строгото изпълнение на всички законни разпореждания и да проучва способността на хората си, като взема пред вид в разни случаи, кои с какво и на кого с какво може да се помогне; з) Да изпълнява той всички длъжности и разпореждания, които му се налагат от законите в страната, предадени по канален ред лично, или писмено; и) Да дава незабавно по въпроси, касаещи се за хора от народността му, точни сведения на всички държавни, народни и обществени учреждения и да изпълнява бързо техните разпореждания; и к) Да резолира и подписва всички писма и документи, да надзирава архивата, имотите, за добрия ред въобще и да съхранява при себе си задружническия печат.

Чл. 11. В отсъствие на мухтаря, помощника стъпва в неговата длъжност и се ползува с неговите права, сам отговаря за всичко което стане по неговата заповед и разпореждания. Той води писмените работи, за които е отговорен лично като началник на канцеларията и води следните книги: 1) Поименен списък на възрастните мъже; 2) Книга за общите движими и недвижими имоти; 3) Книга за протоколните решения и постановления; 4) Входящи дневник; 4) Исходящи дневник; 5) Разносна книга; и 5) Справочна книга за разни бележки.

Чл. 12. Длъжност и права на касиера са: да се грижи за редовното събиране на сумите от разни постъпления; и да изплаща; по заповед на мухтаря до 10 лева: по

разпореждане на постоянния състав по 50 лева; а повече по решение на целия съвет. Той води тези сметководни книги: квитанционната и приходо-разходната.

Чл. 13. Касиера отговаря за поверените му ценни вещи и за доброто положение на сметките. Той е длъжен да вписва на време точно сумите, които постъпват на приход и които се изразходват, срещу които взема нужните разписки.

Чл. 14. Касиера може да държи на разположение свободни суми само до 100 лева, всички други суми внася в държавните парични учреждения, на текущи сметки от името на настоятелството. Ако даде гаранция каквато определи съвета, той може да държи при себе си всички суми.

Чл. 15. Когато касиера би заминал от града за няколко време, или по други причини не стои на работата си за да бъде намерен, той трябва да възложи длъжността си на друг член от съвета, или да остави предвидената в горния член сума за удовлетворение на нужди, които не може да търпят отлагания.

Глава II. § 3. Приход и разход.

Чл. 16. Приход: а) от доброволни пожертвувания и завещания; б) от глоби за разводи и незаконни живеяния; в) от лихви за даваните в заем пари; г) от наем на общите имоти; и д) от непредвидени случаи.

Чл. 17. Разход: а) за канцеларски разноски; б) за възнаграждение на служаци; в) за годишния празник; г) за разни помощи; и д) за благотворителни цели.

Глава III. § 4. Годишен народен празник.

Чл. 18. За годишен празник – покровител е определен “Тергъов-ден”, в който се наумява събитието от миналите времена. Той се празнува тържествено от всички мъже, жени и деца.

§ 5. Печат и длъжностен знак.

Чл. 19. За доказателство и потвърждение на всека писмена бумага, до когото и където и да е, ще се скрепва с подписа на мухтара и печата, който е кръгообразен със следуюния подпис по края “Къптийско мухтарство, г. Видин”, и в средата му ще се изобразява “Св. Георги” на кон, с копие в ръката, забито в крокодил, и зад гърбът му на коня царската дъщеря – мома, която била обречена на жертва на обожаваното в Египет животно и спасена от него, както и народа, запазен от суеверие.

Чл. 20. За отличие (за разпознаване) мухтара ще носи на гърдите си елипсовиден металически знак, с следуюния надпис от горе: “Къптийски мухтар”, а от доле “в гр. Видин”, и в средата ще има изобразено око със слънчеви лъчи, което ще напомня надзорната длъжност, наблюдателност и пр.

§6. Задружен имот.

Чл. 21. Задружните имоти били те движими или недвижими, ще се управляват – наглеждат и изпълняват по ред прокаран в настоящия устав. Начина на употреблението и целите ще се определя от съвета.

§ 7. Общи наредби.

Чл. 22. Освен указаните книжа, ако по естество на работата се изискват и други, съвета ще трябва да ги набави като ги провърви, номерира, подпечати и завери с

подписи от членовете. По всяка работа ще се издават правила и наредби, и отчети за положение на работите, както и решенията на съвета, мухтара ще ги разгласява писмено, или устно чрез хора, за знание, спазване и изпълнение.

Чл. 23. За трудът си постоянния състав ще получава годишно възнаграждение, според състоянието на всяко семейство, обаче то не може да бъде повече от 1 лев на глава за възрастните, от която сума мухтара ще заема половината, а втората половина ще се дели по равно между касиера и заместника. Всички такси за прихода от разните услуги, и суми за разхода, ще се определят от съвета.

§ 8. Последствия от неизпълнение на устава.

Чл. 24. За незачитане на разпоредбите по отношение на настоящия устав, нарушителите ще се глобяват в размер: от постоянния състав до 5 лева; а от съвета до 10 лева, и в краен случай за непокорните няма да се правят никакви постъпки, за помирение, закрила, помагане и пр. Бъде ли нарушението от длъжностно лице то ще се отстрани и може да бъде дадено под съд.

§ 9. Последни разпореждания.

Чл. 25. Всички наредби и разпореждания, по настоящия устав, ще се тълкуват и прилагат с изменения и допълнения, съобразно със законите в страната. И ако по някои причини устава съвсем се отмени, всичките имоти придобити чрез него ще се предадат на градската община.

Забележка: Преписи от протоколите по изборите, и за други промени на лицата от управителния съвет, ще се представят на общинското управление за знание.

Учредителна комисия.

Председател: Гюлиш Мустафа (Запасен подофицер).

Деловодител: Ахемд А. Неязимов (Тако Мунов).

Членове: Ашим Сеферов, Александр Танов, Ахмед А. Руянов, Нацо Конов, Байро Негрушев, Махмуд Мустафов, Шериф Тоташов, Манчо Мингюшев, Дервиш Байрамов, Вейсел Ранов, Шабан Дервишов, Цоко Петров, Шишко Ахмед Алиев, Георги Монов, Асан Ахмедов, Паци Чульов, Мусо Бузов, Ванко Шанов, Х. Усеин Абединов.

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The Statute of the Egyptian Nationality in the Town of Vidin

Chapter I. § 1. Name, Regulation, Tasks and Headquarters.

Art. 1. In respect of the old custom of the aforementioned nationality, in the town of Vidin, the order has been determined regarding its rightful relationships in the society and within itself.

Art. 2. The rules and regulations based on this Statute reach also all the Gypsies [1] in the district regardless of their faith. Provided there are no similar organisations in the neighbouring districts, rightfully, this also concerns the whole constituency. If the

neighbourgoods' and small villages' *Tseribashi (Malebashi)* [2] would need information, help, etc., they should refer to the *Muhtar* of the township.

§ 2. Constitution, Management and Tools.

Art. 3. For the proper implementation of the regulations is responsible a headman, called '*Muhtar*' who is elected for undefined period of time, via the casting of a lot among 9 persons, neighbourhood elders – the leaders determined via a secret ballot by those who have civil and political rights. Preferably, those allowed to vote and to be elected should be registered in the council voting lists [3].

Art. 4. Simultaneously, with the announcement of the *Muhtar*, another person is elected as his Dispensator – who is his assistant, elected via open voting, as well as one Cashier, while the rest of the 6 persons would remain to serve as Councillors. First-degree relatives are not allowed to serve the Council.

Art. 5. In the process of distributing the posts, if the ballot falls on someone who does not want to serve as a *Muhtar*, he could in the same time authorise someone else among the nine Councillors, without right of withdrawal. In the case that his assistant is not willing to take that position, the *Muhtar* has the right to appoint himself such a person including someone who is not among the elected Members.

Art. 6. If a permanent Member would like to quit his seat forever, or if he asks for a leave for a longer period of time, then he would have to make an application to the Council one month in advance which in turn would approve it or not.

Art. 7. The sessions of the Council are legitimate provided more than half of its Members are present while the decisions are taken based on the majority of votes of those who are present. Minutes are taken for each session and are signed by all who participate. The duties of the Councillors are honorary and therefore they control the actions of the permanent Council.

Art. 8. The Council is a supreme body and it can take decisions on all kinds of matters of both private and public character. Each Council Member has the right to submit motions as well as to make enquiries relating to the proper development of the works of the organisation and they can, at any time, when they consider it necessary, invite the Council Members to revise and review the accounts of the Cashier.

Art. 9. The vacant seats of the Council are being elected yearly in the month of May which could be opened due to: death, moving out of town, or the redundancy of someone because of a proven misconduct.

Art. 10. Rights and duties of the *Muhtar*:

a) To represent the group in front of the state's authorities, all public organisations, other associations and third parties; b) To convene Council Members, to determine the agenda and to lead discussions; also to organise elections for various positions and when there are equal votes, his opinion is decisive; c) To protect the common moral and material interests of their compatriots, to support them and to advocate for the legal protection of individuals and of everyone and resolves the formed disagreements between them; d) To awake civil consciousness among the people making everything possible, himself or together with the group, for the implementation of all the measures or ordinances that

are necessary for their more acceptable and respectable human life; e) To work toward finding work for the poor people and when in need to provide first aid making efforts to develop among them feeling of respect, compassion and obedience; f) To keep an eye for the good intellectual, healthy and civil up-bringing of the non-adults so that they could themselves, with dignity and fully enabled protect their interests and settle misunderstandings arisen between themselves; g) To be vigilant for the strict implementation of all legal regulations and to inquire about the abilities of his people, while at certain cases he takes into consideration who and with what, and to whom and with what, would offer assistance; h) To carry out all duties and orders which are assigned to him by the law of the State, either passed on to him in person or in writing; i) To provide promptly exact information regarding matters relating to the people of his nationality to all State, national and community organisations and to quickly execute their orders; and j) To oversee and sign all letters and documents, to oversee the archive, the real estates and be in charge in general for the good order, as well as to keep the stamp of the organisation;

Art. 11. When the *Muhtar* is absent, his Assistant steps in his position and enjoys the same rights; he is also to be solely responsible for everything that may take place due to his orders and dispositions. He keeps the written documents for which he is personally responsible as Head of Office and maintains the following books: 1) A List with the names of adult males; 2) A Book of the common movable property and real estate; 3) A Book with Report decisions and ordinances; 4) A Diary with received mails; 5) A Diary with sent mails; 6) A Record Book with expenses; and 7) A Reference Book with various notes.

Art. 12. The duties and rights of the Cashier are: to diligently collect the money from various sources; and to pay: up to 10 leva for orders made by the *Muhtar*; to 50 leva for orders made by the Permanent Council; and for more money by the decision of the whole Council. He maintains the following account books: one Book with Receipts and one with the Income and Expenses.

Art. 13. The Cashier is responsible for the entrusted to him valuables and for the good condition of the accounts. He is responsible to keep a good record and reference in a timely fashion the sums which come in as income and go out as expenses for which he has to keep receipts.

Art. 14. The Cashier may keep available sums up to 100 leva, all other sums he has to deposit in the state financial institutions in current accounts in the name of the Board of Trustees. If he gives a guarantee which is determined by the Council, he may keep all the sums by himself.

Art. 15. When the cashier is out of town for a certain period of time, or for some other reason he is not available and could not be found, he has to allocate his job to another Member of the Council or to leave the sum foreseen in above article for the satisfaction of needs which could not bear postponement.

Chapter II. § 3. Income and Expenses.

Art. 16. Income: a) from voluntary donations and bequests; b) from fines for divorces and unlawful cohabitations; c) from the interests of lend money; d) from the rent of the common estates; and e) from unforeseen circumstances.

Art. 17. Expenses: a) expenses for stationary; b) for the remuneration of staff; c) for the annual holiday; d) for other subventions; and e) for charity purposes.

Chapter III. § 4. Annual National Holiday.

Art. 18. For the Annual Holiday – as patron is determined *Gergyov-den* (St George's Day) which is being referred to events from the old times [4]. It is officially celebrated by all men, women and children.

§ 5. Stamp and Official Sign.

Art. 19. For the sake of proof and for the confirmation of each written document, sent regardless to whom and where, they will be accompanied by the signature of the *Muhtar* and the stamp which is circular with the following writing along the edge 'Coptic Muhtarship, town Vidin' and in its centre will be depicted 'St George' on a horseback with a spear in his hand, point stuck in a crocodile [5] and behind his back there is the King's daughter – a maiden which has been doomed to be sacrificed to the venerated in Egypt animal and rescued by him in the same way as the people were saved from paganism.

Art. 20. So, that the *Muhtar* is visually recognised, he will wear on his chest an oval metallic sign with the following writing at the top: 'Coptic Muhtar' while at the bottom 'in town of Vidin', and in its centre, there will be an eye with sunrays which will remind the supervisory position, attentiveness, and others.

§ 6. Common Property.

Art. 21. The common properties, regardless if they are movable or immovable, will be managed, supervised and executed by the regulations agreed by the current Statute. The ways of management and the aims will be determined by the Council.

§ 7. Common Regulations.

Art. 22. Besides the mentioned documents, if due to the course of work there arises the need for other documents, the Council would have to supply them by organising them, assigning numbers, stamping them and authorising them with the signs of the Members. Rules and regulations will be issued for each task, report on the work done, as well as the decisions of the Council, will be announced in writing by the *Muhtar* or orally via other people so that they are known, respected and carried out.

Art. 23. For their work, Permanent Staff will be remunerated annually according to the conditions of each family, however, it cannot be more than 1 lev per person for adults; half of this sum will go towards the *Muhtar* while the other half will be equally shared between the Cashier and the Deputy. The taxes for the income from the various services, as well as for the sums of expenses, will be determined by the Council.

§ 8. Consequences from Non-Compliance of the Statute.

Art. 24. For ignoring the regulations regarding this Statute, violators will be fined: from the Permanent Staff, up to 5 leva; while from the Council, up to 10 leva, and as a last resort for the disobedient no actions will be made towards reconciliation, protection, support and etc. If the violation is made by a Member of Staff, he will be ousted and may be sent to court.

§ 9. Final Regulations.

Art. 25. All orders and regulations in this Statute will be interpreted and applied with modifications and additions according to the laws of the Country. And if for whatever

reasons the Statute is thoroughly cancelled, all acquired properties will be handed over to the Town Council.

Note: Transcript from the Minutes of the elections and regarding other changes of the persons in the Executive Council will be presented to the Town Council for their knowledge.

Constituent Commission.

Chair: Gulish Mustafa (Reserve Sergeant).

Clerk: Ahmed A. Neyazimov (Tako Munov).

Members: Ashim Seferov, Aleksandr Tanov, Ahmed A. Ruyanov, Natso Konov, Bairo Negrushev, Mahmud Mustafov, Sheriff Totashov, Mancho Mingyushev, Dervish Bairamov, Veisel Ranov, Shaban Dervishov, Tsoko Petrov, Shishko Ahmed Aliev, Georgi Monov, Asan Ahmedov, Patsi Chulyov, Muso Buzov, Vanko Shanov, H. Usein Abedinov.

Notes

1. Here *кoпти* (Copts) and *цигани* (Tsigani), both terms meaning Gypsies, are used as synonyms.
2. Here 'Tseribashi' (see above) and 'Malebashi' are used as synonyms, i.e. head of *Mala* (*Mahala*).
3. Here, it refers to the registered voters for municipal elections.
4. St George's Day is a traditional holiday with old historical roots among all Balkan peoples, including the Muslims where it is celebrated in its Islamic version of *Hidırlez* (the day of Muslim saints Hidir and Ilyaz); over time, it was preserved mainly by the Gypsies under different names (*Gergyovden/Djurdjevdan/Hederlezi/Erdelezi*) and it became their biggest holiday, acquiring distinctly Gypsy ethnic characteristics (for more detail, see Marushiakova & Popov, 2007b, pp. 33-50; 2016c, p. 47).
5. According to traditional folklore legend, widely spread among the Balkan Christian peoples (including Christian Gypsies), St George kills a Slavic dragon (*змеѝ*), not a crocodile. The exchange of the Slavic dragon with the crocodile, as it could be seen by the Statute, was deliberate in order to emphasise the connection of the 'Copts' (Gypsies) with Egypt. The stamp of the Coptic Muhtarship also depicts a crocodile, not a dragon, while behind St George, on a horse, is seated the king's daughter – an image that is missing from the iconography of Orthodox Christianity, where the daughter of the king stands on the side (in the cases influenced by folklore legends and where she has been depicted).

Source: [No Author.] (1910). *Устав на Египтянската народност в гр. Видин*. Видин: Божинов и Конев.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

Comments

The presented Statute is a significant step forward in the development of organisational forms in the process of Roma civic emancipation in Bulgaria. At first reading, it describes already known practices for the selection of a *Muhtar*, his assistant and his councillors and these forms had already existed elsewhere in the country, e.g. in Sofia (DA Sofia, f. 1 K, op. 2, a.e. 1848, l. 1-15). There are also some additions to the procedure that are unique and even curious, such as the selection of a *Muhtar* by casing a lot among the already elected councillors – a practice that is unknown in Gypsy traditions, and possibly introduced in order to avoid disputes and internal divisions in the community under 'regular' elections (conducted by voting).

However, in addition to the known things in the Statute, there are also a number of new and meaningful points. The first thing to note here is the name itself – this already is not just about a Gypsy *mahala* but instead about the whole of the ‘Egyptian Nationality’. This means that the Gypsies are represented in it as a collective entity on an ethnic basis, which promotes, under the rules of the Statute, their representatives, who in turn communicate with the authorities on behalf of the community. Starting with Art. 1, as the main function of the Statute it is stated that it must, “In respect of the old custom” (that is, in accordance with the norms which remained since the time of the Ottoman Empire), establish and regulate not only “its rightful relationships in the society” (i.e. the public positions and attitudes of the Gypsies in the new realities), but also “among themselves” (i.e. within the community itself, which is certainly a new moment in its development). Moreover, in Art. 2 it is explicitly highlighted that the rules and regulations of the Statute concern “all the Gypsies in the district” and if there are no other alternative formations, it applies to the whole constituency. There is an obvious desire for the new organisation to be set up on a large scale and to include the whole “Nationality” in the region, organised on a hierarchical, vertical structure in which the leaders (*Tseribashi*) of individual urban Gypsy neighbourhoods and rural Gypsy communities are expected to co-ordinate their activities with ‘*Muhtar* of the township’. However, for its part, the *Muhtar* shares its power functions with those of the Supreme Council, which is a ‘supreme body’ (i.e. the original formula of parliamentary democracy and the separation of authorities are obvious). In doing so, the governing bodies (the *Muhtar* and the Supreme Council) assume certain responsibilities and obligations, e.g. to protect the ‘common moral and material interests of their compatriots’, to protect them from the authorities, to solve internal problems in the community, etc.

An interesting question has been raised for voters who are ‘preferred’ to be included in the lists of registered voters for municipal elections (i.e. voting is allowed even if they were not registered). At first glance, this requirement is discriminatory against Muslim Gypsies who, at least under the amendments to the Election Law of 1901 (see above), cannot be voters. However, the actual situation is clearly different from the legal norms because, as the names of the founders themselves show, most of them are Muslims (including Gyulish Mustafa – the Chairman of the Constituent Commission). It would be illogical for them to set such a criterion themselves if they were indeed deprived of suffrage, i.e. it is clear that the requirements of the law do not always apply in reality (at least in the local municipal elections).

It is interesting to note here that the Muslim Gypsies of Vidin, in particular, were among the first to be subjected to forced conversion of their religion in the new Bulgarian State – during the period 1878-1888, 1,435 Muslims were baptised in the diocese of Vidin (Елджаров, 2001, p. 597). Such forced conversions from Islam to Orthodox Christianity have been sporadically applied also elsewhere in the country throughout the interwar period (see below), as well as in the next historical era (the so-called era of socialism, when there was only the forced change of the names from Muslim to Christian, without religious baptising). In addition, there has been a ‘natural’ (i.e. without state coercion) transition from

Islam to Orthodox Christianity among many Gypsies from different regions of the country (e.g. in the capital Sofia). Nevertheless, Muslim Gypsies (some of them with Christian names) represent the majority of the Roma population of modern Bulgaria.

As far as the presented Statute, it is impressive that some of its specific formulations sound extremely up-to-date, as if they were written by our contemporaries, for example, Art. 10 which shows that one of its main goals is to “awake civil consciousness among the people” (namely the civic, i.e. their position as an equal part of the Bulgarian society and the Bulgarian civil nation).

As could be seen from the Statute, in it the terms ‘Tsigani’ (Gypsies) and ‘Egyptyani’ (Egyptians) are used synonymously and are interchangeable. Certain is, however, their preference for the name ‘Egyptians’ and this is not only because it signifies their Egyptian origin (based mainly on the Holy Scripture) – so well-known and spread in Bulgaria, but also because it would be much more prestigious for them and their social status – so that they would be recognised by the society as the heirs of an ancient civilisation and of high culture. That also explains why in the Statute so much attention has been paid to the stamp with its iconography, revealing their connections with Ancient Egypt (and emphasising their connections with Christianity through the image of St George). What is present is one of the signs of processes in the emerging nations in Central and South-Eastern Europe when the basic origin national narratives are being created, and they are reproduced at the artistic-pictorial level which bears symbolic significance (i.e. a new ethno-national symbolism is created).

Through the very idea of printing it as a small book, the Statute of the Egyptian Nationality in Vidin shows that its creators sought to widely emphasise, in social practice, their ideas about the relations between the Gypsies on the one hand, and the state and municipal institutions, on the other. Unfortunately, (at least at this stage) there is a lack of more historical information on how things have developed in Vidin since then. With regard to the practice of appointing representatives by the municipal authorities in the Gypsy mahalas, promoted by the communities themselves, history shows that this relationship over time has been dominated by the City mayor and the municipality who have acquired complete dominance. While in the first decades of the existence of the new Bulgarian State this practice of Gypsies electing their own representatives to the authorities continued, as part of the legacy of the Ottoman times (i.e. as some initial forms of internal national autonomy), in the 1920s and the 1930s, City Mayors were already able to directly appoint their deputies in the Gypsy mahalas without holding any internal elections.

This development is clearly visible, for example, in the materials from the town of Ferdinand (today Montana). There, after the election of a ‘Cheribashi’ in 1927, in response to the Gypsies’ request, the municipal council adopted a special decision according to which the appointment of a ‘mayoral deputy’ (*кметски наместник* in Bulgarian, the new term introduced for the ‘Cheribashi’) of their neighbourhood of a ‘person from the mahala, and Mohammedan faith’, should be done only following the mahala’s representatives’ recommendation (DA Montana, f. 3 K, op. 1, a.e. 25, l. 61). Despite this decision, over the next two years, the City Mayor fired three ‘mayoral deputies’ (the used official

term) and appointed new ones in their place (DA Montana, f. 79 K, op. 1, a.e. 32, l. 15; a.e. 34, l. 20; a.e. 35, l. 30). In this way, the institution of mayoral deputies became hostage to political strife (each new authority appoints their own deputies), a situation that still continues to this day.

Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov

2.3 National Organisations

2.3.1 *The Statute of the Organisation 'Istikbal – Future'*

Утвърждавам. Министерство на вътрешните работи и народното здраве.

№ 14300 от 2.VIII.1919 година.

Препис от устава.

Устав

на Софийската общо мюсюлманско просветно-културно
взаимоспомагателна организация “Истикбал – Бъдеще”

1. Седалище на организацията е Ст[аницата] София.
2. Цел на организацията – да организира мюсюлманите в една обща организация, която помага на бедните при болести, нещастие, случаи [на] смърт и пр., да се бори за морално, материално [и] просветно-културно издигане.
3. Същата чрез беседи, сказки, да открива курсове и пр. за която цел ги издържа един ходжа (поп) и една була, които са необходими при религиозния ни обичай. Издръжката е от членски внос 5 лв. месечно, от утра, вечеринки и увеселения и от разни дарения.
4. Членове се приемат всички български граждани навършили 20 г., които три месеца са неизбираеми [на ръководни длъжности], считани от деня на приемането им.
5. Събрания се свикват всеки месец, а общите в три месеца.
6. Организацията е строго безпартийна и при събрания забранява каквито и да са политически въпроси.
7. Всички се подчиняват на нарежданията на настоятелството и неподчинени[те] се наказват, а тези, които нанасят обида на началството или на организацията, ще се преследват съгласно закона в страната ни.
8. Организацията има под свое владение движими и недвижими имоти, които ги владееха досега професионалните сдружения, които влизат в организацията. От всички имуществва погребални[те] прибори се ползват само [от] членовете на същата, а не-членове ще плащат една определена такса в общата каса.
- [9.] Длъжност на председателя е да се грижи за добрия ход на всички организационни работи, при меншество има наравен глас.
10. Когато председателя отсъствува, замества се от един от [членовете на настоятелството], който носи отговорност.

11. Секретаря води всички книжа и се подчинява на председателя.
12. Касиера се грижи за членски внос и съхранява в касата не повече от 1 000 лева, а останалите внася в някоя банка на името на организацията.
13. Съветниците влизат в съвещание с председателя и образуват управителен съвет.
14. Контролната комисия контролира делата на настоятелството и книгата на секретаря и касиера, щом като намери нередности, [тя] може да отстрани от длъжност провинения и свика събрание, където дава отчет за делата на провинилия се.
15. Настоятелството се избира с мандат за една година. То може да се бламира, когато $\frac{1}{3}$ си подадат оставките или когато се провини в нещо, и то в общо събрание.
16. Организацията има печат със същото название.
17. Организацията има канцелария, която ще се използва и за събрания и след като се увеличи капитала на същата, може да закупи или застрои собствен дом, където ще се настанят бедни и недъгави вдовици и сираци, също и изпаднали мюсюлмани от цяла България.
18. [Организацията] всяка година ще раздава помощи на бедните по случай байряма, а зимно време дърва, кюмюр и пр.
19. [Организацията] ще ходатайства там, където трябва да се отпуснат кредити на мюсюлманите, които да ги употребят за направа на жилищата си удобни за по-хигиеничния живот според нивелацията на града.
20. При смъртен случай [организацията] отпуща известна сума за погребението, като го придружава до вечния му дом.
21. Членове, не платили три месеца членския си внос, се изключват от членство, като му се отнемат всички права.
22. Клоновете [на организацията] се управляват от представител – от по един делегат, произхождащ от средата на членовете от клона, като се ползват с всички права като делегат и член на настоятелството на организацията и предава решението на организацията на членовете от клона, на което решение се подчиняват всички членове.
23. Членовете могат да преизбират свои делегат, когато той се провини на нещо и вместо него се изпраща новоизбрания, придружен с пълномощно.
24. Да се застъпват всички интереси на членовете при болести. Изпраща се безплатна лекарска помощ, дава безплатна адвокатска защита и съвети.
25. [Организацията] ще ходатайства пред Главното Мюфтийство да искат да се даде нов живот на Мюсюлманската Вероизповедна община, която се управлява от Софийския мюфтия без закон и устав.
26. Организацията помага на административните власти и пр.
27. [Организацията] ще помирява членовете си, [при] които [има] препирания и пр.
28. В случай на ликвидация, имуществата се предават на настоятелството на вероизповедната община.

Председател: (п[одпис]) Ю[суф] Мехмедов.

Секретар: (п[одпис]) Шакир М. Пашев.

Вярно с оригинала. Секретар: ... [подпис].

Управително тяло на организацията: ... [нечетивни подписи на 7 души].

∴

I affirm [1]. Ministry of Internal Affairs and National Health.

No. 14300, from August 2, 1919.

Statute Transcript.

The Statute
of the Sofia's Common Muslim Educational and Cultural
Mutual Aid Organisation 'Istikbal – Future'

1. Headquarters of the organisation is the Capital Sofia.
2. The aim of the organisation – to organise the Muslims in one common organisation which helps the poor in times of illnesses, accidents, death, and others and to fight for their moral, material and educational, and cultural upbringing.
3. [These aims] the aforementioned [organisation achieves], through talks and lectures, organizes classes etc. It supports a *Hodzha* [2] (Orthodox Priest) and a *Bula* [3] which are needed in our religious custom. Support comes from membership fees, 5 leva per month, from morning and evening parties, entertainments and from various donations.
4. Members could be all Bulgarian citizens at the age of 20 and above who should not be elected [on lead managing positions] for three months from the day of their acceptance for membership.
5. Meetings are held each month while the General meetings are held every three months.
6. The organisation is strictly non-partisan and in its meetings, it forbids the discussions of any political matters.
7. Everyone should obey the orders of the Board of Trustees and those who do not obey the rules will be persecuted and those who insult the Leadership or the Organisation will be persecuted according to the law of our country.
8. The Organisation owns movable and immovable properties, owned till now by professional associations which join the Organisation. Among all property, burial utensils should be used by members only while non-members will pay a pre-determined fee at the common cash register.
9. The job of the Chair is to take care for the proper execution of all tasks of the Organisation, when there is a minority, the Chair has an equal vote.
10. When the Chair is absent, he is superseded by one of the Board of trustees [4] who bears responsibility.

11. The Secretary maintains all paperwork and is subjected to the Chair.
12. The Treasurer takes care of the membership fees and keeps in the safe no more than 1,000 levs while the rest of the money he deposits in a bank on the Organisation's account.
13. The Councillors hold consultation with the Chair and form the Board of Directors.
14. The Control Commission controls the actions of the Board of Trustees as well as the accounting books of the Secretary and the Treasurer; as soon as it finds irregularities, it can lay off the accused and call for a meeting which gives an account about their deeds.
15. The Board of Trustees is elected with a mandate of a year. The Board of Trustees can be censured when a 1/3rd of the Members hand in their resignations or when it is accused of wrongdoing while in a General Meeting.
16. The Organisation has a Stamp with the same name.
17. The Organisation has an office which will be used also for the purpose of meetings and when the organisation's capital increases, it could buy or build their own home which will host poor and disabled widows and orphans, and also dejected Muslims from all across Bulgaria.
18. The Organisation will give aid yearly to the poor for *Bayram* [5] and in the winter time – wood, coal, etc.
19. The Organisation will advocate favourably for the release of credit loans to the Muslims, at the places where appropriate, which would be used for the building of their homes, appropriate for a more hygienic way of life in accordance to the levelling of the town.
20. At times of death, [the organisation] gives out a certain amount of money for the purpose of the burial and the organisation accompanies the departed to their eternal home.
21. Members, who have not paid their dues for three months, will be excluded from membership and all their rights will be revoked.
22. Branches of the Organisation will be managed by a Representative – a Delegate who is a Member from the branch and who has all the powers as a Delegate and as a Member of the Board of Trustees; the representative passes the decisions of the Organisation to the branch members and they should respect them.
23. Members can re-elect their Delegate when accused of something and in his stead is sent the newly elected one with a power of attorney.
24. To argue on behalf of all the interests of its Members at times of illnesses. It sends free medical help, gives free attorney defence and advice.
25. The Organisation will intercede with the office of the Main Mufti asking for a new life for the Muslim Religious Parish which is governed [now] by the Mufti from Sofia unlawfully and without a statute.
26. The Organisation helps the state authorities and others.
27. The Organisation will make peace between its Members who have arguments, etc.
28. In the case of liquidation, the real estate will be transferred to the Board of Trustees of the Religious Parish.

Chair: (Signature) ... Yusein Mehmedov.

Secretary: (Signature) ... Shakir M. [6] Pashev.

True with the original, Secretary: ... [Signature].

Management Body of the Organisation: ... [Illegible signatures of 7 people].

Notes

1. The resolution, "I affirm" of the Minister of Internal Affairs and National Health means that the Statute of the organisation is approved by the authorities and that it is already registered with the law.
2. 'Hodzha' is the term used in Bulgaria for Imam; in this case is meant not the Imam in a certain mosque but a chosen person from the mahala who performs a number of functions as an Islamic cleric during certain customs (first and foremost at funerals). Such forms of Folk Islam are widespread among Gypsies in Bulgaria, including today.
3. 'Bula' is the term used to refer to the woman-assistant of the 'Hodzha' in Folk Islam who takes over some of the Hodzha's functions among the women. This form is also widespread among Gypsies in Bulgaria, in some cases even there may be only 'Hodzhakinya' (Imam-Woman).
4. In the original, it is 'one of the Chairs' which is an obvious mistake.
5. Muslims in the Balkans (including Muslim Gypsies) celebrated two big religious holidays under the name 'Bayram' – *Kurban-Bayram* (Eid al-Adha or Eid Qurban) and *Sheker-Bayram* (Eid al-Fitr or Ramadan Bayram).
6. In the original, it is 'Shakir N. Pashev' which is a typo – Shakir Pashov's second (patronymic) name is 'Mahmudov'. He himself spells his family name in many documents as 'Pashev' and that is the case here.

Source: SCA, f. 1Б, op. 8, a.e. 596, l. 69.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.3.2 *The Minutes of the General Constitutive Meeting of the Mohammedan-Gypsy Union*

Протокол

на общото Учредително събрание от 25 декември 1933
година на Общия мохамедано-цигански национален културно-просветен и взаимоспомагателен съюз в България

Днес, 25 декември 1933 година, в ст[аницата] София, ръководящото общото учредително събрание на гореказания съюз в състав: Председател: Рамчо Шакиров, подпредседател Демир Яшаров и секретар Слави Илиев, състави настоящия учредителен съюз протокол за следното:

I. Одобри се съставения в три екземпляра устав на Общия мохамедано-цигански национален културно-просветен и взаимоспомагателен съюз в България, като се възложи на избрания управителен съвет да го представи на Почитаемото Министерство на Вътрешните Работи и Народното Здраве в ст[аницата] София, за надлежно утвърждение.

II. С мандат до първия съюзен конгрес избраха се следните управителни тела:

Управителен съвет:

1/ Шакир М. Пашев, от София, ул. “К[онстантин] Величков” No. 80; 2/ Рашид Мехмедов, от София, ул. “Одоровци” No. 45; 3/ Билял Османов, от София, ул. “Три уши” No. 145; 4/ Слави Илиев, от София, ул. К[онстантин] Величков, No. 134; 5/ Мехмед Скендеров, от София, ул. “Татарли” No. 56.

Запасни членове на Управителния съвет:

1/ Рамчо Шакиров, от София, ул. “Индже войвода” No. 43; 2/ Младен Спасов, от София, ул. “Индже войвода” No. 43.

Управителния съвет след конституирането си избра:

Председател на съюза – Шакир М. Пашев, Секретар на Съюза – Славе Илиев, и Касиер на съюза – Мехмед Скендеров.

Контролна комисия:

1/ Асен Османов, от София, ул. “К[онстантин] Величков” No. 127; 2/ Сали Билялов, от София, ул. “К[онстантин] Величков” No. 98; 3/ Найде Яшаров, от София, ул. “Татарли” No. 16.

Просветен съвет:

1/ Ахмед Сотиров, от София, ул. “Индже войвода” No. 71; 2/ Благой Сотиров, от София, ул. “Доктор Калинков” No. 25; 3/ Яшар Сираков, от София, ул. “Татарли” No. 155; 4/ Асан Рустемов, от София, ул. “Татарли” No. 94 и 5/ Васил Димитров, от София, квартал “Безжичен телеграф”.

Религиозен съвет:

1/ Кочо Такев, от София, ул. “Индже войвода” No. 29; 2/ Али Яшаров, от София, ул. “К[онстантин] Величков” No. 104; 3/ Мато Асанов, от София, ул. “Татарли” No. 11; 4/ Калея Доков, от София, ул. “Татарли” No. 45; 5/ Мустафа Сеидимов, от София, ул. “Климентина” No. 196; 6/ Монге Ахмедов, от София, ул. “Татарли” No. 52; 7/ Мустафа Фенузов, от София, ул. “Татарли” No. 29; 8/ Банго Талев, от София, ул. “Константин Величков” No. ... и 9/ Демир Салиев, от София, ул. “К[онстантин] [В]еличков” No. 76.

Ст[аницата] София, 25 декември 1933 г.

Бюро на общото учредително събрание на съюза:

Председател: ... [подпис], Подпредседател: ... [подпис], Секретар: ... [подпис].

::

The Minutes

of the General Constitutive Meeting on 25 December 1933 of the Common Mohammedan-Gypsy National Cultural-Educational and Mutual Aid Union in Bulgaria

Today, 25 December 1933 in the Capital Sofia, the managing constitutive meeting of the aforementioned Union in composition: Chair Ramcho Shakirov, Vice Chair Demir

Yasharov, and Secretary Slavi Iliev, constituted the present Constitutive Union Minutes with the following:

I. It approved the created Statute of the Common Mohammedan-Gypsy National Cultural-Educational and Mutual Aid Union in Bulgaria and it was delegated to the elected Board of Directors to present it to the Esteemed Ministry of Internal Affairs and National Health in the Capital Sofia in order to be dully approved.

II. With a mandate until the first Union Congress the following managing bodies were elected:

Board of Directors:

1/ Shakir M. Pashev, from Sofia, Konstantin Velichkov Str. No. 80; 2/ Rashid Mehmedov, from Sofia, Odorovtsi Str. No. 45; 3/ Bilyal Osmanov, from Sofia, Tri Ushi Str. No. 145; 4/ Slavi Iliev, from Sofia, Konstantin Velichkov Str. No. 134; 5/ Mehmed Skenderov, from Sofia, Tatarli Str. No. 56.

Substitute Members of the Board of Directors:

1/ Ramcho Shakirov, from Sofia, Indzhe Voyvoda Str. No. 43; 2/ Mladen Spasov from Sofia, Indzhe Voyvoda Str. No. 43.

After the Constitutive Meeting, the Board of Directors chose:

President of the Union – Shakir M. Pashev, Secretay of the Union – Slave Iliev, and Treasurer of the Union – Mehmed Skenderov.

Control Commission:

1/ Asen Osmanov, from Sofia, Konstantin Velichkov Str. No. 127; 2/ Sali Bilyalov, from Sofia, Konstantin Velichkov Str. No. 98; 3/ Nayde Yasharov, from Sofia, Tatarli Str. No. 16.

Enlightenment Council:

1/ Ahmed Sotirov, from Sofia, Indzhe Voyvoda Str. No. 71; 2/ Blagoy Sotirov, from Sofia, Doktor Kalinkov Str. No. 25; 3/ Yashar Sirakov, from Sofia, Tatarli Str. No. 155; 4/ Asan Rustemov, from Sofia, Tatarli Str. No. 94; and 5/ Vasil Dimitrov, from Sofia, Bezzhichen Telegraf neighbourhood.

Religious Council:

1/ Kocho Takev, from Sofia, Indzhe Voyvoda Str. No. 29; 2/ Ali Yasharov, from Sofia, Konstantin Velichkov Str. No. 104; 3/. Mato Asanov, from Sofia, Tatarli Str. No. 11; 4/ Kaleyа Dokov, from Sofa, Tatarli Str. No. 45; 5/ Mustafa Seidimov, from Sofia, Klimentina Str. No. 196; 6/ Monge Ahmedov, from Sofia, Tatarli Str. No. 52; 7/ Mustafa Fezunov, from Sofia, Tatarli Str. No. 29; 8/ Bango Talev, from Sofia, Konstantin Velichkov Str. No. ...; and 9/ Demir Saliev, from Sofia, Konstantin Velichkov Str. No. 76.

The Capital Sofia, 25 December 1933.

Bureau of the General Constitutive Meeting of the Union:

President: ... [Signature], Vice President: ... [Signature]. Secretary: ... [Signature].

Source: CSA, f. 264, op. 2, a.e. 8413, l. 27-28.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.3.3 *The Statute of the Mohammedan-Gypsy Union*

Устав

на Общия мохамедано-цигански национален културно-просветен
и взаимоспомагателен съюз в България

Седалище на Съюза – ст[аницата] София.

Чл. 1. Цел на Съюза: да организира всички цигани (мохамедани и др[уги]) в националната им принадлежност в България за да създаде между им просветна, професионална и обща култура, а така също да оздрави на базата на законите в България религиозния им бит с ценни морални устои; да създаде организация за защита материалните и духовни интереси на тая нация в страната, а и взаимоспомагателен институт чрез самопомощ.

Чл. 2. Средства на съюза: [членски внос на] организациите към Съюза във всички населени пунктове на циганските малцинства, популярни беседи и курсове за просветно и професионално образование, здравно гражданско учене за култивиране граждански добродетели в майката отечество – България издигане висотата на религиозния бит на членовете си и при наличност на законни условия откриване на частни училища.

Чл. 3. Редовни членове на Съюза могат да бъдат всички наши сънародници в България и др[уги страни], числящи се към всички отделни сдружения, а и неорганизираните такива, но членуващи в професионалните си сдружения: ковашкото, калайджийското, кошничарското, джамбазкото, посредническо-джамбазкото, хамалското, музикантското и пр[очие], като отделните професионални сдружения или организации биват представени с по един делегат пред съюза с пълномощно от своето сдружение или организация.

За почетни членове в съюза се провъзгласяват всички дарители било то в наличност, в имоти или поддръжка на съюза в материали.

Чл. 4. Материални средства на съюза: [средствата], добити от редовен членски внос, определен по размер от Върховния съвет на съюза, заседаващ всяка година, от дарения, увеселения, забави, вечеринки, излети, глоби от съюзната управа над членуващите, от съюзни печатни издания или значки. [...]

Чл. 5. Права на членовете. Всички организирани членове на съюза са равноправни и участвуват с право на глас във всички събрания на съюза. Всеки член на съюза е длъжен безрезервно да се подчини на наредбите на управителния съвет, които не противоречат на настоящия устав, а и да работи за преуспяването на съюза, да записва нови членове и да пропагандира между националното ни малцинство за просветното, общокултурното и възпитателно назначение на съюза, изобщо да пропагандира целите на съюза.

Чл. 6. Организация на съюза. [...] Всяка провинциална организация влизаща в общия съюз избира и изпраща с редовно пълномощно свои делегати за конгреса. [...] Съюзния конгрес излъчва Висш съюзен съвет. Конгреса може да бъде посетен

и от желаещи гости, но без права на избиратели и избираеми. Съюза ще действа за сдобиване с всички права по законите на страната, с които се ползват всички останали подобни съюзи.

Чл. 7. Съюзът има за цел още да създаде чрез своите членове и следните културни начинания: 1. Откриване на общо-просветни и професионални читалища; 2. Откриване национални частни училища в по-големите центрове; 3. Откриване регионални вероизповедни общини; 4. Да назначи учители специалисти, които първо чрез курсове да подготвят неграмотните в четмо и писмо, да отправят членуващите към добиване занаятчийско образование и професионални права, да канализират религиозния живот на същите, а въобще да ги подготвят като добри граждани на България.

Чл. 8. Задължения на членовете към съюза.

Всеки организиран в съюза член е длъжен да получава задължително официалния орган на съюза в България, както и да записва и други абонати за същият между неорганизираните.

Всеки такъв член е длъжен да носи при всички прояви на съюза специалната съюзна значка, както и да разпродава тези значки и между неорганизираните.

Организиран съюзен член, който не внася редовно членските си вноски в съюзната каса чрез касиера на сдружението си или направо в съюзната каса, се изключва като предварително се уведомява да се издължи в даден му срок.

Подлежи на изключване и онзи съюзен член, който не пази престижа на съюза, пропагандира противно на целите и средствата му идеи явно вредни за съюза или пък антидържавни такива.

Подлежат на изключване и цели сдружения, ако те след като изцяло членуват в Съюза вършат онова, което е казано в предшествующите алинеи.

Чл. 9. Управление и права на Върховния Съюзен съвет. Конгресът избира върховен съюзен съвет от кандидати на членуващите организации от цяла България, който в пълния си състав се събира само по решение с вишегласие на управителния съвет на съюза и то при много важни съюзни проблеми, които организацията на съюза наложи в течение на живота ѝ. Върховния съюзен съвет може да бъде свикан само веднъж в годината.

Управителния пък съюзен съвет има следния състав: Председател, двама подпредседатели, секретар и касиер. Управителния съвет е постоянното управително тяло на съюза в течение на организационната година и в казания си състав се избира тоже от конгресните делегати, съвместно с делегатите за конгреса и на професионалните сдружения. [...] Изборите на: върховен съюзен съвет, на управителен съвет и на конгресно бюро става по реда, указан в настоящия член все с тайно гласоподаване. С бюлетината за управителен съвет се избира и контролна комисия от трима члена. [...]

Забележка I: Върховния съюзен съвет преди приключване на ежегодния конгрес задължително назначава из средата на явилите се редовни делегати на

конгреса осемчленни комитети със задачи: а) културно-просветни; б) религиозни; в) благоустройствени. [...]

Забележка II. Културно-просветния комитет, като помощен орган на управителния съвет на съюза, се грижи и носи отговорност за всички начинания указани в целите на съюза; той учредява и увеселителните комисии при всяка организация, които развиват дейността за събирането и материалните средства на съюза от работата на разните: спортни, туристически, гимнастически, лекторски кръжоци, артистични трупи, музикални турнета, пласимент на печатните произведения, значки и пр.

Религиозният комитет, като помощен орган на управителния съвет на съюза, се грижи и носи отговорност за: Нравственото и религиозно издигане на членовете на съюза, верското им представителство и организация според вероизповеданието им, за преследване на незаконно живущите в брак и съдействува за узаконяването на такива случаи. Този комитет представлява едновременно членове на съюза пред респективните власти в страната при назначаване, уволняване и пр. всички верски служители на съответното религиозно място. Религиозния комитет е инстанция, която играе ролята на помирителен съд при всички семейни конфликти целящи разрушаването на създадено семейство. Този комитет е задължен да направи ведно с управителния съвет на съюза и всички постъпки за образуване на национална вероизповедна община, където в царството се има нужда от такива. [...] Религиозния комитет носи задължението да организира и цялата благотворителна дейност на съюза, както и онази дейност, която пази верските традиции: годежи, сватби, раждания, смърт, погребения и пр.

Благоустройствения комитет има следните задължения: да брани пред съответните власти в страната придобитите права на съюзните членове върху недвижими собствениости: покрити или непокрити, като специално пък в градовете има назначението да бди за строежите на съюзните членове, ставащи общо-квартални, щото те да отговарят на всички закони в страната за да не се нарушава оседлостта на такива членове. Същият комитет, независимо от властите в страната, е задължен да бди щото всеки съюзен или неорганизиран член на нацията да пази строго всички хигиенически взисквания в обществения живот; да ходатайствува пред респективните държавни и общинските власти за благоустрояването на кварталите, където живее оседло национално малцинство и въобще да ръководи всички инициативи от благоустройствено естество за нацията си.

Чл. 10. Структура на оказаните поделения.

Всяко национално сдружение от 20 и повече члена избира ежетригодно свое настоятелство в състав: Председател, подпредседател и секретар-касиер в годишното си събрание по висшегласие, като протокола за този избор се представлява подписан от изборното бюро на Управителния съвет на съюза в София за утвърждаване и публикуване в съюзния орган. [...]

Чл. 11. Права и длъжности на членовете на управителния съвет на съюза вълн от до тук казаните.

Управителния съвет издава наредби по организация живота на съюзът, които отпечатва в съюзния орган.

Само следните длъжности от управителния съвет са платени: Председател, секретар и касиер, а останалите са почетни. [...]

Чл. 12. Съюза наема помещение за канцелария, което може да се използва в София и за събрания, а след като стане материално мощен първата му задача е да си закупи и построи собствен дом като юридическа личност или на кооперативни начала, който да служи и за столично училище, столично читалище, хотел за настаняване на бедни съюзни членове, съюзен университет по всички занаяти за младото поколение, приют за инвалиди от войната, злополука, старост и недъгавост за нацията ни от цяла България.

Чл. 13. Една от големите благотворителни задачи на съюза е щото в определен ден на годината всички поделения на съюза да проведат деня на благотворителността на българския циганин за подпомагане на всички нуждаещи се бедни и малоимотни наши сънародници.

Чл. 14. В съюзната канцелария задължително се водят следните книжа: входящ и изходящ дневник, протоколна книга за всички институти на съюза според тоя устав, касова, квитанционна книга и други счетоводни книги. [...]

Чл. 15. Печата на същия съюз има кръгла форма с надпис: "Общ цигански национален културно-просветен и взаимоспомагателен съюз в България" със звезда в средата. [...]

Чл. 18. За незабавно отпочване взаимоспомагателната функция на съюза при същият е вече образувана "Взаимоспомагателна каса", книгата на която се водят от общия касиер на съюза с цели: подпомагане при поискване мотивирано и проучено бедни и нуждающи се внезапно съюзни членове чрез отпускане помощи за случаи на болест, безработица, смърт, злополука и пр.; формиране временно на помещения за приют на стари, недъгави и останали сами в живота сънародници или сънароднички, издръжка на бедни и способни деца за завършване прогимназия, гимназия, университет или професионални училища; погребение на разноски на съюза крайно беден циганин или циганка. В такива екстрени случаи съюзните органи ще прибегват и до единичните помощи на заможни членове.

Чл. 19. Патронния празник на съюза е Георгиев ден, [който се чествува] всяка година.

Чл. 20. Конгреса на съюза ще се състоява всяка година в денят на Освобождението на България и ще се предшества от вечеринка, международна пропаганда и манифестация.

Чл. 21. Настоящия устав може да се измени и допълни в конгресите на съюза.

Същият се състави, прие и одобри в общото учредително събрание на основаният вече съюз, държано на 25 декемврий 1933 година в София. [...]

От Общия мохамедано-цигански национален културно-просветен и взаимоспомагателен съюз в България,

Председател: ... [подпис]. Секретар: ... [подпис]. [Печат на организацията].

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The Statute of the Common Mohammedan-Gypsy National Cultural-Educational and Mutual Aid Union

Headquarters of the Union – Capital Sofia.

Art. 1. Aims of the Union: to organise all Gypsies (Mohammedans and others) in their national belonging in Bulgaria in order to create among them educational, professional and common general culture, and also, based on the laws of Bulgaria, to recuperate their religious lives with valuable moral principles; to create an organisation for the preservation of the material and spiritual interests of this nation in the country, but also a mutual aid institute through self-help.

Art. 2. Resources of the Union: membership fees of organisations of the Union from all places inhabited by Gypsy minorities, public lectures and courses for enlightenment and professional education, health civil learning for the cultivation of civil virtues in the motherland – Bulgaria, uplifting of the religious way of life of their members, and, if the laws permit, opening of private schools.

Art. 3. Regular Members of the Union could be all our co-nationals in Bulgaria and other countries, who belong to all individual associations, but also those who do not belong to any, but are members of their professional associations: blacksmiths', tinsmiths', basket-makers', horse-dealers', the intermediary horse-dealers' [1], the porters', the musicians' and others, while the individual professional associations or organisations are represented in the Union by one Delegate who is authorised by their association or organisation.

As Honorary Members of the Union are proclaimed all donors regardless if they have contributed with cash, with real estate or with support for the Union in resources.

Art. 4. Material Resources of the Union: acquired money from regular membership fees, determined by the Supreme Council of the Union, which meets annually, from donations, parties, social events, picnics, fines by the Union's leadership on its members, from print publications and badges. [...] [2]

Art. 5. Rights of the Members. All organised Members of the Union have equal rights and participate with the right to cast votes in all meetings of the Union. Each member of the Union is obliged to obey the ordinances of the Board of Directors which do not contradict to the current Statute but also to work towards the success of the Union, to enrol new members and to propagate among our national minority for their enlightenment, cultural and educational purpose of the Union, and in general to propagate the aims of the Union.

Art. 6. The Organisation of the Union. [...] Each provincial organisation which is in the Common Union, should elect and send, with a regular authorisation letter, their Delegates to the Congress [...] The Congress of the Union determines a Supreme Union Council. The Congress may be attended also by willing guests who, however, do not have rights to cast votes or be elected. The Union will function for the acquisition of all rights in accordance with the laws of the country which are enjoyed by all of the other similar unions.

Art. 7. The Union will also aim to create, through its Members, the following cultural endeavours: 1) the opening of educational and professional community reading clubs; 2) the opening of national private schools in the larger towns; 3) the opening of regional religious parishes; 4) to appoint teachers-specialists who will initially via training teach the uneducated how to read and write, to direct the Members to acquire professional education and rights, to channel their religious lives and in general to help them prepare to become good citizens of Bulgaria.

Art. 8. Duties of the Union's Members.

Each Member of the Union is obliged to receive the official Publication of the Union in Bulgaria as well as to enrol new subscribers among non-members.

Each such member is obliged to wear the special Union badge at all events of the Union, as well as to sell those badges to the unorganised.

Members of the Union who do not pay regularly their fees via the treasurer at their own organisation or directly at the Union's treasurer's office, will be expelled from the Union while they will be notified in advance to pay off their duties in a given time period.

Also, that Member of the Union who does not guard the image of the Union, propagate against its aims and ideals, obviously harms the Union, or harms the country, will be also excluded.

Also, liable for exclusion will be whole associations provided they have been full members of the Union and that they do that which is mentioned in the above paragraphs.

Art. 9. Management and Rights of the Supreme Union Council. The Congress elects a Supreme Union Council from among the candidates of member organisations from all across Bulgaria which in its full make-up convenes only by a decision by a majority of the Union's Board of Directors, and only at utmost serious issues which the Union may identify during the course of its life. The Supreme Union Council may be convened only once per year.

On the other hand, the Union's Board of Directors has the following composition: a President, two Vice Presidents, a Secretary and a Treasurer. The Board of Directors is the permanent governing body of the Union during the organisational year. In its composition, it is being elected by the Congress Delegates, together with the Delegates for the Congress and Professional Associations. [...] The elections of the Supreme Union Council, the Board of Directors and of the Congress Bureau are done in accordance to the rules described in the current article via a secret ballot. A Control Commission composed of three members is also elected with the ballot-paper for the Board of Directors. [...]

Note I: The Supreme Union Council prior to the conclusion of the yearly Congress, by all means, appoints among the attending regular Delegates of the Congress 8-member

Committees with the following tasks: a) Cultural and Educational; b) Religious; c) Public Works. [...]

Note II: The Cultural and Educational Committee, being a subsidiary body of the Board of Directors of the Union, takes care and bears the responsibility for all endeavours described in the Aims of the Union; it organises also the Entertainment Commissions for each organisation which deals with the collection of material resources for the Union from the following activities: sports, tourist, gymnastic, lectures, artistic groups, musical tours, selling of published materials, badges etc.

The Religious Committee, as a subsidiary body of the Board of Directors, takes care and has the responsibility for: The moral and religious uplifting of the members of the Union, their religious representation and organisation according to their confessions, the punishment of those couples who live together illegally and it helps for the legalisation of such cases. The Committee represents the members of the Union from the same faith to the respective authorities in the country at the appointment, discharge, etc. of all religious staff at the respective religious place. The Religious Committee is an instance which plays the role of a conciliation board for all family conflicts which aim at destroying the established family. This Committee is obliged to create, together with the Board of Directors of the Union, everything necessary for the formation of a national religious community wherever in the Kingdom has the need for it. [...] The Religious Committee also has the obligation to organise all charity activities of the Union, as well as those activities which preserve the religious traditions: engagements, weddings, birth celebrations, death, burials, etc.

The Committee of Public Works has the following duties: to protect the acquired rights of the Union Members from the respective authorities of the country in terms of real estate: built or not, while especially in the towns it has the role to be vigilant for the buildings of the Union's Members which are part of the wider neighbourhood in order that they are in line with the laws of the country, and that their sedentarisation is not disturbed. The same Committee, regardless of the authorities of the country, is obliged to see to it that each Union or non-Union Member of the nation strictly observes all hygienic requirements of the public life; to advocate at the respective state and council authorities for the development of the neighbourhoods where the national minority lives sedentary and to manage, on the whole, all public work initiatives for its own nation.

Art. 10. Structure of the mentioned units.

Each national association consisting of 20 or more members elects for three years their own board of trustees composed by: President, Vice President and a Secretary-Treasurer in its annual meeting elected by majority vote while the minutes for this meeting is presented and signed by the electoral bureau of the Board of Directors of the Union in Sofia which is to be confirmed and published in the Union's Publication. [...]

Art. 11. Rights and Obligations of the Members of the Board of Directors of the Union besides the ones mentioned here.

The Board of Directors issues regulations on the organisation of the life of the union, and they become public via the Union's Publication.

Only the following positions from the Board of Directors are paid: President, Secretary and Treasurer while the rest are honorary. [...]

Art. 12. The union rents a place which is to serve as an office in Sofia also for the purpose of meetings and after the Union becomes financially better off, its first task would be to buy and build its own place, as a legal organisation or as a cooperation, which would serve also as a school in capital city, capital city *chitalishte* [3], a hotel which would accommodate poor Union Members, a Union University offering training in all kinds of crafts for the benefit of the youth, a hostel for the war invalids, accidents, old age and handicap for our nation from all across Bulgaria.

Art. 13. One of the Union's the main charitable tasks is, on a certain day of the year, all departments of the Union to observe a Day of Charity for the Bulgarian Gypsy in order to support all our poor and impoverished compatriots.

Art. 14. By all means, in the Council's office are kept the following books: an incoming and outgoing Register Book, a Minute Book for all of the institutions of the Union according to this Statute, a Receipt Book and other accounting books. [...].

Art. 15. The Stamp of the Union has a circular form with the inscription: "Common Gypsy National Cultural-Educational and Mutual Aid Union" with a star in the middle [4]. [...]

Art. 18. For the immediate start of the mutual aid function of the Union, a "Mutual Aid Loan Society" has been already established, whose books are kept by the general Treasurer of the Union with the aims: assistance at the request of motivated and proven poor and those in immediate need from among the Union Members, providing help at times of illness, unemployment, death, accident, etc.; the temporary formation of places for the accommodation of elderly, handicapped and those left alone in their life amongst our compatriots, the support of poor and capable children for their graduating from junior high schools, high schools, universities or professional colleges; burials with the support of the Union of very impoverished male and female Gypsies. At such extreme cases, the Union organs will resort also to the individual on-time help of well-to-do Members.

Art. 19. The Patron Holy-Day of the Union is St George's Day [5], to be celebrated each year.

Art. 20. The Congress of the Union will take place each year on Bulgarian Liberation Day [6], and will be observed with evening party, a cross-nationalities' propaganda and a manifestation.

Art. 21. This Statute may be amended and added to in the course of the Union's Congresses.

The Statute was created, accepted and approved by the General Constitutive Meeting of the already established Union which took place on 25 December 1933 in Sofia.

Of the Common Mohammedan-Gypsy National Cultural-Educational and Mutual Aid Union,

Director: ... [Signature]. Secretary: ... [Signature]. [Stamp of the Organisation].

Notes

1. For what reason the societies of horse-dealers “and the intermediary horse-dealers” are divided it is not very clear. In fact, they refer to almost the same occupation (the horse-dealers are always intermediators). It is possible that there may have been two such associations in Sofia at that time.
2. Here and below the parts of administrative character which are identical to every legally approved Association statute of that time are omitted.
3. In Bulgaria, the system of the so-called *chitalishta* (Cultural Reading Clubs) has been widespread since the time of the Ottoman Empire. They carry out many and broader functions also as centers of cultural and social life in a certain settlement or in an urban neighbourhood.
4. In the text of the Statute (Art. 15), the inscription of the stamp bearing the name of the Union does not include the word ‘Mohammedan’, while the stamp itself, placed at the end of the document, lacks the word ‘Gypsy’. Similarly, there are discrepancies between the texts found in the Statute and in the stamp itself and in reflecting the symbolism of the Union. The text of the Statute (Art. 15) states that the stamp has a star in its middle while the stamp itself has a crescent and a star in its centre (i.e. the typical Muslim symbolism also reflected in the national flag of neighbouring Turkey). It would be impossible to know whether these are unintentional errors or deliberately made omissions in the Statute.
5. It is interesting to note that in defining the holiday of the Union (Art. 19), the term ‘Patron Holy-day’ is used. It is the same term used in order to mark the annual celebrations of the patron saints of the various Esnafs (Guilds). Like in Vidin, as a Gypsy holiday was proclaimed St George’s Day, i.e. this traditional holiday became already a national symbol for the Gypsies.
6. Linking the Union’s Congress with the National Day of Bulgaria (the Day of Liberation, celebrated on the 3rd of March – the day on which the 1878 Treaty of San Stefano ended the Russo-Turkish War, referred to in Bulgaria as the ‘Liberation War’). In this way, the Gypsies’ belonging to the Bulgarian civic nation is explicitly emphasised.

Source: CSA, f. 264, op. 2, a.e. 8413, l. 7-12, 15-20, 21-26 (three copies).

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.3.4 *The Application from the Mohammedan-Gypsy Union (April)*

До Господина Министъра на Вътрешните Работи и Народното Здраве.

Ст[олицата] София.

Заявление

от Общия мохамедано-цигански национален, културно-просветен
и взаимоспомагателен Съюз в България

Със седалище София, ул. “Климентина” No. 194.

[Печат:] Вх. No. 9303, 17.IV.1934.

Уважаеми Господин Министре,

Чест ни е да представим на благосклонните Ви [очи за] по-нататъшни разпореждби в подведомствената Ви управа:

1. Учредителния протокол на съюза ни; и

2. Три екземпляра от устава на съюза ни,

с молба да бъде надлежно утвърден и регистриран казания ни съюз.

Целите и задачите на същият са подробно изброени в устава ни; те не само не противоречат на който и да било закон в отечеството ни БЪЛГАРИЯ, но позволяваме си повторно да подчертаем, че имат за пряка задача да издигнат нашето национално малцинство до степен на първостепенни граждани, на безупречни поданици на отечеството и родината ни, както и да освободят респективните власти над нас от много грижи за постигане на тези цели.

Дълбоко уверени в уважаването на настоящата ни молба, оставаме с отлични към Вас почитания.

Ст[олицата] София, ... април 1934 година.

Председател: ... [подпис на Шакир Пашев], [печат].

[

Върху текста на заявлението е написана ръкописна резолюция:

“Поради мотивите изложени в писмото на Мин[истрството] на В[ъншните] р[аботи] и изповеданията [1], вх. No. 17063/34 г., устава не се утвърждава и съюза не може да съществува като такъв. 16.VII.1934 ... [нечетивен подпис].”

∴

To the Minister of Internal Affairs and National Health.

The Capital Sofia.

Application

from the Common Mohammedan-Gypsy National Cultural-Educational
and Mutual Aid Union in Bulgaria

With headquarters Sofia, Klimentina Str. No.194.

[Stamp] Incoming Number: 9303. Received on: 17.04.1934.

Esteemed Mister Minister,

It is our honour to present to your benevolent attention for further edicts in your jurisdiction the following:

1. The Constitutive Assembly Minutes of our Union; and
2. Three copies of the Statute of our Union,

with a request our respective Union to be duly confirmed and registered.

The aims and the duties of the Union are listed in detail in our Statute; they not only do not contradict whichever law of our homeland BULGARIA, but also, we allow ourselves to highlight again, they have the immediate duty to raise our national minority to a level of first-class citizens and flawless subjects of our homeland and native land and also to ease our respective authorities from the many worries in satisfying these aims.

We are deeply convinced in the acceptance of this request and remain with the utmost respect towards you.

The Capital Sofia, ... April 1934 [1].

President: ... [Signature of Shakir Pashev]. [Stamp].

Over the text of the application, a handwritten resolution is written:

Due to the reasons given in the letter of the Ministry of External Affairs and Religious Denominations [2], Incoming No. 17063/34, the Statute is not accredited and the Union cannot exist as such. 16.VII.34 ... [Illegible Signature].

Notes

1. The exact date is missing. As it could be seen from the letter itself, it has been received on 17.04.1934.
2. See the letter below.

Source: CSA, f. 264, op. 2, a.e. 8413, l. 1.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.3.5 The Application from the Mohammedan-Gypsy Union (June)

До Господина Министъра на Вътрешните работи и народното здраве.

Ст[олицата] София.

Заявление

от Общия мохамед[ано]-цигански национ[ален] култ[урно]-просветен
и взаимоспом[агателен] съюз в България

Седалище: ст[олицата] София, ул. Климентина No. 194.

[Печат:] Вх. No. 14031.

Получено на 9 юни 1934.

Уважаеми Господине Министре,

Известно е, че от дълги години функционират надлежно и законно утвърдени от съответното Министерство наши професионални организации и дружества като: Ковачкото [дружество], Калайджийското [дружество], Д[ружест]во “Египет”, Организация “Истикбал”, Взаимоспомагателно [дружество], които дружества и организации се събраха вкупом през м[иналата] 1933 год[ина и] образуваха горепоменатия Общ Мохамедано-Циган[ски] Национ[ален] Култ[урно]-просветен и Взаимоспом[агателен] съюз в България със седалище ст[олицата] София – организация безпартийна, целите и задачи на който съюз са подробно изброени в устава ни, които не противоречат на който и да било закон в отечеството ни.

Книжката: учредителния протокол и три екз[емпляра] от устава при [подаването на] заявлението се представиха в почитаемото Министерство през м. април за утвърждение, обаче до днес нямаме резултат.

Понеже днес имаме управление, надпартийно управление, което управление цялата наша нация поздравява, си позволяваме да помолим, Господине Министре, да благоволите и ни утвърдите представените книжа.

Дълбоко уверени в уважаването на настоящата ни молба оставаме с отлично към Вас почитание.

Председател: ... [подпис и печат].

∴

To: The Minister of Internal Affairs and National Health.
The Capital Sofia. [handwritten]

Application
From the Common Mohammedan-Gypsy National Cultural-Educational
and Mutual Aid Union in Bulgaria

Headquarters: Sofia, Klimentina Str. No. 194.

[Stamp:] Incoming No. 14031.

Received on 9 June 1934.

Dear Mr. Minister,

It is known that for many years appropriately and lawfully confirmed by the respective Ministry have functioned our professional organisations and associations such as: Blacksmiths' Society, Tinsmiths' Society, Society *Egypt*, Organisation *Istikbal*, Mutual Aid Society; these societies and organisations merged in the last year, 1933, and formed the above-mentioned Common Mohammedan-Gypsy National Cultural-Educational and Mutual Aid Union in Bulgaria with its headquarters, the Capital Sofia – an organisation without any party allegiance, whose aims and tasks are thoroughly listed in our Statute which does not contradict any law in our homeland.

The paperwork: Constituent Assembly Minutes and three copies of our Statute were presented to the respectful Ministry in the month of April to be approved, however, to present day we do not have a result.

Since today we have a governance, that stays over all parties [1], and which all our nation salutes, we allow ourselves to ask you, Mr. Minister, to be so kind and to approve the submitted paperwork.

We are truly certain you will respect our request and we leave you with all due respect.

Chair: ... [Signature]. [Stamp].

Notes

1. It refers to the Government of Kimon Georgiev which came into power after the military coup of May 19, 1934, which banned the political parties and introduced the non-partisan rule.

Source: CSA, f. 264, op. 2, a.e. 8413, l. 14.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.3.6 *Opinion*

Поверително!

Министерство на Външните работи и на Изповеданията.

До Министерството на Вътрешните Работи и Народното Здраве, отдел Вероизповедания. Тук. No. 11646-53-V, 10.VII.1934 г., София.

[На] No. 8247/934 год.

Министерството повръща устава на мохамедано-циганския национален културно-просветен съюз с мнение, ДА НЕ СЕ УТВЪРЖДАВА тоя устав, понеже циганите-мюсюлмани у нас се организират по външно внушение.

Главен Секретар: ..., Пълномощен Министър: ..., Началник Отдел: ... [подписи].

∴

Confidential!

Ministry of External Affairs and Religious Denominations.

To the Ministry of Internal Affairs and National Health, Department of Religious Denominations.

Here. No. 11646-53-V, 10 July 1934.

[In response to] No. 8247/1934.

The Ministry returns the Statute of the Mohammedan-Gypsy National Cultural-Educational Union with the opinion this Statute NOT TO BE AFFIRMED because the Gypsy Muslims in our country are organised through foreign influence.

Main Secretary: ..., Minister Plenipotary: ..., Head of Department: ... [Signatures].

Source: CSA, f. 264, op. 2, a.e. 8413, l. 6.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.3.7 *Acknowledgement*

Разписка

Долуподписаният Управителен Съвет на Общия Мохамедано-цигански Национален Културно[-]Просветно и Взаимоспомагателен Съюз в България със седалище ст[олицата] София, удостоверяваме с настоящето си, че ни се съобщи, чрез ю[-и]

Полиц[ейски] Участък, съдържанието на Писмо No 10652 от 19.VII.т[ази].г[одина] на Министерство на В[ътрешните] Р[аботи] и Н[ародното] Здраве в смисъл, че устава ни няма да се утвърди от М[инистерст]вото и че Съюза не може да съществува като такъв.

Задължаваме се в срок от 30 дни да разтурим Съюза и свалим съюзната фирма.

Ст[раницата] София, 25.VII. 1934 год.

Управителен Съвет: ... [подписи].

∴

Acknowledgement

The undersigned Board of Directors of the Common Mohammedan-Gypsy National Cultural and Educational and Mutual Aid Union in Bulgaria with headquarters in the Capital Sofia, certifies with this that we were informed through the 10 Police Station of the contents of the Letter No 10652 from 19.VII. this year from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and National Health meaning that our statute will not be affirmed by the Ministry and that the Union cannot exist as such.

We are obliged, within 30 days, to dissolve the Union and to destroy the firm of the Union.

The Capital Sofia, 25.VII. 1934

Board of Directors: ... [Signatures].

Source: CSA, f. 264, op. 2, a.e. 8413, l. 2.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.3.8 *A Letter to Police Directorate*

Софийска Общо Мюсюлманска Културно Просветна Взаимоспомагателна Организация "Истикбал". 18 юлий 1939 г., София.

До Господина Директора на Полицията, Тук.

[Печат]: Главна Дирекция на Народното здраве. 23 юли 1939. Дело № 31.

Господин Директоре,

Виждайки, че вместо да върви към напредък, циганското население, то от ден на ден отива към морален и материален упадък, поради което, с цел да го издигнем в културно, просветно, морално и религиозно отношение, основахме дружество на всички цигани в столицата, което има за задача да работи между последните за материалното им и духовно издигане, за да може да приближи отчасти живота им към тоя на останалото столично население, защото състоянието, в което се намират в настоящия момент не може и не бива повече да се търпи.

За постигането на нашата цел, обаче е необходима пълна подкрепа от всички отговорни фактори в страната в кръга и рамките на съществуващите закони, защото без такава подкрепа осъществяването на нашата задача е невъзможно, особено за запазване морала между циганите.

Докато за издигането им в културно и просветно отношение е необходимо упорито да се работи ред години чрез изнасяне на сказки и реферати, както и откриване [на] вечерни курсове за възрастните, задачата ни да запазим морала между циганите е съвсем трудна и без подкрепата на властта е абсурд.

На първо време, обаче трябва да се вземат мерки за запазване на техния морал – най-ценната основа, върху която се гради семейното щастие и бъдещето на един народ.

За голямо съжаление, вместо покварата и разврата да намаляват, те от ден на ден се увеличават и вземат застрашителни размери. Нещо обикновено е в късни часове през нощта да се движат пияни мъже и жени из улиците на квартала [1] и из затънтените места, където се вършат срамни деяния, вследствие на което се насаждат и най-опасните за човечеството болести, а в същото време много жени и деца заспиват гладни, защото всичко онова, което техният баща през деня е припечелил, през нощта изяжда и изпива, без да се върне в своя дом, където го чакат гладните жена и деца.

И вместо да се вземат строги мерки за изкореняването на това голямо зло, за съжаление семейните бирарии в квартала, които не са нищо друго, а типични кабаре-рета [2] и гнезда на разврат – от едно се увеличиха на три и именно за увеличението на разврата са единствено най-голямата причина тези кабаре-рета, където се вършат срамни работи и то често от деца под 14 годишна възраст, описанието на които е невъзможно, а най-жалкото е, че същите нощни заведения се посещават от много видни лица из центъра на града [3], които със своето държание дават лош пример на простото циганско население, като не липсват дори и побоища между въпросните видни лица.

Ако се ограничат пиянството и разврата между циганското население, наполовина поне ще се подобри неговото материално положение, за което от страна на властта не са необходими никакви средства, а само един по-строг контрол и вземане мерки за отстраняване особено причините за увеличаване на разврата.

Ето защо, най-учтиво Ви молим, Господин Директоре, да наредите чрез подведомствените ви полицейски органи следното:

1. Да се вземат най-строги мерки срещу всички цигани и циганки, които скитат нощно време без всякаква работа из квартала, особено спрямо ония, които са в пияно състояние.

2. Да направите необходимото от Ваша страна за закриване на циганските кабаре-рета – гнезда на разврата, които деморализират циганското население и действуват много зле върху възпитанието особено на младежта и децата от квартала.

Уверени, че ще обърнете сериозно внимание на тези наши искания и ще направите всичко зависящо от Ваша страна, с което ще извършите и един акт на внимание към циганското население, което винаги е бивало и си остава от полза за държавата, ний оставаме към Вас с отлични почитания.

Секретар: ... [Подпис] (Рашид Мехмедов), Председател: ... [Подпис] (Шакир Пашов).
[Печат].

∴

Sofia Common Muslim Cultural Educational Mutual Aid Organisation "Istikbal".
18 July 1939. Sofia.

To Mr. Director of Police, Here [Sofia].

[Stamp]: Directorate General of Public Health. 23 July 1939. Case No. 31.

Mr. Director,

Seeing that instead of moving forward, the Gypsy population goes to moral and material decline day by day, which is why, in order to raise it on cultural, educational, moral and religious aspect, we have founded a society for all Gypsies in the capital, tasked with working with the latter for their material and spiritual uplifting so that they can bring their lives closer to that of the rest of the capital's population, because the condition they are in now cannot and should no longer be tolerated.

However, in order to achieve our goal, full support is needed from all responsible factors in the country within the framework and within the existing laws, because without such support, the realisation of our task is impossible, especially in preserving the morality among the Gypsies.

While it takes years of hard work to raise them culturally and educationally by giving lectures and talks, as well as opening evening courses for the adults, our task to preserve the moral among the Gypsies is quite difficult and without the support of the authorities it would be absurd.

In the first place, however, care must be taken so that their morality is preserved – the most valuable foundation on which family happiness and the future of a nation are based.

For great disappointment, instead of the corruption and the immorality to decrease, they are increasing day by day, and they take alarming dimensions. It is something common in the late hours of the night, when drunken men and women to walk around through the streets of the neighbourhood [1] and out of the shabby places, where acts of shame are being committed, as a result of which the most dangerous diseases for humanity are planted, and at the same time many women and children fall asleep hungry, because all that their father has earned during the day goes in his food and drink in the night, without him returning to his home where his hungry wife and children are waiting for him.

And instead of taking rigorous measures to eradicate this great evil, unfortunately, the family beer houses in the neighbourhood, which are nothing more than typical cabarets [2] and nests of immorality – have increased from one to three, and namely, for the increase of the immorality the sole and greatest reason are these cabarets, where shameful things are being done, and often by children under the age of 14, the description of which is impossible, while the saddest thing is that these night houses are visited by many prominent people from the centre of the city [3] who, with their behaviour, set a bad example for the ordinary Gypsy population, while fights are not uncommon between these eminent persons.

If the drunkenness and the immorality among the Gypsy population are limited, their material situation will improve at least by half, for which no resources would be needed by the authorities, but only tighter control and the taking of measures to especially eliminate the reasons for the increase of the immorality.

That is why, we kindly ask you, Mr. Director, to order, through your subordinate police authorities, the following:

1. Take the most stringent measures against all Gypsy men and Gypsy women who roam in the night without any reason in the neighbourhood, especially those who are in an intoxicated state.
2. Do what you need to do to close down the Gypsy cabarets – the nests of immorality that demoralise the Gypsy population and act very poorly for the upbringing, especially of the youth and of the children in the neighbourhood.

We are convinced that you will pay serious attention to these demands of ours and that you will do everything in your power, with which you will also offer an act of attention to the Gypsy population, which has always been and continues to be of benefit to the state, we remain with great respect.

Secretary: ... [Signature] (Rashid Mehmedov), Chair: ... [Signature] (Shakir Pashov).
[Stamp].

Notes

1. It refers here to the Gypsy mahalas, *Konyovitsa* and *Tatarli*. They were located at the then outskirts of the city (around today's boulevard Aleksandar Stamboliyski and boulevard Konstantin Velichkov).
2. The most famous of these cabarets was *Pri Keva* (At Keva) where the popular singer of Gypsy songs Keva (originally from Vidin) used to sing. She had several phonograph records in the 1930s for the Record Company *Balkan*, which included the song *Telal Avel* (*She Comes from Below*), performed in the Romani language. This was the first record of such kind in Bulgaria.
3. The cabaret *Pri Keva* was especially popular and frequently visited by the bohemians in Sofia (Тенеб, 1997, pp. 225-27). According to widespread urban rumors at the time, a frequent visitor to the cabaret was also Prince Cyril, brother of the Bulgarian King Boris III and, after his death, a regent of the Crown Prince Simeon II, sentenced to death by the People's Court in 1945.

Source: DA Sofia, f. 1 K, op. 4, a.e. 683, l. 93.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.3.9 *The Statute of the Organisation 'Ekiye'*

Устав

на Единната общо-културна просветна организация на циганските малцинства в България "Екипе"

Глава I. Същност, цел, задачи и устройство.

Чл. 1. Единната циганска организация в България включва в себе си всички цигани, които принадлежат към всемирното циганско движение и са членове на някои от местните дружества на Единната циганска организация в страната, към която плащат членски внос.

Чл. 2. Единната циганска организация в България (ЕЦО) е легитимният представител на циганското движение в страната и пред Всемирната циганска организация. В нея членуват всички цигани навършили 18-годишна възраст индивидуално, без разлика на пол и социално положение. В нея членуват също така всички цигани от мохамеданска и православна християнска религия, без да се прави каквато и да е разлика.

Чл. 3. Единната циганска организация в България има следните свои задачи: а) Да се бори срещу фашизма и антициганизма и расовите предразсъдъци; б) Да издигне циганското народностно чувство и съзнание у българските цигани; в) Въвеждане на циганския език сред циганските народни маси, като говорим и писмен език; г) Запознаване българското циганско малцинство с циганската култура; д) Запознаване българското циганство с неговата духовна, социална и стопанска култура; е) Издигане икономически циганските слоеве в България; ж) Физическо закаляване на циганската младеж в България; з) Продуктивизиране на циганските маси; и) Закрепване и издигане на циганските институти в България; к) Осветляване българското обществено мнение по нуждите на циганското население; л) Да създаде стремеж у циганите за изграждане на едно национално огнище в своя земя.

Чл. 4. Органите на Единната циганска организация в България се определят от конференцията на ЕЦО и те са следните: а) Местни единни цигански дружества; б) Конференция на Единните цигански дружества в България; в) Висш организационен съвет (ВОС); г) Централен комитет (ЦК); д) Главна контролна комисия; е) Главно комисарство на цигански фонд за земеделска подготовка; ж) Висш организационен съд.

Чл. 5. Конференцията и настоящият устав определят функциите на всеки един от горните органи на ЕЦО и техните отношения помежду им. Конференцията е властна да създаде нови органи със специални задачи, ако това се изисква в даден момент.

Конференцията може да слее някои от функциите на тези органи в едно и да делегира някои от тях върху Централния комитет на ЕЦО.

Чл. 6. Централните органи на ЕЦО се избират от Конференцията съгласно глави ... на настоящия устав.

Чл. 7. ЕЦО се представлява пред властите, учрежденията и частни лица от избора от Конференцията Централен комитет, респективно от председателя на същия или негов заместник заедно със секретаря или сам.

Чл. 8. В рамките на Единната циганска организация, отделните цигански дружества имат право да се организират отделно със свои управителни тела, със свои устави, непротиворечащи на устава на ЕЦО. Тези дружества могат да водят самостоятелен организационен живот.

Глава II. Местни единни цигански организации.

Чл. 9. Местни единни цигански дружества се образуват от най-малко 15 членове на ЕЦО, живущи в едно и също селище, навършили 18 години, които се подчиняват на настоящия устав и плащат редовно членския си внос.

Чл. 10. Всеки циганин, които отговаря на Чл. 9 има право да бъде член на дадено местно д[ружест]во. За целта той подава съответна декларация и ако настоятелството на местното д-во отхвърли молбата му, той има право да отнесе въпроса до първото общо събрание на местното д[ружест]во.

Чл. 11. Във всеки табор може да има само едно местно циганско д[ружест]во. Всяко местно циганско д[ружест]во има свой устав, непротиворечащ на настоящия. Уставът на местното циганско д[ружест]во се утвърждава от Централния комитет. [...]. Нови д[ружест]ва се приемат от ЦК и тяхното приемане се утвърждава от конференцията.

Чл. 12. Всяко местно единно д[ружест]во е автономно в границите на настоящия устав. То е длъжно да изпълнява решенията на върховните цигански институти и да се подчинява на тяхните нареждания. [...]

Чл. 13. Общите събрания са редовни и извънредни. Редовните общи събрания се свикват всеки 6 месеца за изслушване отчета на настоятелството и другите органи на дружеството. Извънредното общо събрание се свиква от настоятелството, когато то намери, че това е нужно, а така също и когато бъде поискано с писмена молба от една пета от членовете на д[ружест]вото, респективно една десета от членовете на местното дружество в София или по искане на Централния комитет на ЕЦО за разглеждане на спешни въпроси.

Чл. 14. Настоятелството на местното единно циганско дружество е върховния изпълнителен орган на същото. [...] Настоятелствата на местните цигански д[ружест]ва се утвърждават от Централния комитет. [...]

Чл. 17. Всяко местно д[ружест]во, респ. неговото настоятелство, всяка година представя на Централния к[омитет] на ЕЦО писмен отчет за дейността си през изтеклата организационна година.

Чл. 18. Членовете на ЦК, както и членовете на останалите централни институти на ЕЦО имат право да присъстват със съвещателен глас на заседанията на настоятелството на местното д[ружест]во.

Глава III. Права и задължения на членовете.

Чл. 19. Всеки член на организацията има активно и пасивно изборително право за всички изборни институти – местни и централни, стига да отговаря на следните условия: да е член на някое местно единно циганско д[ружест]во, да е платил членския си внос към същото и за избираемия да има едногодишно старшинство в организацията.

Чл. 20. Всеки член на организацията е длъжен да бъде записан в местното единно циганско д-во да се съобразява с настоящия устав, както и с устава на местното д-во, да плаща членския си внос, да спазва организационната дисциплина и да изпълнява нарежданията и решенията на местните и централни органи на ЕЦО в България.

Чл. 21. Конференцията на ЕЦО в България е върховен орган на същата. Решенията ѝ са задължителни за всички местни единни цигански д[ружест]ва, за всеки член на организацията. Конференциите биват редовни и извънредни.

Чл. 22. Редовната конференция на организацията се свиква всеки 3 години и по възможност след всеки Всемирен цигански конгрес. [...]

Чл. 23. Редовните конференции на организацията изслушват, разискват и се произнасят по отчетите на всички избрани от предишната конференция органи на ЕЦО. Тези органи са отговорни пред конференцията. Конференцията определя бъдещата дейност на организацията, приема бюджета на същата и избира също така и пет делегати за Всемирния цигански конгрес. Конференцията е властна да внесе изменения в настоящия устав, както и в правилника за произвеждане на изборите. [...]

Чл. 26. Всяко местно единно циганско дружество има право най-малко на двама делегати, независимо от броя на легитимирания при него членове. Местни дружества с повече от 100 редовни членове имат право по на един допълнителен делегат на всеки последующи сто членове или част от 100 редовни членове. Редовните членове на едно местно дружество се определят от броя на редовно отчетените от местните дружества към ЦК членове.

Чл. 27. В конференцията, освен редовно избраните делегати на местните дружества участват с права на редовни делегати: председателите на Централния комитет, всички останали членове на останалите институти участват в конференцията със съвещателен глас. При вземане становища по отчетите на Централните институти отговорните по тях лица нямат право на глас. [...]

Чл. 30. Заседанията на конференцията са публични, освен ако по даден въпрос самата конференция реши разискванията да стават при закрити врата. Заседанията се водят по правилник, изработен от самата конференция.

Глава V. Висш организационен съвет.

Чл. 31. Висшият организационен съвет се избира от конференцията и се състои от 35 души. Към него с равни права се предават по двама представители на Централния Комитет. Висшият организационен съвет се избира за три години. Членовете на ВОС могат да бъдат и с различни табори (селища). [...]

Глава VI. Централен комитет.

Чл. 34. Централният комитет се избира от Конференцията или при особени случаи от Висшия организационен съвет. Той се състои от председателя, двама подпредседатели, двама секретари и касиери, осем съветници, всички живущи в един и същ град. Председателят на Централния комитет се посочва в самата конференция, а останалите длъжности се разпределят в първото заседание на Централния комитет. Председателят на ЦК е председател на единната циганска организация в България. [...]

Глава VII. Главна контролна комисия. [...]

Глава VIII. Висш организационен съд. [...]

Глава IX. Бюджет, счетоводство и контрол. [...]

Глава X. Дисциплинарни разпореждания. [...]

Глава XI. Печатен орган на организацията.

Чл. 47. Печатният орган на Единната циганска организация в България носи названието “Романо еси”. Той се списва от редакционна колегия под ръководство на Централния комитет.

Чл. 48. Печатният орган на организацията е преди всичко информационен. Той дава сведения за общественно политически теми, както и за живота на организациите в България. [Вестникът трябва] да възпитава всички членове в чрез статии и дописки в отечественофронтовски дух, и да проповядва изграждането на социализма в България.

Чл. 49. Формата на вестника, цената и начина на издаването му се определят от Централния Комитет. [...] Органът се издържа от собствени приходи и от субсидии, предвидени в бюджета. [...]

Глава XII. Изборни институти и провеждане на избори. [...]

Глава XIII. Общи разпореждания на настоящия устав.

Чл. 58. [...] Печатът на Единната циганска организация в България е кръгъл със следния текст: “Единна циганска организация в България – Централен комитет-София”, който текст се написва на български и цигански езици. Печатът на местните единни д[ружест]ва са подобни на ЦК.

Чл. 59. Празникът на организацията е 7 май. Знамето на организацията е червено с две бели полета в средата с триъгълник.

Чл. 60. Изменения в настоящия устав са допустими да се правят само от Конференцията на организацията, в чийто дневен ред изрично е предвидено това.

Чл. 61. Настоящият устав е приет от II редовна конференция на ЕЦО в България на ... в гр. София.

На II редовна конференция на ЕЦО в България на ... в гр. София, която прие и утвърди настоящият устав на организацията, участваха следните делегати, представителите на съответните местни единни цигански организации.

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The Statute
of the United Common-Cultural Educational Organisation
of the Gypsy Minorities in Bulgaria 'Ekipe' [Unity]

Chapter I. Nature, Aims, Tasks and Structure.

Art. 1. The United Gypsy Organisation in Bulgaria includes in itself all Gypsies who belong to the world Gypsy movement and are members of some of the local associations of the United Gypsy Organisation in the country to which they pay membership fee.

Art. 2. The United Gypsy Organisation in Bulgaria (UGO) is the legitimate representative of the Gypsy movement in the country and to the World Gypsy Organisation. Eligible members could be any Gypsy at the age of 18 and above, regardless of sex and social status. Members could be also all Gypsies with Mohammedan and Christian Orthodox religions without any differentiation being made.

Art. 3. The United Gypsy Organisation in Bulgaria has the following tasks: a) To fight against fascism, the anti-Tsiganism and racial prejudices; b) To raise the Gypsy nationality feeling and consciousness among the Bulgarian Gypsies; c) To introduce the Gypsy language among the Gypsy masses as oral and written language; d) To introduce the Bulgarian Gypsy minority to the Gypsy culture; e) To introduce to the Bulgarian Gypsy their spiritual, social and economic culture; f) To uplift economically the all Gypsy strata in Bulgaria; g) To make physically fit the Gypsy youth in Bulgaria; h) To make the Gypsy masses productive; i) To consolidate and set up Gypsy institutes in Bulgaria; j) To enlighten the general Bulgarian opinion regarding the needs of the Gypsy population; k) To create a longing feeling among the Gypsies for the creation of a national hearth in their own land.

Art. 4. The bodies of the United Gypsy Organisation in Bulgaria are determined by the Conference of the UGO and they are the following: a) Local united Gypsy societies; b) Conference of the United Gypsies in Bulgaria; c) Supreme Organisational Council (SOC); d) Central Committee (CC); e) Main Control Commission; f) Main Commission of the Gypsy Fund for the Agricultural Preparation; g) Supreme Organisational Court.

Art. 5. The Conference as well as the current Statute determine the functions of each of the above-mentioned bodies of the UGO and their mutual relationships. The Conference has the power to create new bodies with specific tasks if that would be needed at a certain time.

The Conference could merge in one of the functions of these bodies and delegate some of their tasks to the Central Committee of the UGO.

Art. 6. The central bodies of the UGO are elected by the Conference in accordance with Chapters ... [1] of the current Statute.

Art. 7. The UGO is being represented to the authorities, the state-institutions and private bodies by the Central Committee, which is selected by the Conference, respectively by the President of the Central Committee or his representative, together with the Secretary or by himself.

Art. 8. Within the United Gypsy Organisation, the separate Gypsy societies have the right to organise separately with their own governing bodies and statutes that do not contradict to the Statute of the UGO. These societies can have independent organisational lives.

Chapter II. Local United Gypsy Organisations.

Art. 9. Local united Gypsy societies can be formed by at least 15 members of the UGO who live in the same place, are over 18 years of age, respect the current Statute and pay regularly their membership fees.

Art. 10. Each Gypsy, who fits into the description of Art. 9, has the right to be a member of a local society. For that purpose, he has to submit a relevant declaration and if the management of the local society rejects his request, he has the right to refer the matter to the first general meeting of the local society.

Art. 11. There could be only one local Gypsy society for each *tabor* [2]. Each local Gypsy society has their own statute which does not contradict to the current one. The statute of the local Gypsy society is confirmed by the Central Committee. [...] New societies are accepted by the Central Committee and their acceptance is confirmed by the Conference.

Art. 12. Each local united society is autonomous within the framework of the current Statute. The local united society is obliged to obey the decisions of the supreme Gypsy institutions and their ordinances. [...]

Art. 13. The General Meetings are regular and special. The regular General Meetings are convened every 6 months for hearing the report of the Board and the rest of the bodies of the society. The special General Meetings are convened by the Board when they find it as necessary and also when this is requested in writing by 1/5th of the members of the society; respectively, by 1/10th of the members of the local society in Sofia or by request of the Central Committee of the UGO in order to review emergency matters.

Art. 14. The Board of the local united Gypsy society is the Supreme Executive Body of the same. [...] The Boards of the local Gypsy societies are confirmed by the Central Committee. [...]

Art. 17. Each local society, respectively its Board, presents to the Central Committee of the UGO annually a written report for its activities for the past organisational year.

Art. 18. The members of the CC as well as the members of the other central institutions of the UGO have the right to be present and have the right to vote in the meetings of the Board of the local society.

Chapter III. Rights and Obligations of the Members.

Art. 19. Each member of the organisation has an active and passive voting right for each of the electoral institutions – local and central, as long as they satisfy the following conditions: to be a member of a local united Gypsy society, to have paid their membership fee and for the elected – to have a seniority [3] in the organisation for a year.

Art. 20. Each member of the organisation is obliged to be enrolled in the local united Gypsy society, to respect the current Statute, as well as the statute of the local society, to pay his/her membership fee, to respect the rules of the organisation and to carry out the orders and the decisions of the local and central bodies of the UGO in Bulgaria.

Art. 21. The Conference of the UGO in Bulgaria is the supreme body of the organisation. Its decisions are compulsory for all local united Gypsy societies and for each member of the organisation. The conferences are regular and special.

Art. 22. The regular Conference of the organisation is convened every 3 years and if possible after each World Gypsy Congress. [...]

Art. 23. The regular Conferences of the organisation listen to, discuss and give opinion about the reports of all previously elected bodies in the previous Conference of the UGO. These bodies are answerable to the Conference. The Conference determines the future activities of the organisation, approves its budget, and also elects five delegates for the World Gypsy Congress. The Conference has the power to make changes to the current Statute, as well as the Regulations for conducting the elections. [...]

Art. 26. Each local united Gypsy society has the right to at least two delegates, regardless of the number of its legitimate members. Local societies with more than 100 regular members have the right to an additional delegate for every additional hundred members or part of 100 regular members. The regular members of a local society are determined by the number of those who have been regularly reported by the local societies to the Central Committee.

Art. 27. In the Conference, apart from the regularly elected delegates of the local society, with rights of regular delegates are the presidents of the Central Committee; all other members of the rest of the institutions take part in the Conference with a deliberate vote. When a point of view is taken into consideration regarding the reports of the Central institutions, the persons in charge do not have the right to vote. [...]

Art. 30. The meetings of the Conference are open to the public, unless the Conference itself decides that discussions should take place behind closed doors. The meetings take place according to the regulations determined by the Conference itself.

Chapter V [4]. Supreme Organisational Council

Art. 31. The Supreme Organisational Council is elected by the Conference and is composed of 35 people. In it, with equal rights, are delegated two representatives from the Central Committee. The Supreme Organisational Council is elected for three years. The members of the SOC could also have different *tabors* (settlements). [...]

Chapter VI. Central Committee

Art. 34. The Central Committee is elected by the Conference or in special cases by the Supreme Organisational Council. It is composed by a President, two vice-presidents, two secretaries and treasurers, eight councillors, all residing in the same town. The President of the Central Committee is indicated by the Conference itself while the rest of the duties are determined in the first meeting of the Central Committee. The President of the CC is a President of the United Gypsy Organisation in Bulgaria. [...]

Chapter VII. Main Control Commission. [...]

Chapter VIII. Supreme Organisational Court. [...]

Chapter IX. Budget, Accounting and Control. [...]

Chapter X. Disciplinary Orders [...]

Chapter XI. Publication of the Organisation.

Art. 47. The Publication of the United Gypsy Organisation in Bulgaria is newspaper, called *Romano esi* (Roma Voice). It is edited by an Editorial Board under the guidance of the Central Committee.

Art. 48. The organisation's Publication is primarily informative. It gives information on public and political issues as well as on the affairs of organisations in Bulgaria. The newspaper must educate all members via articles and reports in the spirit of the Fatherland Front [5] and advocate for the building of socialism in Bulgaria.

Art. 49. The format of the newspaper, the price and the manner of its publication are determined by the Central Committee. [...] The newspaper is supported by its own revenues and by subsidies envisaged in the budget. [...]

Chapter XII. Electoral Institutions and Holding of Elections. [...]

Chapter XIII. General Orders of the Current Statute.

Art. 58. [...] The stamp of the United Gypsy Organisation in Bulgaria is circular with the following text: 'United Gypsy Organisation in Bulgaria – Central Committee-Sofia' which is written in Bulgarian and in Gypsy languages. The stamps of the local united associations are similar to the CC.

Art. 59. The holiday of the organisation is May 7. The flag of the organisation is red with two white fields and with a triangle in the middle.

Art. 60. Amendments to this Statute may be made only by the Conference of the Organisation, whose agenda expressly provides for this.

Art. 61. This Statute was adopted by the Second Regular Conference of the UGO in Bulgaria on ... [6] in Sofia.

On the Second Regular Conference of the UGO in Bulgaria on ... in Sofia, which adopted and approved this Statute of the organisation, the following delegates took part, representatives of the respective local united Gypsy organisations [7].

Notes

1. An omission in the text, apparently it was envisaged to enter the numbering of the chapters later.
2. Here, as well as below (Art. 31), the term 'Tabor' is used in the sense of 'Settlement', which is rather strange because in Bulgaria as well as in the former USSR (with the exception of the Transcarpathian Region which was annexed to the USSR after the end of the Second World War), this term has always meant a specific Gypsy group who led a travelling way life. The mystery becomes even greater because the whole phrase is in fact a loan translation from the Russian language (in Bulgarian another preposition would be used); a satisfactory answer could not be offered here to explain it.
3. It is understood that they have already been elected to a management position in the organisation.
4. In the text, Chapter 4 is missing which is most probably a typo.
5. It is meant the overthrow of the Government on September 9, 1944, and the establishment of a Government of the Fatherland Front (a coalition dominated by the Communist Party) which radically altered the country's political course and which declared war on Germany.
6. Here and later below, the date is omitted and replaced with dots, i.e. the text of the Statute has been prepared in advance in order for it to be accepted, dated and signed in a complete (and unaltered) fashion. From the memoirs of Shakir Pashov (see below) it became clear that the statute was

written after the 6th of March 1945 (i.e. before the end of WWII), when the constituent assembly of the new organisation was held (more precisely, the restoration of the old Organisation *Istikbal* under a new name) and was to be adopted at the National Conference of the new organisation. Such a National Conference was held only on the 2nd of May 1948, and in it, as could be seen from the manuscript of Shakir Pashov itself, this Statute has not been discussed and adopted at all; in fact, it remained illegitimate and never entered into force. This is understandable as the Bulgarian political situation in 1948 changed significantly and the Statute was no longer up-to-date or valid. 7. The signatures of the delegates are missing and it is natural because, as already stated, the Statute was never formally approved.

Source: CSA, f. 1 Б, оп. 8, а.е. 596, л. 50-52.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.3.10 *The Memoirs of Shakir Pashov (Part 1)*

Шакир М. Пашов

История на циганите в България и в Европа. "Рома"

[...]

Двадесет и трета глава

Просветно дело

Учениците-цигани пред освобождението и наскоро след него, та дори до 1905 година, учеха в София в турското училище, на което *моалим* /директор/ беше Осман Ефенди. Над стотина деца-циганчета са били ученици в това училище, от които пет са били изпратени да следват в Цариградския университет от турската вероизповедна община, като степендиянти. Те се казваха: Кочо Рамаданов, Малик Омеров, Садик Сефидов и Ибраим Коков.

През 1905 година, поради изселването на турското население от София и България, турските ученици намаляха и останаха главно децата на нашите сънародници и затова, членовете на новото турско настоятелство, озлобени закриха училището и нашите деца през 1906 година отидоха масово да учат в българските училища. [...]

През 1906 година бяха създадени цигански гимнастически дружества, които изпълняваха дневни и вечерни игри и организираха излети към Княжево и Враждебна.

Съобразно нашето обществено устройство и ние, както европейските малцинствени цигански групи, имахме един старейшина, който наричахме Мухтар (Черибашия), който представляваше циганското малцинство пред официалните власти. Черибашията се избираше доброволно и той следеше за строгото спазване на морала и реда между населението.

През 1919 година, след като се завърнаха от войната, циганите се събраха на събрание, в което ние вече имахме млади интелигентни хора, в едно бурно заседание смъкна споменатите старейшини (черибашии), като се създадоха по нов

образец пет до седем-членни комитети, които представляваха циганско малцинство пред всички органи на властта и се грижеха за превъзпитанието на малцинството. Комитетите се състояха от председател, секретар и членове. Освен комитетите, съществуваха от много стари времена и дружества за подпомагане на социално слабите. Те се наричаха “лонжи”. Последните продължиха своята работа. Те помагаша на крайно нуждаещи се приживе и при случай на смърт. Всяка “лонжа” наброяваше от 30 до 50 члена. Тя устройваше и излети до Княжево (Бале Ефендия, Бали Баба), и други места, където изнасяха музикални увеселения с народни хора и танци през целия ден. Ръководствата на “лонжите” се наричаха *Уста Баши* и *Егит Баши*.

През 1920 година циганската младеж замести тези “лонжи” с дружества, които се ръководеха също по нов модерен начин и образец. Ръководството им се състоеше от председател, подпредседател, секретар и членове на управителния съвет, а уставите им бяха утвърдени от Министерството на вътрешните работи. Тези комитети имаха същата задача, както и “лонжите” – да раздават помощи и да бдят за опазване на добрия морал. [...]

Двадесет и шеста глава

Борби за граждански и политически права

На едно събрание през 1921 година прогресивната младеж реши да се състави комитет, който да си постави за задача за даване на политически и граждански права на циганското малцинство. Въпреки постановленията на конституцията, Каравелов, недоволен от циганското малцинство заради това, че вместо да даде нему подкрепата си, то бе я дала на Радославов, отне изборителните права на циганите. Този явно противоконституционен акт на Каравелов бе посрещнат с болка от циганското малцинство, което смяташе, че Каравелов няма никакви основания да прави това.

Сега, след като много от младежите бяха взели участие във войната 1915-1918 година и след като мнозина от тях бяха оставили костите си по четирите краища на Балканския полуостров, циганското малцинство смяташе, че има всички основания да претендира за равенство пред законите в страната. Министър-председател тогава бе Ал[ександър] Стамболийски.

Комитетът бе избран и в него влизаха: [X]юсеин Билалов, Шакир Пашев, Рашид Мехмедов. Реджеб Юсеинов, Мута Билалов, Юсуф Мехмедов, Билал Османов.

Скоро след това така избраният комитет се яви пред министър-председателя Ал[ександър] Стамболийски, който внимателно изслуша исканията на комитета и след това обеща да бъдат дадени тези права. И той устоя на обещанието си. В първото заседание на следващото Народно събрание той внесе предложение за възстановяване изборителните права на циганите и подкрепен от комунистическите народни представители, законът бе приет.

През 1925 година циганското малцинство избра училищно настоятелство в състав: председател Рашид Мехмедов, подпредседател Реджеб Юсеинов и секретар

Шакир Пашев, а членове: Мустафа Енкеков, Малик Омеров. Училищното настоятелство в горния състав бе утвърдено от Столичната община, но турската вероизповедна община следваше по закона да гарантира за училищното настоятелство, което тя отказа да стори. Циганите-мохамедани по това време водили борба да имат право на избор и то във вакъфското настоятелство. Но понеже устава на мюсюлманската община изискваше да има 40 семейства, за да имат право циганите на избор, а понеже циганите не са имали толкова семейства, мюсюлманската община се противопостави и в този случай. Това действие на мюсюлманската община силно възбуди циганското малцинство. Тогава всички цигани се обединяват като един и успяват в скоро време да извадят удостоверения на повече от 40 семейства, че са мохамедани от Столичната община, и че са турци. Мюсюлманската община, обаче, пак е упорствувала и не искала да признае представените удостоверения за достоверни. Борбата стига до Върховния административен съд, но и тук циганското малцинство изгубило, защото делото било решено в полза на мюсюлманската вероизповедна община. И циганите си остават само с необорените документи, че са турци.

Преди едни избори Никола Мушанов назначи тричленна комисия в следния състав: Юсеин Папукчиев, председател; Хюсеин Билалов – секретар и Малик Еминов – член. След изборите, обаче, не се дава възможност на тази тричленна комисия да си заеме местата, понеже Шумков, частният секретар на Никола Мушанов, бил издал заповед поменатата тричленна комисия да не приема вакъвското настоятелство от старите ѝ членове, като и сега малкото турци, които бяха останали, успеха да се наложат на болшинството.

Но и сега циганското малцинство не се е отчаяло, а се отдава на организационен живот и на 7 май 1929 година се основава първата организация на циганското малцинство в София, която обединява всички бивши дружества (лонжи) в организацията “Истикбал” (Бъдеще), която наброява значителната за онова време цифра 1 500 члена, с председател Юсуф Мехмедов и секретар Шакир Пашев, а член – Юсеин Билалов.

Същата година се основава и дружество “Взаимопомощ” с председател Рашид Мехмедов, в която членуваха част от дружествата на бившите лонжи. По този начин се създават в циганското малцинство две големи организации – “Истикбал” и “Взаимопомощ”.

Освен тези две големи организации, циганите имаха и други професионални дружества на ковачи, калайджии, търговци, които членуваха в “Истикбал”.

Съществуваха и младежки културно-просветни дружества с много прогресивни тенденции: “Наангле” (Напред) и спортното дружество “Египет”.

През 1930 година прогресивната младеж обедини в едно двете големи организации на циганското малцинство под едно общо име “Истикбал” (Бъдеще), с председател Шакир Пашев, двама подпредседатели, а именно: Реджеб Юсеинов и Рашид Мехмедов и секретари: Ахмед Сотиров и Рамчо Шакиров, и членове: Ю[сеин] Билалов, Емин Еминов, Райчо Кочев и др.

През 1931 година, по предложение на председателя на организацията Шакир Пашев, бе взето решение да се издава цигански вестник в България, който нарекоха “Тербие” (Възпитание). Негов пръв редактор бе Шакир Пашев. Вестникът бе разпространен из цялата страна. За тази цел бяха организирани много хора във Враца, Лом, Оряхово, Плевен, Пловдив, Кюстендил, Стара Загора, Русе, Шумен, Бургас, Перник, Сливен и в много села.

Задачата, както на общата организация “Истикбал”, така и на вестника “Тербие” бяха презъпитаването и културно-просветното издигане на циганското население в България.

На 7 май 1932 година се състоя първата циганска конференция в гара Мездра. Тази конференция се състоя, благодарение на инициативата на циганската организация във Враца. Организатори на тази конференция бяха сънародниците ни Никола Палашев и Сандо Ибров. Присъствуваха делегати от цялата врачанска област, включително и от селата. Тук бяха представени Михайловград, Оряхово и селата около него, Бяла-Слатина, Плевен, Лом, Червен бряг и София. Софийската делегация се водеше от председателя на организацията “Истикбал” в София – Шакир Пашев и в нея влизаха още Емин Еминов, Найдо Яшаров и Али Яшаров. Конференцията се състоя до калето край Мездра и се взе решение всички цигани в България да се ръководят от общата организация “Истикбал”. Реши се също органът на организацията “Истикбал” – вестник “Тербие”, да проникне като просветителен лъч до последната колиба на цялото циганско малцинство в България.

На 7 май 1934 година се поднесе венеца на гроба на починалия заслужил деятел на организацията – Реджеб Юсеинов, който приживе бе щедро надарил училището и циганските деца. Той беше дълго време подпредседател на циганската организация. Роден е на 10 май 1879 година и почина на 30 декември 1933 година. Венецът бе положен и от името на ръководството на организацията й Шакир Пашев с кратко слово и секретаря Рамчо Шакиров и този ден – 7 май, стана традиция циганското малцинство да отива на поклонение на гроба на заслужилия цигански деятел Реджеб Юсеинов.

Културно-просветната организация “Истикбал” стана законен представител на циганското малцинство в цяла България. Поменатата организация водеше регистър за ражденията и смъртните случаи само за София. Организацията притежаваше собствена погребална кола. “Истикбал” издаваше служебни бележки за нашите сънародници, без които Софийската община не им издаваше нужните удостоверения. Организацията представляваше списък пред Софийската община за циганските бедни семейства и според този списък им се даваше съответната материална помощ.

С една дума организацията “Истикбал” играеше роля на официален институт, представляващ единствен циганското малцинство пред законните власти в София.

В[естник] “Тербие” пък играеше ролята на възпитател сред циганското малцинство. Неговата задача бе да издига културно-просветното равнище на циганите, да ратува за тяхното политико-обществено възпитание и да насочва циганското

малцинство към прогресивните политически идеи, единствени които ратуваха за равенство на всички нации в държавата. Тази своя задача той изпълняваше с ревност и ентузиазъм и ръководството на вестника истински се радваше, когато разбере, че вестникът действително подпомага издигането във всяко отношение на циганите. Хюсеин А. Билалов бе един от най-близките сътрудници на вестника и влизаше в редакционната колегия. Той бе истински ентузиазиран, обичаше вестника и с дейността си бе дясната ръка на неговия редактор Шакир Пашев. Те двамата, с дружни усилия, не жалейки време, сили и средства влагаха всичкото си умение и старание да подобрят все повече страниците на вестника, за да го направят жив, сочен и интересен за читателите му. Те знаеха, че един вестник може да стане настолен за читателите си, когато ратува за повишаване на техния материален бит и когато този вестник отразява мислите, желанията, стремежите и идеалите на своите читатели. И в това отношение те правеха всичко, за да задоволят всестранный изисквания на читателите си. Те също така бяха горди, защото в „Тербие“ бе първият вестник в Европа, който се издаваше, за да ратува за културно-просветното издигане на циганското малцинство. До създаването на в[естник] „Тербие“, а и дълго след това, никъде в Европа не се издаваше вестник на циганските малцинства. Това бе една голяма придобивка за българските цигани и справедлива гордост на неговите инициатори, а особено за редакционното ръководство.

В своите колони вестникът отразяваше ежедневните грижи на циганското малцинство, той се занимаваше с всестранный и плодотворна работа на организацията „Истикбал“, изнасяше живота на разните други цигански организации – тези на младежите, на спортните им клубове, на занаятчийските организации и предаваше всяко събитие, което се случваше в живота на циганското малцинство. Той поощряваше младите и ентузиазирани цигани да подобрят все повече своето културно-просветно издигане, ратуваше всеотдайно за всестранный превъзпитаване на циганското малцинство, зовеше го към прогресивна политико-обществена дейност, бореше се с предразсъдъците, вкостенелите и умиращи традиции и в това отношение той имаше неоспорни успехи. Той стоеше, например, начело в борбата за премахване на шалварите, като в това отношение подпомагаше решително борбата на самата организация „Истикбал“. И когато виждаше плодовете на своята дейност, редакционната колегия се радваше, защото в нейните среди имаше разбирането, че без културно просветно издигане на циганското малцинство, без премахване на вредните закостенели предразсъдъци, суеверия и нрави, един народ не може да върви напред. Редакционната колегия схващаше, че циганското малцинство ще трябва преди всичко да се отърси от всички вредни предразсъдъци, да тръгне по един нов път на превъзпитание, да усвои новите прогресивни политико-обществени идеи – с една дума да тръгне в крак с всички културни народи.

В[естник] „Тербие“ се издаваше на български език. [...] Вестник „Тербие“ наистина повдигаше националното патриотично чувство на циганското малцинство, но се бореше решително и убедително против неговото шовинизиране. Вестникът

ратуваше за един просветен патриотизъм, но се противопоставяше на непросветения фанатизъм и шовинизъм.

И в това отношение в. “Тербие” бе образец на един действително прогресивно демократичен орган, задачата на която бе да сее любов между хората, а не разединение. Той бе срещу братските унижителни войни – за мир и разбирателство между всички народи в света. Главен стимул на в[естник] “Тербие” бе любовта между хората, разбирателството между народите. Той бе решителен и непоколебим враг на омразата между хората и неразбирателството между народите. С тези основни лозунги, които бяха легнали в неговата програма, вестникът се посрещаше с радост от всички, и особено от циганското малцинство.

И затова неговият успех бе толкова голям.

Двадесет и седма глава

Нрави и обичаи, и борбата срещу вредните такива

До 1920 година циганите имаха обичаи във връзка с брака, които бяха явно вредни, често крайно обидни за момата и много вредни за създаването на истински щастливи цигански семейства. Това бе обичаят “Баба-ак”, по силата на който момчето-жених и неговите родители трябваше да заплатят скъпо на бащата на булката, за да имат съгласието на момините родители за сключване на брака. Този вреден и крайно обиден обичай трябваше на всяка цена да бъде премахнат, защото той създаваше поводи за сключване на брак не по любов и взаимно влечение, а бракове, в които младият кандидат-жених при наддаване можеше да отклони момата от онзи, към когото тя чувствуваше влечение. Този “Баба-ак” (бащина заслуга) безспорно бе остатък от времената, когато се е търгувало със жените и когато те са били обикновена стока – така, както е бил и добитъкът например. Този вреден и отживял времето си обичай трябваше да бъде премахнат на всяка цена и срещу него въстанаха решително организацията “Истикбал”, както и в[естник] “Тербие”. Тази борба не бе лека, защото предубежденията и закостеливостта, особено на по-старите, не се побеждаваха така лесно. Със системна разяснителна работа, обаче, както в общи събрания, така и при домашни срещи и лични разговори, този обичай полека-лека бе премахнат, за да открие широко дверите към създаване на истинско щастливо циганско семейство.

С премахването на този обичай разводите в циганските семейства значително намаляха, защото браковете вече се създаваха не вече “по сметка”, а по влечение. А да се укрепи основната клетка на всяка нация – семейството, това значи да се укрепи и самата нация. В това отношение борбата с оскърбителния обичай “Баба-ак” на организацията “Истикбал” и в[естник] “Тербие” ще трябва да бъде оценена правилно и справедливо и да им се признае, че те са извършили, макар и много трудно и при силно противодействие, една истинска национална победа в укрепването на циганското семейство. [...] С това борбата на организацията “Истикбал” и в[естник] “Тербие” добива значението на огромна национална придобивка.

Свадбите някога траеха по четири дни (от вторник до петък). Този обичай, обаче, все повече се изоставяше поради новата стопанска конюнктура, защото нищо не оправдаваше обичаят да се протакат сватбите по четири дни, да се пръскат за небивали тържества много средства, да се преуморяват в четиридневни веселби, както младоженците, така и техните близки, за да се стигне до там, че няколко дни след като се свърши сватбата, да се търсят пари за най-насъщните семейни и домашни нужди. Безсмислените разходи по тези сватби често лишаваша младите семейства от възможността да се обзаведат, за да имат в дома си условията на един щогоден човешки живот. Тази традиция, срещу която организацията водеше разяснителна работа, постепенно, по силата на самите обстоятелства, от ден на ден все повече отпаднаше, за да се стигне днес до еднодневната сватба.

През време на сватбите на младоженците се носеха от техните близки подаръци, обикновено овни, вино, ракия. Този обичай и до днес съществува, само сега е преобразен, като на младите съпрузи се купуват за подаръци вече разни домашни потреби, като котли, тенджери, кани, гардероби, бюфети и пр. – неща, които изисква новия живот.

Обичайно е било също така булката да се гримира с бял крем, като по него се налепвали разни украшения, защото самият крем се е намазвал на дебел пласт, та да може да държи украшенията залепени на него. Някои гримьорки (телези[й]ки) са поставяли върху белия крем черти от друг цвят и специални пулчета.

Бракът на циганите-мохамедани се е извършвал в къщи от имамина (свещеника), а бракът на православните цигани се е извършвал в православната църква, без обаче да бъде гримирана булката. След венчавката, обаче, обичаите са същите, както и при циганите-мохамедани.

Когато в семейството е настъпвало някакво сериозно недоразумение, спорът е бил уреждан от специалния отдел при организацията “Истикбал”. Този отдел се е наричал помирителен съвет на циганското малцинство. Той е успявал почти винаги да урежда спорните въпроси и да внася мир и успокоение в семейството. От тук явствуваша колко всестранна и плодотворна е била дейността на организацията “Истикбал”.

Когато говорим за дейността на организацията, ще трябва да отбележим огромната работа, която вършеше в нея Хюсеин А. Билалов. Той бе секретар на организацията и се грижеше за нейната всестранна дейност. [...] Той водеше регистрите на организацията и издаваше бележките, които по-горе упоменахме и без които Столичната община не издаваше на циганите никакви удостоверения.

Организацията “Истикбал” имаше всяка седмица конференция на всяка група по отделно, на които се изнасяха беседи за превъзпитанието на циганското малцинство и за неговото културно и политико-обществено издигане. В тези конференции се водеше и системната борба против шалварите, които в скоро време бяха премахнати от циганското малцинство. Освен това, организацията “Истикбал” устройваше [...]

Друг обичай, съществуващ между циганите, е така наречения “сюнет” – обрязване. Младите момчета, като навършат известна възраст, се обрязват при специална тържествена обстановка, която почти се приближава до тази, която съществува при сватбите. Обрязването се извършва от специално подготвен за целта бръснар.

Организацията “Истикбал” водеше всестранна дейност. В своята разяснителна работа тя успя да премахне много ненужни, а често дори и вредни и скъпи обичаи.

По настояване на организацията “Истикбал” премахна се гримирането при сватбите на младоженката, премахна се също така “Баба-ака”. Сватбите пък станаха по-скромни. Това са придобивки, които, ако се прецени вредата от всичките тези обичаи, ще се разберат и значението им.

Шалварите престанаха да бъдат всекидневна носия на циганките, а останаха като музейна ценност и се обличат само при специални случаи, когато трябва да се подчертае националният характер на някое тържество. [...]

Двадесет и девета глава Цигански културен дом в София

През 1906 година Столичната община подари на циганското малцинство двеста квадратни метра място за постройка на обществено-културен дом на циганите в София.

Този подарък въодушеви много цялото циганско малцинство в София за по-бързото построяване на обществено-културния цигански дом. Запретнаха се всички в работа и кой с каквото можеше помагаше, за да бъде изграден дома. И наистина, благодарение на тези усилия културно-обществения дом бе изграден на ул. “Найчо Цанов” 175 със средствата, усилията и труда изключително само на циганите.

Впоследствие организацията “Истикбал” поддържаше в този дом 5-6 бездомни стари цигани до 1934 година. През месец юни 1934 година с писмена заповед бе разтурена организацията “Истикбал” и органа ѝ в[естник] “Тербие” бе спрян. Същото стана и с всички политически партии в България.

На 6 март 1936 година циганският квартал бе блокиран от санитарните власти, защото бяхме наклеветени, че между циганите върлувала епидемия, което впоследствие се указа, че е било лъжа. Макар че блокираната махала бе поддържана с храна от санитарните власти, това никак не се хареса на циганите и те избраха комитет, който да издействува вдигането на блокадата. В състава на комитета влизали: Шакир Пашев, Ахмед Сотиров, Хюсеин А. Билалов, Емин Еминов, Райчо Кочев, Шакир Местамов, Исмаил Шакиров (Толио), Яшар Мустафов, Найдо Яшаров, Асан Османов, Мута Билалов, Асан Османов и др., които след дълги преговори, успяха да уредят благоприятно въпросът и блокадата бе вдигната.

Комитетът също тъй уреди и обезщетяването на онези цигани, които поради блокадата, бяха загубили надниците си. Държавата им плати загубената надница.

Тридесета глава Първият цигански бал в София

На 3 март 1938 година, циганското малцинство устрои в Градското казино първият цигански бал в София с ориенталски цигански музикални номера и сцени от “Хиляда и една нощ”. Софийското гражданство, което масово посети този пръв по рода си цигански бал, продължително акламира всички номера от прекрасната програма и се удивляваше на дарбите на циганските артисти и музиканти.

Българските вестници не останаха глухи към тази наша първа културна проява и излязоха с възторжени статии и бележки за бала, като написаха извънредно ласкави похвали, както за артистите, така и за музикантите.

Автор на художествените пиеси и сцени от “Хиляда и една нощ” бе Шакир Пашев, режисьор Емин Еминов, а балет-майстор – Хюсеин А. Билалов.

С този пръв цигански бал се тури началото на театралните прояви на циганското малцинство. Той бе нашата първа и макар много плаха стъпка към културно проявление, в което ние вече можем да изтъкнем дарованията, на които са способни циганите.

Посрещнати така ласкаво от софийската публика и преса, ние добихме кураж, за да продължим тази традиция, на която сега туряме началото и която, за наша радост и гордост, излезе твърде сполучлива.

Тридесет и първа глава Възстановяване на Софийската циганска организация

През 1945 година, след като народните свободи бяха възстановени, циганското малцинство, по инициатива на разтурената организация “Истикбал”, свика на 6 март голямо събрание на ул. “Татарли” 18. Това събрание се е смятало като учредително такова, на което единодушно се е решило да бъде възстановена организацията на малцинството, за да се продължи превъзпитанието на последното.

На това събрание единодушно е било избрано следното ръководство на организацията: Председател – Шакир Пашев, Подпредседатели – Райчо Кочев и Билал Османов, Касиер – Демир Рустемов, Секретар – Таир Селимов, Членове: Емин Еминов, Хюсеин А. Билалов, Сульо Метков, Решо Демиров, Рамчо Тотев, Демчо Благоев, Найдо Яшаров, Асан Османов (Палячо), Асан Соманов, Исмаил Шакиров, Шакир Мещанов, Али Мехмедов, Изет Салчов, Цеко Николов.

В организацията бяха приобщени около 3 000 члена. Ръководството създаде във всички квартали организации в които редовно се провеждаха събрания и конференции. Задачата на тези събрания бе да работи все по-упорито за всестранното културно-просветно и политико-обществено издигане на циганското малцинство.

След народната победа от 9 септември 1944 година, както за българския народ, така и за циганското малцинство се откриха нови светли хоризонти на пълно

политическа, културна и национална свобода. Циганското малцинство ентусиазирано поздрави народната победа, защото тя отвори за него до тогава здраво заключените двери на свободата. С победата на 9 септември се премахна дискриминацията, която буржоазно-фашистките правителства бяха установили до тогава за циганското малцинство. Пред циганското малцинство се откри широкият друм за културно-просветната работа и то не закъсня да я използва всестранно. Из цялата страна бяха създадени самодейни художествено-музикални колективи, които навсякъде бяха посрещнати с голям интерес, всеобщо одобрение и възторг.

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Shakir M. Pashov

The History of the Gypsies in Bulgaria and in Europe. "Roma"

[...]

Chapter 23

Educational Work

The Gypsy students, before the liberation and soon after that, even up to 1905, used to study in Sofia in the Turkish school whose *Moalim* (principal) used to be Osman Efendi. More than a hundred Gypsy pupils used to study in this school, five of which were sent to study in the University of Istanbul [1] by the Turkish Religious Council, as scholarship holders. Their names were: Kocho Ramadanov, Malik Omerov, Sadik Sefidov and Ibrahim Kokov.

In 1905, due to the expulsion of the Turkish population from Sofia and Bulgaria, the number of Turkish students decreased and who have left were mainly the children of our Gypsy compatriots, and that is why the embittered members of the new Turkish Board of Trustees closed down the school and our children in 1906 went to study in great numbers in the Bulgarian schools. [...]

In 1906, Gypsy gymnastic societies were created which organised day and night exercises and also used to organise outings to Knyazhevo and Vrazhdebna [2].

According to our social order and we, also like the European minority Gypsy groups, used to have a leader, which we used to call *Muhtar* (*Cheribashia*), who used to represent the Gypsy minority in front of the official authorities. The *Cheribashia* was elected voluntarily and he used to ensure for the strict observance of the moral and the order among the population.

In 1919, after they came back from the war, Gypsies gathered together in a meeting in which we already had young, intelligent people, in a stormy meeting the aforementioned Elders (*Cheribashii*) were taken down and were created, according to a new model, Committees with five to seven members which represented the Gypsy minority in front of all organs of the authorities and cared after the re-education of the minority. The committees were composed by a president, a secretary and members. Besides the

committees, since old times there used to be also associations for the support of the socially poor. They were called *londzhi* [3]. The latter continued their work. They helped those who are most in need while alive and at times of death. Each *londzha* was composed between 30 and 50 members. They used to organise outings in Knyazhevo (Bale Efendiya, Bali Baba) [4] and other places, where they organised musical parties with national *horo* [5] dances and dance throughout the day. The leaders of the *londzhi* were called *Usta Bashi* [6] and *Egit Bashi* [7].

In 1920 the Gypsy youth substituted these *londzhi* with associations, which were managed also by a new, modern way and model. Their management was composed by a president, vice-president, secretary and members of the managing board, while their statutes were approved by the Ministry of the Internal Affairs. These Committees had the same task, like the *londzhi* – to give out aid and to be vigilant for good moral. [...]

Chapter 26

Struggles for Civil and Political Rights

At a meeting in 1921 the progressive youth decided to set up a committee with the task to grant political and civic rights to the Gypsy minority. Despite the constitutional provisions, Karavelov [8], dissatisfied with the Gypsy minority because instead of supporting him, they had given their support to Radoslavov [9], he had taken away the Gypsy's electoral rights [10]. This apparently unconstitutional act of Karavelov was affront with pain by the Gypsy minority, which considered that Karavelov had no reason to do so.

Now that many of the youths took part in the 1915-1918 war and many left their bones across the Balkan Peninsula, the Gypsy minority felt that there was every reason to claim equality before the laws of the country. The Prime Minister then was Aleksandar Stamboliyski [11].

The Committee was elected and included: [H]yusein Balilov, Shakir Pashev, Rashid Mehmedov, Redzheb Yuseinov, Muto Bilalov, Yusuf Mehmedov, Bilal Osmanov.

Shortly after that, the selected Committee appeared before Prime Minister Aleksandar Stamboliyski, who listened intently to the Committee's requests and then promised these rights to be granted. And kept his promise. At the first meeting of the next National Assembly, he submitted a proposal for the restoration of the voting rights of the Gypsies and supported by the Communist MPs, the law was passed [12].

In 1925, the Gypsy minority chose a school board of trustees, consisting of: President Rashid Mehmedov, Vice-president Redzheb Yuseinov and Secretary Shakir Pashev; members: Mustafa Enkekov, Malik Omerov. The school board of trustees in the upper composition was approved by the Capital City Hall, but the Turkish religious community was supposed to guarantee for the school board, which it refused to do. The Mohammedan Gypsies at that time fought to have a right to be elected in the Waqf Board of Trustees. But since the statute of the Muslim community required 40 families, in order for the Gypsies to have the right to elect, and since the Gypsies did not have [registered] that many families, the Muslim community also opposed this. This action by the Muslim community

has greatly aroused the Gypsy minority. Then all Gypsies united as one and soon succeed in obtaining certificates from more than 40 families that they are Mohammedans from the Capital's City Hall and that they are Turks. The Muslim community, however, has still persisted and did not want to acknowledge the presented certificates as credible. The struggle reached the Supreme Administrative Court, but here again the Gypsy minority lost as the case was decided in favour of the Muslim religious community. And the Gypsies were left with only the undisputed documents that they are Turks.

Before some elections [13], Nikola Mushanov [14] appointed a three-membered commission in the following composition: Yusein Papukchiev – president; Hyusein Bilalov – secretary, and Malik Eminov – member. After the elections, however, there was no chance for this commission to take their places because Shumkov, the private secretary of Nikola Mushanov had issued an order the aforementioned three-member commission not to take over the responsibility of the Waqf's Board of Trustees from the old members; same as now, the few Turks that remained, managed to prevail over the majority.

And yet, the Gypsy minority has not despaired, but has instead dedicated itself to an organisational life and on May 7, 1929, the first organisation of the Gypsy minority in Sofia was founded, which unites all former societies (*londzhi*) in the Organisation *Istikbal*, which had the significant, for that time, figure of 1,500 members, with President Yusuph Mehmedov and Secretary Shakir Pashev, and Member – [H]Yusein Bilalov.

That same year, Association *Vzaimopomosht* (Mutual Aid) was founded, with the President Rashid Mehmedov, in which members were part of associations of the former *londzhi*. Thus, the Gypsy minority created two large organisations – *Istikbal* and *Vzaimopomosht* (Mutual Aid).

Besides these two large organisations, the Gypsies also had other professional associations of blacksmiths, tinsmiths, traders who were members of *Istikbal*.

There were also youth cultural and educational societies with very progressive trends: *Naangle* (Forward) and the Sport Society *Egypt*.

In 1930, the progressive youth united in one of the two large organisations of the Gypsy minority under the common name *Istikbal* (Future), with President Shakir Pashev, two Vice-Presidents, namely: Redzheb Yuseinov and Rashid Mehmedov and Secretary: Ahmed Sotirov and Ramcho Shakirov, and members: Yusein Bialov, Emin Eminov, Raycho Kochev and others.

In 1931, on the proposal of the President of the organisation, Shakir Pashev, it was decided to issue a Gypsy newspaper in Bulgaria which they called *Terbie* (Upbringing) [15]. His first editor was Shakir Pashev. The newspaper was distributed throughout the country. For that purpose, many people were organised in Vratsa, Lom, Oryahovo, Pleven, Plovdiv, Kyustendil, Stara Zagora, Ruse, Shumen, Burgas, Pernik, Sliven and in many villages.

The task of both the common Organisation *Istikbal* and the newspaper *Terbie* was the upbringing and cultural-educational uplifting of the Gypsy population in Bulgaria.

On May 7, 1932, the first Gypsy Conference took place at Mezdra Station. This Conference was held thanks to the initiative of the Gypsy organisation in Vratsa. Organisers of the Conference were our compatriots Nikola Palashev and Sando Ibrov.

Delegates from the whole Vratsa region, including from the villages, were present. Mihailovgrad [16], Oryahovo and the villages around it, Byala Slatina, Pleven, Lom, Cherven Bryag and Sofia were also presented here. The Sofia delegation was headed by the President of Organisation *Iskikbal* in Sofia – Shakir Pashev, and also included Emin Eminov, Naydo Yasharov and Ali Yasharov. The conference took place near the Mezdra Station and it was decided that all Gypsies in Bulgaria should be led by the common Organisation *Istikbal*. It was also decided that the publication of the Organisation *Istikbal*, the newspaper *Terbie* would penetrate as an enlightening beam to the last hut of the entire Gypsy minority in Bulgaria.

On May 7, 1934, the wreath was placed at the tomb of the deceased honoured activist of the organisation, Redzheb Yuseinov, who while alive had generously contributed for the School and the Gypsy children. He was for a long time a Vice-President of the Gypsy organisation. He was born on 10 May 1879 and died on December 30, 1933. The wreath was also put on behalf of the leadership of the Organisation by Shakir Pashev, accompanied with a short speech and by Secretary Ramcho Shakirov, and on that day – May 7th became a tradition for the Gypsy minority [17] to pay tribute at the grave of the deserving Gypsy activist, Redzheb Yuseinov.

The Cultural-Educational Organisation *Istikbal* became a legal representative of the Gypsy minority in entire Bulgaria. The said Organisation kept a register for the births and deaths only for Sofia. The Organisation had its own funeral car. *Istikbal* issued official notices for our compatriots, without which the Sofia municipality did not issue the necessary certificates. The Organisation used to present a list for the Gypsy poor families to the Sofia municipality, and according to this list, they were given the appropriate material assistance.

In short, the Organisation *Istikbal* played the role of the only official institution representing the Gypsy minority before the legal authorities in Sofia.

The newspaper *Terbie*, on the other hand, played the role of a mentor for the Gypsy minority. Its task was to raise the cultural-educational level of the Gypsies, to work towards their political-civil education and to direct the Gypsy minority towards progressive political ideas – the only ones that pledged towards equality of all nations in the country. That was executed with passion and enthusiasm and the leadership of the newspaper was truly happy when they found out that the newspaper in fact helps the Gypsy uplifting in all aspects. Hyusein A. Bilalov [18] was one of the closest associates in the newspaper and he was in the editorial board. He was really enthusiastic, he loved the newspaper and with his work he was the right arm of the editor of the newspaper, Shakir Pashev. Both of them, with mutual effort, wasting no time, power and money, put all their abilities in order to improve as much as possible the pages of the newspaper and in order to make it engaging, luscious and interesting for its readers. They were aware that a newspaper could become attractive for the reader when it advocates for their material well-being as well as when the newspaper reflects their thoughts, desires, aims and ideals. And in that respect, they made anything possible in order to satisfy the numerous requirements of their readers. Also, they were proud because the newspaper *Terbie* was the

first newspaper in Europe [19] to be issued in order to work for the cultural-educational uplifting of the Gypsy minority. Up until the creation of the newspaper *Terbie* and long after that, nowhere in Europe there was a newspaper for the Gypsy minorities. That was a huge advantage for the Bulgarian Gypsies and a fair proudness of its initiators and especially for the Editorial Board.

In its columns, the newspaper used to reflect the everyday concerns of the Gypsy minority, it used to deal with the all-rounded and fruitful work of Organisation *Istikbal*, reflected the realities of the other Gypsy organisations – those of the youth, of their sports clubs, of the professional organisations and communicated all events which took place in the lives of the Gypsy minority. It encouraged the youth and enthusiastic Gypsies to improve as much as possible their cultural-educational uplifting, it was working tirelessly towards for the all-rounded re-education of the Gypsy minority, it encouraged it towards progressive political-civil activities, it fought against prejudices and the rigid and dying traditions and in that respect, it used to have uncontested success. For example, it was on the forefront in the fight to get rid of the salwars [20], and in that respect, it helped the struggles of the Organisation *Istikbal*. And when it became used to see the fruits of its activities, the Editorial Board was happy because there was the agreement that without cultural and educational uplifting of the Gypsy minority, without the getting rid of the harmful, rigid prejudices, superstitions and norms, a nation cannot progress. The editorial board was aware that the Gypsy minority before anything else would have to rid themselves from all harmful prejudices, to take a new route towards re-education, to perceive the new progressive political-civil ideas – in a word, to be in synchronisation with all other cultured nations.

The newspaper *Terbie* was issued in Bulgarian language. [...] The newspaper *Terbie* raised truly the national and patriotic feeling of the Gypsy minority but it did not fight convincingly against its chauvinistic feelings. The newspaper was working towards an enlightening patriotism but it did stand against uneducated fanaticism and chauvinism.

In that aspect, too, the newspaper *Terbie* was an etalon of one truly progressive democratic organ whose task was to spread love between people and not separation between them. It was against the brotherly humiliating wars – it was for peace and understanding between all nations in the world. The main stimulus of the newspaper *Terbie* was the love between people and the understanding between the nations. It was a steady and firm enemy of the hatred between people and the misunderstanding between the nations. With these main slogans, which were lying in its framework, the newspaper was welcomed with joy by all and especially by the Gypsy minority.

That is why its success was so huge.

Chapter 27

Habits, Customs and the Fight against the Harmful Ones

Up until 1920 the Gypsies used to have customs related to marriage which were harmful, often really offensive for the girl and very harmful for the creation of truly happy

Gypsy families. That was the custom *Baba-hak* [21], according to which the boy to get married and his parents had to pay expensive to the father of the girl so that they get the consent of the parents of the girl so that the marriage does happen. This harmful and utterly offensive custom had to be eliminated by all means as it gave reasons for marriages to be entered not by love and mutual desires but marriages in which the young bridegroom could persuade a girl not to marry the one she has true feelings by offering her more. This *Baba-hak* (father's merit) was undoubtedly a remnant of the times when it was traded with women and when they were ordinary commodity – just as the cattle were, for example. This harmful and old-fashioned custom had to be abolished at all costs, and Organisation *Istikbal* as well as the newspaper *Terbie*, resolutely resounded against it. This struggle was not easy, for the biases and the stubbornness, especially of the elderly, were not so easy to overcome. With systematic explanatory work, however, both in general meetings and in domestic and personal conversations, this custom was slowly abolished to find the wide gates for the creation of a truly happy Gypsy family.

With the abolition of this custom, divorces in Gypsy families have greatly diminished, because marriages have already been created not “by interest”, but by attraction. And to strengthen the basic unit of every nation – the family, that means to strengthen the nation itself. In this respect, the fight of the Organisation *Istikbal* and the newspaper *Terbie* against the abusive *Baba-hak* custom will have to be judged correctly and fairly and to be acknowledged that the Organisation and the Newspaper have achieved a true national victory in the strengthening of the Gypsy – even though this has been difficult and in the face of a strong opposition. [...] With this, the struggle of the Organisation *Istikbal* and of the newspaper *Terbie* gained the significance of a huge national benefit.

Weddings once lasted for four days (from Tuesday to Friday). This custom, however, was increasingly abandoned because of the new economic situation because nothing justified the custom weddings to last for four days, to waste a lot of means for rare celebrations, for both the newlyweds and their relatives to get very tired celebrating for four days, and to get to the situation that a few days after the wedding is over, they seek money for their most urgent family and domestic needs. The unimaginable costs of these weddings often deprived young families of the opportunity to furnish their places so that they have in their homes the conditions of a more or less normal human life. This tradition, against which the Organisation was conducting an explanatory work, gradually, by virtue of the circumstances itself, was becoming increasingly obsolete every day to reach today's one-day wedding.

During the weddings of the newlyweds, there were gifts from their close-relatives, usually rams, wine, *rakiya* [22]. This custom still exists today, but now it is transformed, as for the young spouses are bought as gifts various kinds of household goods such as cauldrons, pots, jugs, wardrobes, buffets, etc. – things that the new life requires.

It was also common for the bride to put on makeup – white cream, sticking on also various ornaments because the cream itself was smeared on a thick layer so that she could hold the decorations glued to it. Some makeup artists (*teleziyki*) used to apply on the white cream other colours and special *pulcheta* [23].

The marriages of the Gypsy-Mohammedans were carried out at home by the *Imam* (Priest), and the marriage of the Orthodox Gypsies was carried out in the Orthodox Church without the bride, however, putting makeup. After the wedding, nevertheless, the customs are the same as with the Mohammedan Gypsies.

When there was a serious misunderstanding in the family, the dispute was settled by the special department of the Organisation *Istikbal*. This department was called the Conciliation Council of the Gypsy Minority. It has almost always managed to settle the controversial issues and to bring peace and reassurance to the family. From here we can see how comprehensive and fruitful the Organisation *Istikbal* was.

When we talk about the activities of the organisation, we have to note the huge work that Hyusseïn A. Bilalov did in it. He was the secretary of the organisation and took care of its comprehensive activities. [...] He kept the registers of the organisation and issued the notes we mentioned above and without which the Sofia Municipality did not issue any certificates to the Gypsies.

The Organisation *Istikbal* had a weekly conference of each group separately, where talks were held about the re-education of the Gypsy minority and its cultural and political-social rise. These conferences also led to the systematic struggle against the salwars, which were soon removed from the Gypsy minority. Besides, the Organisation *Istikbal* organised ... [24].

Another custom existing among the Gypsies is the so-called *Syunet* – circumcision. The young boys, when they reach a certain age, are circumcised in a special solemn setting that resembles very much that of weddings. Circumcision is performed by a barber who has been specially trained [25].

The Organisation *Istikbal* had a comprehensive activity. In its work, it has managed to eliminate many unnecessary and often even harmful and expensive customs.

At the insistence of the Organisation *Istikbal*, the makeup at the bride's marriage was abolished, and *Baba-hak* was also removed. Weddings became more modest. We would understand the significance of these gains, if the harm of all these customs was assessed.

Salwars have ceased to be a daily costume for the female Gypsies but have remained as a valuable asset and are only dressed on special occasions when the national character of a celebration has to be emphasised. [...]

Chapter 29

The Gypsy Cultural House in Sofia

In 1906 Sofia municipality granted the Gypsy minority two hundred square meters of space for building a Public Cultural House of the Gypsies in Sofia.

This gift inspired the entire Gypsy minority in Sofia for the faster construction of the Public Cultural Gypsy House. Everybody got busy at work and whoever helped with whatever they could in the building of the House. Indeed, thanks to these efforts, the Cultural Social House was built on Naycho Tsanov Str. 175 exclusively with the resources,

efforts and labour of the Gypsies. Subsequently, the Organisation *Istikbal* kept 5-6 homeless old Gypsies in this House until 1934.

In June 1934, the Organisation *Istikbal* was suspended by a written order and its publication, the newspaper *Terbie* was interrupted. The same thing happened also with all political parties in Bulgaria.

On March 6, 1936, the Gypsy neighbourhood was closed off by the Sanitary Authorities because they were accused of having an epidemic among the Gypsies, which was later said to have been a lie. Although the blocked neighbourhood was maintained with food by the Sanitary Authorities, this all did not appeal to the Gypsies, and they chose a Committee in order to lift the blockade. Members of the Committee included: Shakir Pashev, Ahmed Sotirov, Hyusein A. Bilalov, Emin Eminov, Raicho Kochev, Shakir Mestamov, Ismail Shakirov (Tolio), Yashar Mustafov, Naydo Yasharov, Asan Osmanov, Muto Bilalov, Asan Osmanov and others who after long negotiations managed to favourably settle the issue and the blockade was lifted.

The Committee also arranged for the compensation of those Gypsies who, due to the blockade, had lost their wages. The state paid them their lost wages.

Chapter 30 The First Gypsy Ball in Sofia

On March 3, 1938, the Gypsy minority set up the first Gypsy ball in Sofia with oriental Gypsy musical performances and scenes from *One Thousand and One Nights* at the City Casino. Citizens from Sofia who have visited the first of its kind Gypsy ball, have been continuously acclaiming all the performances from the superb programme and were amazed by the gifted Gypsy artists and musicians.

The Bulgarian newspapers did not miss this first cultural event and they came out with enthusiastic articles and comments about the Ball, writing extraordinary praises for both the artists and the musicians.

The author of the artistic plays and scenes from *One Thousand and One Nights* was Shakir Pashev, director was Emin Eminov, and ballet master – Hyusein A. Bilalov.

This first Gypsy Ball set the beginning of the theatrical manifestations of the Gypsy minority. It was our first, even though a very timid, step towards a cultural manifestation in which we can point out the talents of the Gypsies.

So gladly met by the audience and the press in Sofia, we have gained the courage to continue this tradition, where we now set the beginning and which, for our joy and pride, has turned out to be so successful [26].

Chapter 31 The Revival of the Gypsy Organisation

In 1945, after the freedoms of the people were restored, the Gypsy minority, by the initiative of the dissolved Organisation *Istikbal*, convened a large meeting on 6 March at

Tatarli Street 18. This meeting was considered as a constitutive where it was unanimously decided the Organisation of the Gypsy minority to be restored in order to continue the re-education of the latter.

At this meeting, the following leadership of the organisation was unanimously chosen: President – Shakir Pashev, Vice Presidents – Raycho Kochev and Bilal Osmanov, Treasurer – Demir Rustemov, Secretary – Tair Selimov; Members: Emin Eminov, Hyusein A. Bilalov, Sulyo Metkov, Resho Demirov, Ramcho Totev, Demcho Blagoev, Naydo Yasharov, Asan Osmanov (Palyacho), Asan Somanov, Ismail Shakirov, Shakir Meshtanov, Ali Mehmedov, Izet Salchov, Tseko Nikolov.

About 3,000 members were involved in the Organisation. The Board of Directors established organisations in all neighbourhoods where meetings and conferences were held regularly. The task of these meetings was to work more and more persistently for the all-rounded cultural-educational and political-social rise of the Gypsy minority.

After the People's victory of 9 September 1944 [27], both for the Bulgarian people and the Gypsy minority new light horizons of full political, cultural and national freedom were opened. The Gypsy minority enthusiastically congratulated the People's victory because it opened to them the until then tightly locked doors of freedom. With the 9th September victory, the discrimination that the bourgeois-fascist governments had previously established for the Gypsy minority was abolished. The wide route for cultural and educational work was opened to the Gypsy minority, who did not hesitate to use it fully. Amateur artistic and musical groups have been created all over the country which were welcomed everywhere with great interest, general approval and enthusiasm.

Notes

1. It is not entirely clear what the author means by 'The University of Istanbul' (in the original, the Bulgarian designation of the city is used – 'Tsarigrad'). At that time (late 19th and early 20th century), no university existed in Istanbul (except Robert College); perhaps it may be referring to the Islamic Theological School which in 1933 transformed into Istanbul University.
2. Knyazhevo and Vrazhdebna were at the time villages near Sofia; today they are neighbourhoods of Sofia.
3. The name 'londzha' (singular, 'londzhi' plural form) comes from *lonca* (Turkish). It was used by the former *esnafs* (guilds) in the Ottoman Empire which used to have so-called Big Londzha (General Assembly) and Small Londzha (Board of Directors).
4. It refers to the *Türbe* (Mausoleum) of the 16th-century Muslim Saint Bali Efendi. Under the name 'Ali Baba', he is still referred by the Gypsies in Sofia who, on the 2 August (the day of St Elijah in the so-called old style, i.e. according to the Julian Calendar), visit the *Türbe* (located in the courtyard of St Elijah Church) in Knyazhevo (Marushiakova & Popov, 1997, p. 138).
5. 'Horo' is a circle group dance in the Balkans.
6. 'Usta Bashi' (from Turkish) is also an *esnaf* terminology – that is how was called the leader of a certain guild.
7. 'Egit Bashi' (from Turkish) – Head Master.
8. It refers here to Petko Karavelov (1843-1903), who was a well-known Bulgarian politician, leader of the Democratic Party.
9. Vasil Radoslavov (1854-1929) was a prominent Bulgarian politician and a leader of the Liberal Party. In this case are meant the parliamentary elections in 1900 during which he was the Minister

of Interior. According to the electoral practice in Bulgaria at the time, Gypsy votes were considered as “dowry” of the ruling parties.

10. See above (Part 1).

11. Aleksandar Stamboliyski (1879-1923) was a prominent Bulgarian politician, leader of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, and the Prime Minister of Bulgaria at the time (1919-1923).

12. Here, Shakir Pashov does not accurately reflect what has happened (see Comments).

13. This refers to the Parliamentary elections held in 1931.

14. Nikola Mushanov (1872-1951) was a prominent Bulgarian politician of the Democratic Party and a Prime Minister of Bulgaria (1931-34).

15. The newspaper *Terbie*, regrettably, has not been preserved in the Bulgarian libraries and it is not known whether there are somewhere any stored copies of it. According to known data, the newspaper was published between February 27, 1933 and May 6, 1934, with a total of 7 issues; the editorial committee included Shakir Mahmudov Pashev (editor-in-chief), Asen Gotov and Demir Yasharov; the newspaper was a publication of the Mohammedan National Educational and Cultural Organisation, and from issue No. 6 it became a publication of the Common Mohammedan National Cultural and Educational Union in Bulgaria (Иванчев, 1966, Vol. 2, p. 398).

16. Today, the town of Montana.

17. In fact, visits to the cemetery one day after the celebration of St George's Day is an old tradition of the Gypsies which is preserved to this day.

18. Hyusein Bilalov was the son of Ali Bilyalov, the second (assistant) *Muhtar* of the Gypsies in Sofia at the beginning of the 20th century (about whom we already wrote, see above).

19. The newspaper *Terbie* is not the first Gypsy newspaper – neither in Europe, nor in the world, and not even in Bulgaria (see below). Shakir Pashov may not have been aware of the existence of such publications in other countries, however, he certainly knew about the publication of newspapers of the Evangelical Gypsies in Bulgaria. As a Deputy Member of the Bulgarian Parliament in 1947, he visited the village of Golintsi (today, a neighbourhood of the town of Lom) and according to the oral history of the community there, he helped to preserve the existence of the local Gypsy Evangelical church (see below). In this case, there is an evident case of self-censorship in order not to speak publicly about the presence of Evangelical Gypsies at a time when religiosity was not perceived positively by the authorities (the manuscript is dated 1957).

20. In the original, the word ‘feredzhe’ has been spelled out but later scratched out. That is how the special head veil for Muslim women (Hijab) is referred to in Bulgaria. There is no historical records or recollections of Gypsy women in Sofia ever wearing *feredzhe*.

21. The term ‘Baba-hak’ (from Turkish) for the Gypsies in the Balkans refers to the traditional bride price paid by the bridegroom's family to the family of the girl in arranged marriages.

22. ‘Rakiya’ (from Turkish *Raki*), is a strong alcoholic drink which is quite popular in the Balkans.

23. A diminutive form of ‘Pul’ (Turkish) – small metallic shiny circles that embellish the clothing of women worn on holiday occasions. The case describes the special makeup of the bride's face which used to be common in various Muslim communities in the Balkans. Today, it is no longer an observed practice by the Roma (replaced only with festive makeup) but it is preserved in places by the so-called Pomaks (Bulgarian Muslims) in the Rhodope Mountains (in Bulgaria), as well as by the Gorani in Kosovo.

24. An omission in the text.

25. The practice of circumcision (from the Turkish *Sünnet*) was preserved by the Gypsies in Sofia until the 1970s; there is a preserved photo of the festive procession of the boys (riding horses) to be circumcised in the neighbourhood *Fakulteta* in Sofia (ASR, f. Михаил Георгиев).

26. As Shakir Pashov writes elsewhere in his memoirs, at the Ball the Bulgarian Tsar Boris III was also invited. While he did not personally attend it, he had sent an envelope containing money for the poor Gypsies (ASR, f. Шакир Пашов). However, he made a small mistake in his memoirs, because the Gypsy Ball was not in 1938 (Неве пома, 1957a, p. 4), but in 1937, and was widely

covered by the foreign press. From the descriptions in it, it is clear that the Gypsy Ball was opened by a mixed choir, which performed the Bulgarian national anthem, followed by traditional Gypsy songs; the dancer Anushka and the famous Gypsy singer Keva took part in the Ball (Observer, 1937). As pointed in the notes above (p. 102), the singer Keva was very popular at that time, and according to rumours, the cabaret *At Keva*, located in the then Gypsy neighbourhood, was visited even by members of the royal family (Тенев, 1997, pp. 225-227); she also recorded several gramophone records in the 1930s, including songs in Bulgarian and Romani (Димов, 2005).

27. There is a preserved photo, dated September 9, 1944, which presents a rally of the Gypsies from Sofia in support of the new government (ASR, f. Фотографии). Another photo, also from the autumn of 1944, shows the official manifestation of Gypsies in Sofia, demonstrating in front of the Bulgarian Parliament where women are dressed in festive 'traditional' costumes (wearing salwars) and wear posters with the words "Stop Racial Differences", "Long Live the Fatherland Front", "Death to Fascism" (Ibid.). It is interesting to note that this Gypsy manifestation is also reflected in a painting by the famous Bulgarian artist Vasil Evtimov (1900-1986), dated 1944, i.e. it was painted immediately after the demonstration.

Source: Пашов, Шакир М. (1957). *История на циганите в България и Европа. "Рома"*. София, pp. 80-82, 101-122. Manuscript. In ASR, f. Шакир Пашов, а.е. Книга.

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Comments

The materials included in this section reveal a transition to a new, extremely important stage in the development of Roma civic emancipation. During this stage, the main aspiration of the community was to win and establish its equal position in society. While the previous forms of the realisation of Roma emancipation were built on the basis of existing institutions, inherited from the previous historical epochs and preserved and developed in the new conditions (e.g. the case of the *Muhtar*), these forms are now changed according to the rules and the requirements of the new historical realities and are therefore filled with new contents.

The main reason for this development is contextual; namely, the overall and significant changes in the socio-political realities after the end of the First World War, which inevitably affected the Gypsies, who are an ethnically defined segment of the society. The essence of these changes was captured quite precisely by Bernard Gilliat-Smith (writing also under the pseudonym Petulengro) who, before the War, was in diplomatic service in Sofia. His words, although addressing the generation of his main informant Pashi Suljoff from Sofia, reflect the entire essence of the changes that occurred in their lives after the War:

This [...] was due, I think, to the effects of the First Great War. Pashi Suljoff's generation represented a different "culture", a culture which had been stabilized for a long time. The Sofia Gypsy "hammal" was – a Sofia Gypsy "hammal." He did not aspire to be anything else. He was therefore psychologically, spiritually, at peace with himself. [...] Not so the post-war generation [...] who could be reckoned as belonging to the proletarians of the Bulgarian metropolis. The younger members of the colony were therefore already inoculated with a class hatred which was quite foreign to Pashi Suljoff's generation. [...] To feel "a class apart", despised by the Bulgars who were, *de facto*, their "Herrenvolk", was pain and grief to them. (Gilliat-Smith, 1945, pp. 18-19).

Similarly, Shakir Pashov's memoirs begin precisely from the time he spoke while in the trenches with his fellow men about the need to "organize our Gypsy minority" (Пашов, 1957, p. 5). The involvement of the Gypsies in the wars (the two Balkan Wars and the First World War), along with all other Bulgarian citizens, develops and strengthens their sense of belonging to the Bulgarian civic nation. The new realities after the War, when they again become "second class citizens", pushes them towards an organised struggle to change the position of their community in the society, which Shakir Pashov explicitly underlines (see above). Thus, it turns out that the involvement of the Gypsies in the Bulgarian army (for more detail see Иванова & Кръстев, 2014) not only leads to the strengthening of their national civic identity but also towards the development of the processes of the Roma civic emancipation. This is not a specific Bulgarian phenomenon, but a general pattern, and similar processes in one form or another also occur in other countries in the region.

The establishment of the first Gypsy civic organisation, and to a large extent the entire Gypsy civic movement during the interwar period, is linked with the name of Shakir Pashov (often in documents, he also spells his family name as Pashev). Nevertheless, as already stated in the Introduction, and as any source of such character, his memoirs (Пашов, 1957), which are one of the main sources for this period, need further verification through comparison with other sources dealing with the described events. These memoirs were written in the 1950s (dated 1957) after his political career ended. In them, Pashov strives for his memoirs to be in tune with the new, ideological reading of history which leads to the creation of a new historical narrative. If not for anything else (e.g. fears of new repressions, aspirations for political rehabilitation, etc.), without doing so, he would not have hoped that his manuscript could be published (after all, despite his best efforts, the manuscript was never approved for printing).

Shakir Mahmudov Pashov was born on October 20, 1898, (Ковачева, 2003, p. 13), in the village of Gorna Banya (today a neighbourhood in Sofia). He graduated from a technical school for railway workers and took part in the First World War, where he was injured several times. After his return from the front in 1919, he started working for the Bulgarian State Railways (ASR, ф. Шакир Пашов). In his memoirs, he does not mention anywhere the foundation of the *Sofia's Common Muslim Educational-Cultural Mutual Aid Organisation 'Istikbal – Future'* which he created at his own initiative, but the "struggles for civil and political rights" (Пашов, 1957, p. 101) he assigns to the Society *Egipet* (Egypt), which was linked with the Communist Party (for the case with this association, see below) and which obviously sounds better in the context of the communist rule.

According to Shakir Pashov, the first public appearance of the new Gypsy civic movement was the 1921 meeting of the 'progressive youth' (it means to say it was attached to the communist ideas) which elected a delegation and managed to meet with Prime Minister Aleksandar Stamboliyski. At this meeting, the delegation raised the issue of the stripping of voting rights for the Gypsies in 1901, which remained in force despite the adopted amendments to the 1919 Election Law, according to which voting was mandatory for all Bulgarian citizens (Държавен вестник, 1919, p. 1). Prime Minister Stamboliyski promised to restore their voting rights and, according to the words of Shakir Pashov, at

the next session of the National Assembly, he tabled a “proposal for the restoration of the voting rights of the Gypsies and supported by the Communist MPs, the law was passed” (Пашов, 1957, p. 101). The debates in the Bulgarian Parliament regarding this correction of the Electoral Law are indicative. Prime Minister Aleksandar Stamboliyski in response to a remark made by the opposition justified the voting rights of Gypsies with their participation in the Bulgarian army during the two Balkan wars and the First World War (Дневник, 1923). Finally, the Electoral law was changed and the electoral right of Muslim Gypsies was restored. What remained was only the ban on voting for those Gypsies who did not have a permanent domicile, i.e. nomads.

The reasons why Shakir Pashov apparently ‘omits’ to mention the early stages of the existence and activities of Organisation *Istikbal* become clear from the published documents. It is natural that in his memoirs, written at a time when the struggle to limit the role of the religion (and especially Islam) is an important element of the state policy, Shakir Pashov does not want to relate his past with this organisation. However, when he writes about the 1930s, he nevertheless marks his ties with *Istikbal*. He is doing so that he could silence his involvement with the establishment and the activities of the *Common Mohammedan-Gypsy National Cultural-Educational and Mutual Aid Union in Bulgaria* (see below) as in the name of *Istikbal* the ties with Islam are not so visible.

In fact, however, in its full name, the Organisation *Istikbal* is defined as ‘Muslim’ and although the membership is open to all Bulgarian citizens (Art. 4) its primary purpose is defined as “to organise the Muslims in one common organisation” (Art. 2). It is significant that its Statute does not mention the word ‘Gypsies’ even once and it explicitly emphasises that it is “strictly non-partisan” (Art. 6). As a whole, Organisation *Istikbal* could be characterised, at least according to its Statute, as a typical Muslim charitable organisation which bears only a few elements of modern civic activities (e.g. struggle for ‘educational-cultural upbringing’). The most important goal of the Organisation, even noted in its Statute (Art. 25), and especially evident by its subsequent actions, is Gypsies to get involved with the Muslim Religious Community in Sofia. At that time there were only a small number of ethnic Turks but they did not allow the inclusion of Gypsies in it.

This struggle for Gypsy participation in Muslim faith communities also has its historical roots. In spite of the rights given by the state to sedentary Muslim Gypsies (Кънев, 1998, pp. 72-73; Нягулов, 2012, pp. 564-703) their participation in these religious communities was strongly contested and even denied by the Turkish population. After a discussion at the first national congress of the Turks in Bulgaria, held from October 31 to November 3, 1929 in Sofia, there was the following decision on this issue:

‘Muslim Gypsies cannot participate in elections’ for trustees of religious communities ‘because of their low cultural level’; and because these ‘purely Turkish national possessions’ are inherited from the ancestors of the Turks. (Şimşir, 1988, pp. 89-90).

Although this decision had no legal force, it still influenced the exclusion of some Muslim Roma from Muslim communities. By participating in the elections for the leadership of

Sofia's religious community, and in particular of the Waqf Board of Trustees, the Gypsies from Sofia hoped that they would be able to "take it over" from within and that the Organisation *Istikbal* would assume its functions (Art. 25). In this way, Gypsies were hoping to get the chance to control and use Muslims' real estate (waqf estates) in order to solve the problems of their own community. As it could be seen from Shakir Pashov memoirs, in this struggle they overcame various obstacles, even some of them were able to show official documents that they are ethnic 'Turks' (i.e. they were ready to publicly declare another ethnic identity), but encounter opposition from ethnic Turks. More details about the struggles of the Gypsies in Sofia for the leadership of the Muslim religious community we learn from an article published in the newspaper *Terbie* written by Hyusein Bilalov, one of Shakir Pashov's associates in 1933, and reprinted after the end of World War II in the newspaper *Romano Esi* (Gypsy Voice) (Романо еси, 1946, p. 2). These struggles began in the early 20th century and went through various vicissitudes: writing complaints to various state and municipal authorities, which resulted in a file created by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Religious Denominations in 1926; a lawsuit against The Ministry of Justice for refusal to hold elections for a mosque board of trustees in 1927; a lawsuit against the prosecutor of the Sofia District Court in 1930, etc. (Ibid.). In the end, after the case reached the Supreme Administrative Court, it failed. It is indicative, that in the whole article of Hyussein Bilalov the word 'Gypsies' is not mentioned even once, i.e. in the struggles for inclusion into Islamic boards (and property), noticing of ethnic identity is omitted.

The activities of Organisation *Istikbal* managed to exert their influence in other cities as well. The case of the establishment in the town of Shumen of the *Muslim Charitable Association 'Cemiyet-i Hayriyye'* ('Mutual Aid Society' in Turkish) is especially illustrative. The Statute of this organisation was approved by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Public Health on April 13, 1929, and it was legally re-registered on September 20, 1934 (DA Shumen, f. 1605, op. 1, a.e. 29, l. 1-14). In the Statute, like the Statute of the Organisation *Istikbal*, no reference is made to Gypsies at all. The two Statutes in fact do not differ significantly, but among the founding members of the Association in Shumen are Gypsy Muslims, some of them later become activists in the Gypsy civic organisations (Демирова, 2017, pp. 38-39). Whether this is a local unit of the national Turkish organisation of the same name (Стоянов, 2012, pp. 531) or an attempt to create a separate, Gypsy clone of that organisation, is difficult to assess.

What has been said above, however, does not mean at all that the memoirs of Shakir Pashov should not be used as a historical source. On the contrary, although not credible in some specific details and in its interpretations, in many other respects they are an indispensable and even a unique source. Most importantly, they offer a perspective on the historical processes 'from within', from the point of view of the Gypsy community. This particular perspective may be somewhat distorted by the vicissitudes of the time, but it is nevertheless an authentic and, in many cases, an irreplaceable source.

It becomes clear from Shakir Pashov's recollections that the transition of the Gypsy civic movement after the First World War has been carried out by the younger generation which, through elections, replaces the old Muhtars (or 'Cheribashi') with new civic

committees that would have to assume their functions. As elsewhere in the country (see above), the local authorities, however, were abandoning the old practice of electing Gypsy representatives and started to appoint directly mayoral deputies who had far more limited functions. This eventually pushed Gypsies to seek other forms to secure their own representation in the municipality and the state.

The new generation in the Gypsy civic movement relied on the already existing, older forms of community organisation in the Gypsy neighbourhoods, namely on the so-called *Londzhi*. The *Londzhi* have originated on the basis of the guild's (esnaf) associations (and preserved the esnaf terminology); they have lost their former professional bases but retained the functions of mutual aid. Organisation *Istikbal* tried to take on some of their functions, in particular the charitable work and the support of members in emergency situations (especially in funerals which involved many expenses) but this was not enough for the community. That is why some of the *Londzhi* began to function as charitable civic associations and sought formal registration (how many of them managed to do so is difficult to say). On the whole, the institutions of the *Londzhi* have proved to be extremely sustainable over the years, although their activities have been restricted by the Communist regime. In Sofia, they continue to exist to this day while their activity is already entirely controlled by women.

The Organisation *Istikbal* had the ambition to also include in its organisation the professional Gypsy associations (Esnafs) (Art. 8). Gypsy Esnafs themselves had also experienced changes under the new conditions and they changed their forms and social functions. This is not just about their legitimisation under the conditions of the independent Bulgarian State which required their registration as professional associations, e.g. the transformation of the old Porter's Esnaf in Lom into association in 1896 (Тахир, 2018), but also about the creation of new associations, such as *Porter's Association 'Trud'* (Labour), founded in Kyustendil in 1901 (the flag of the Association is still preserved), the *First Sofia Flower-selling Association 'Badeshte'* (Future) headed by Ali Asanov, founded in Sofia in 1909 (Тахир, 2018), etc. In the capital Sofia alone, in 1932 there were 26 Gypsy professional associations (Бръзицов, 1970), and new ones continued to be created, such as the *First Mohammedan Youth Basket-making Aid Association* headed by Idriz Yasharov Demirov, founded in 1938 (CSA, f. 264 K, op. 4, a.e. 506, l. 3-4), and *Sofia Branch Craftsmanship Tinsmith Association* which became in 1939 the *Sofia United Axesmith-Horseshoe-Tinsmith Association* (CSA, f. 264 K, op. 5, a.e. 515, l. 1-2). New associations were founded also elsewhere in the country, for example, the *Tinsmith Craftsmanship Association* in Veliko Tarnovo in 1938 (CSA, f. 264 K, op. 2, a.e. 5204, l. 2-3). Some of these professional associations continued to exist for some time after WWII, e.g. *The Basket-weaving and Ragmen Association*, headed by Yordan Yasharov, and the *Tinsmith and Blacksmith Association*, headed by Demir Rustemov and Murad Bilyalov, took part in the festive event on May 1, 1950, in Sofia (Nevo Drom, 1950, p. 2).

At the same time, there were attempts to expand the activities of local professional associations on a national level which was evidenced by the national meeting of the Association of the Gypsy Musicians (many of them military musicians) in Sofia in 1920

(ASR, f. Людмила Живкова). More interesting, however, is the other direction of development in which Gypsy professional associations began to merge into Gypsy civic organisations and began to fulfil new public functions (Marushiakova & Popov, 2017b), as is the case with the inclusion of several professional Gypsy associations in Sofia in the newly-created *Mohammedan National Educational and Cultural Organisation*, which grew into the *Common Mohammedan-Gypsy National Cultural-Educational and Mutual Aid Union in Bulgaria*.

The transition to this new stage in the development of the Roma civic emancipation movement is again linked with the name of Shakir Pashov. After returning from his temporary emigration to Turkey (1925-1929, for more details, see below), in the period between 1929 and 1933 he led the transition of Organisation *Istikbal* from a charitable Muslim one (as it was, at least according to its status) to a Gypsy civic one.

A poster printed in 1930 on behalf of the *Sofia's Common Muslim Educational and Cultural Mutual Aid Organisation 'Istikbal – Future'* was titled “Moods and Truths. To the attention of our State, the Sofia Municipal Administration, and the Society” illustrates this change (DA Sofia, f. 1 K, op. 2, a.e. 831, l. 625-62506). The poster is dated March 6th, 1930, and was prepared on the occasion of numerous publications in the press, about the upcoming displacement of the inhabitants of the Gypsy neighbourhood in Sofia (80-100 families). In response to this ‘lawlessness’, the organisation states that the Gypsy neighbourhood could not be considered a “nest of infectious diseases” (as it is called by the press) because “no one resident of the neighbourhood is registered in Sofia hospitals”; that “morally ... we are the strictness” and in the “Morality” department of the Police Directorate among the registered prostitutes “there is not a single Gypsy woman”; that maintaining street cleanliness is an obligation of the city authorities, which they do not fulfil due to “criminal negligence”. The poster also notes that the people from the neighbourhood (i.e. Gypsies) make their living from “skilled labour” of “blacksmiths, basket makers, livestock dealers, musicians, porters, shoemakers, etc.”, which is of use for all inhabitants of Sofia. Furthermore, it underlines especially that “we, as equal citizens of our equally dear for everybody homeland Bulgaria, took a valiant and proven courageous part in the wars [the two Balkan Wars and the First World War – authors’ note.], in which Bulgaria fought and, on an equal footing, we all made dear sacrifices”. The organisation quotes the paragraph from the Constitution: “all Bulgarian citizens are equal before the laws of our country”, and “property rights are inviolable”. A request is made to form a joint commission with representatives of the residents of the neighbourhood to determine the illegally settled communities coming there from the countryside of “comb-makers, sieve makers, beggars, and others”.

The text of the poster uses both terms, ‘Muslims’ and ‘Gypsies’ (with the predominance of the former), but without opposing them, i.e. in this way, for the first time, the Organisation *Istikbal* de facto publicly declared itself a representative of the Gypsies and thus became a political subject in their struggles for civic emancipation.

Under the leadership of Shakir Pashov, the Organisation *Istikbal* along with a number of mutual-aid, charitable, and professional associations, as well as *Londzhi*, came together to form the *Common Mohammedan-Gypsy National Cultural-Educational and Mutual Aid*

Union in Bulgaria, which attempted to get officially registered in 1934 but was denied. This refusal fits in the context of the overall aspirations of the new authorities, after the coup of May 19, 1934, to control the public and political life of the country, while the specific reason for the refusal was not a particular attitude against the Gypsies but rather a fear of Turkey's influence on them. Such concerns existed in the public space at the time and even included the development of a conspiracy scenario that through the new Union was part of the preparation to build a united front of the Muslims in Bulgaria (Мир, 1934, p. 3).

In the Statute of the new organisation, there are a number of new and important elements as compared with the Statute of the Organisation *Istikbal*. First, it is the very name itself which explicitly emphasises that it is a union of the Gypsies in Bulgaria, i.e. it already has the ambition to work on a national scale along with separate sub-divisions in the country and to be representative of all Gypsies, including the already existing Gypsy organisations, without infringing on their independence (Art. 3). These ambitions of the Union are not without reason, as in the 1932 conference in Mezdra, representatives of Gypsies from different towns and villages (mainly from the north-west of the country) decided to unite under a common national organisation.

Moreover, the Union even leaves its door open to take on an international dimension, allowing it to be joined by “our co-nationals” from other countries (Art. 3). Of course, this possibility remains at an abstract level, but it still refers to the beginning of the establishment of a Gypsy trans-border identity (or at least the presence of such a desire is indicated).

The tasks that the Union set for itself go far beyond those of *Istikbal*, and by its very design, it was, to a much greater extent, a modern Gypsy civic organisation which should work in three main directions – cultural-educational, religious and urban development – in which they intended to use a full range of diverse activities. It is difficult to examine exactly what has been done in practice to accomplish these tasks. Unfortunately, the print of the Union, the newspaper *Terbie* (Upbringing), which would be an invaluable source in that direction, is not preserved, but from published analysis of its articles by Nayden Sheytanov (Мир, 1934, p. 3), the main accents of the activities of the Union become clear and as well as most of its ideological platform. As pointed by Sheytanov the newspaper devotes a great deal of space to the struggles of Muslim Gypsies for access to the government of Islamic religious communities and property, and in this field, their ethnic identity is left behind. Also the Art. 2 of the Union's Statute envisaged “if the laws permit, the opening of private schools”. As only religious communities were entitled to open private schools, this article reflects the hope for victory in this contest.

Sheytanov explicitly warns the authorities that the Union intends to be a center to attract Gypsies and create a “common front” of Muslims in Bulgaria (ibid.). At the same time, the newspaper *Terbie* publicly presented the new ‘national’ concept about the Gypsy community. It constantly used the terms “our nation”, “our national movement”, “our national consciousness”, i.e. Gypsies recognise themselves as a nationality, “descendants of the great King Pharaoh”, and it appeals to its fellow men: “Do not neglect your family, your faith, your traditions”, “You must proudly call yourself a Gypsy!” (Ibid.). As

can be seen, the Roma historical narrative at that time continued to be dominated by the “Egyptian version” about their origin, which began to give way to the “Indian version” only in the 1950s, after the knowledge about it reached them and under the influence of the first wave of Indian films shown in Bulgaria.

According to Nayden Sheytanov, newspaper *Terbie* cooperates with the “Romanian and Hungarian Gypsies” (Ibid.). In fact, from today’s point of view, we can not be sure whether such cooperations actually took place or whether this was a mere propaganda ploy. Nevertheless, it shows that there was a clear consciousness of a cross-border unity of the Gypsy community. This idea continued to evolve, and in a few years’ time, an article entitled “Gypsies Will Organise” appears in the yellow press (Празднични вести, 1937, p. 2). The article reports that two young Gypsies, Ahmed Seizov and Petar Ivanov, were touring the country and trying (without much success) to organize Gypsies into a union to be a member of the International Gypsy Union based in Hungary (Ibid.). The Bulgarian police investigated the case but failed to find persons with such names; also the leadership of the Organisation *Istikbal* confirms that such persons are unknown in the Gypsy community (CSA, f. 370, op. 6, a.e. 745, l. 1, 3). Nor is there anything known about the existence at this time of any International Gypsy Union (neither in Hungary nor anywhere in the world), it is likely this may have been a journalistic hoax.

New moments in the development of the civic consciousness of the Gypsies were also the call for political representation “to organise ourselves [...] to have representatives of our interests” (Мир, 1934, p. 3), and calls to the Bulgarian State to start an active policy for the social integration of the Gypsies. The main argument in that direction were the realities in other countries around the world: “Why Gypsies in Turkey are not in such a low stage as we in Bulgaria? [...] In Europe, especially Austria, Hungary, Romania, Poland [...] and in Soviet Russia, there were legislators there, and they created a series of laws to assist [the Gypsies], both materially and cultural-educational” (Мир, 1934, p. 3).

In his memoirs, Shakir Pashov pays much attention to the tremendous impact of the newspaper *Terbie* (which he, for the reasons explained above, proclaims as a publication of Organisation *Istikbal*) on the Gypsies in the country. It is difficult to judge how strong this impact has been, but at least according to the newspaper’s heading, it print-run was 1,500 copies (a relatively good number for its time) and, according to Shakir Pashov, in its distribution “many people were organised in Vratsa, Lom, Oryahovo, Pleven, Plovdiv, Kyustendil, Stara Zagora, Ruse, Shumen, Burgas, Pernik, Sliven and in many villages” (Пашов, 1957, p. 118). In the newspaper *Terbie* were published letters from various places of the country – Vratsa, Sliven, the village of Galiche (Vratsa Province), including a letter from the village of Dolna Kremena (Vratsa Province) about a ‘big gathering’ (Мир, 1934, p. 3). Thus, despite its limited time of publishing (less than two years), its impact should in no way be underestimated.

The closure of the newspaper *Terbie*, together with the refusal to register the *Common Mohammedan-Gypsy National Cultural-Educational and Mutual Aid Union in Bulgaria*, are a direct consequence of the Decree-Law of June 13, 1934, with which the new Government of Kimon Georgiev, which came to power with a military coup on May 19,

1934, banned the existence of all political organisations and therefore stopped their prints. This is not exactly the case, however, with the dissolution of Organisation *Istikbal* about which Shakir Pashov writes in his memoirs (Пашов, 1957, p. 118). In this case, he is referring to the refusal to register the Union (about which, as already stated, he does not mention a single word in his memoirs). In any case, there are a number of documentary pieces of evidence suggesting that *Istikbal* not only continued to exist after 1934 but even wrote formal letters on the organisation's letterhead and used its stamp, with one of them (published above) addressed to the Police Department itself.

It is significant that in this letter, the Gypsy activists discern clearly between their obligations towards their community and the expectations of the state for active policy towards them as part of the society. They explicitly emphasise that state intervention is crucial for the future of their people.

Another official letter of Organisation *Istikbal* is a public declaration, *A Clarification in Relation to the Appearance in the Newspaper Dnevnik [Diary] of Falose and Inaccurate Information about the Occurrence of the Disease Typhus among the Gypsies* on 16 March 1938, which says:

This, in our view, is unworthy and unjust because it inflames the passions and creates resentment which is necessary for no-one. Instead of us being supported, instead of us being taught something good so that we are good Bulgarian citizens, we are treated like this. We are Bulgarian citizens, with Bulgarian spirit, we have left the bones of our fathers and brothers on the battlefields in the two wars and today we are ready to sacrifice for the benefit of our homeland Bulgaria in which we were born, we live and enjoy all freedoms. (DA Sofia, f. 1 K, op. 4, a.e. 531, l. 5).

In his memoirs, Shakir Pashov pays special attention to the struggles of Organisation *Istikbal* against some traditional customs of the Gypsies in Sofia – the paying of ransom-money for the girl at weddings, the circumcision of boys, wearing salwars by the women – all of which he describes as harmful to the Gypsies. It is hard not to notice, however, that these customs are linked (including in the eyes of the surrounding population) with Muslim traditions and clearly the emphasis and efforts of the organisation in this regard were influenced by the spirit of the time in which the memoirs were written. However, this was not the main approach of the author because not a single concern has been raised with regard to opposing, for instance, the Muslim cultural elements during funerals, in which (at least at that time) there were many strong Muslim traditions (including the obligatory presence of an Islamic cleric). The apparent need for support of the community in organising funerals is reflected in the published statutes of Gypsy organisations (see above), as well as in the establishment of other organisations with similar purposes, as for example the *Gypsy Cultural-Educational and Posthumously-Charitable Association 'Butlaches' (Virtue)* in 1939 (CSA, f. 264K, op. 5, a.e. 1109, l. 3-5). In fact, as will be discussed later, the situation with the development of Gypsy organisations in Yugoslavia is very similar in this respect.

As could be clearly seen, the whole development of Organisation *Istikbal* during the interwar period oscillated constantly between ethnic and religious, with the latter in

Bulgaria being directly linked and often replaced by another (Turkish) ethnic identity. In any case, regardless of the specific variant, these were superimposed on the Bulgarian civic national identity. This multidimensionality of identities is reflected in the names of the organisations – most of them in Bulgarian, and much less include Turkish words (*Istikbal*, *Dzhamiet* – *Hairlie*, and newspaper *Terbie*) as well as in Romani language (*Romni*, *Naangle*, *Butlaches*). The identity negotiation is especially clear in the Gypsy activists' struggle against the *shalwars* described above. On the one hand, this is a struggle for the establishment of the Bulgarian civic national identity in the public space, by denying these Gypsy traditions, which are interpreted as Turkish; on the other hand, as Shakir Pashov himself writes, the *salwars* remain as a 'museum value' and as a Gypsy national symbolism, which is demonstrated publicly only on certain special occasions: for example, at the festive demonstrations until circa the 1960s, the Gypsies from Sofia would pass in front of the officials' tribune dressed in festive *salwars*, a fact which can be seen in the many preserved photos from that time (ASR).

The complex relationships between the different identities (ethnic, religious, and national) continued to be relevant for the Gypsies in Bulgaria in the subsequent historical periods, including nowadays. Especially for the Gypsies in Sofia, who at the time were the leaders in the process of civic emancipation of the community, the choice was ultimately unambiguous – for them, the ideas of considering the Gypsies as a separate nationality dominated strongly – finding their logical culmination in the Statute of *The United Common-Cultural Educational Organisation of the Gypsy Minorities in Bulgaria 'Ekiye'* (Unity) which declares itself as a direct successor of Organisation *Istikbal*.

The organisation *Ekiye* was established two months before the end of the Second World War, under new social and political conditions that were reflected in its Statutes (Art. 48). Much more attention, however, has been paid to the ideas about the future development of the Gypsies as a nationality, albeit frequently emphasised as a cross-border nationality. Moreover, the text repeatedly emphasises the commitment of its activities to the "World Gypsy Movement", the "World Gypsy Organisation" and the "World Gypsy Congresses" (Art. 1, 2, 22, 23), and, ultimately, as a distant perspective, the creation of an independent Gypsy state – "To create an aspiration in the Gypsies to build a national hearth in their own land" (Art. 3). When this will happen is not determined, but in any case, one of the main national symbols, the national flag (though not very clearly described, as well as with unclear symbolism), is already present (Art. 59). At that time, nowhere in the world has there been a 'World Gypsy Organisation' so, it remains a mystery how the Gypsy activists came up with these ideas, which occupied leading positions in the ideological platform of the new organisation. One possibility here is to have a representation of what is desired as a reality, in the hope of activating the mechanism of 'fulfilling prophecy', and it is quite likely that we have an analogy here with the ideas from the world of Zionism which were especially popular at the time.

Generally speaking, the development of the ideas of civic emancipation of the Gypsies from 1878 to 1945 proceeded in different directions, but remained within the same umbrella, despite the fact that they could take on quite various and specific dimensions.

The end of the Second World War marked the beginning of a new historical era in which, under the influence of new social and political realities, the basic ideas and ways of realisation of Roma civic emancipation began to radically change.

Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov

2.4 Evangelical Churches

2.4.1 *The Gypsy Evangelical Baptist Church*

Делото на циганската Евангелска Баптийска църква в село Голинци

Благодарение на Бога защото по многото своя милост и неизказаната си любов възроди и нас циганите като най-последен народ, щото и нашето племе да приеме. Хвала чест и благодарение. Слава Богу и получихме входа на този благодат даде ни Господ църква увеличи числото ни 41 члена верующи. Тази е единствената църква състояща се от цигани и [те] съставляват Циганска[та] Евангелийска Баптийска църква.

Тази църква се намира на един северен край на България два километра от град Лом на източната страна село Голинци.

Църквата ни беше прочута и зарадва целия запад: Германия, Англия и Америка.

Но! уви: печален, печален ден! ден на скръб, ден на пепел и вретисце. Сатана успя да влезе в трима братя Авесаломци, които искаха да вземат първите места на църквата – Председателство, Секретарство и Касиерство – които места не са ги получили по редовен избор. Същите братя недоволни, задето не бяха избрани в църковното настоятелство, надхвърлиха се против избраното настоятелство с груби и различни думи чрез които се произведоха караници, побоища, [и се стигна] до голямо безобразие в църквата, гдето се черкуваме. Същите трима братя, с молив и книга ходеха от къща в къща за да прелъгват простодушните братя, и ги записват в списъците си, които списъци представиха на Ломския пастир, и с тези имена желаят да станат клон на Ломската църква.

Пастира Трифон Димитров, насърчен от това за да използва случая и да бъде големец на две църкви, наел се сериозно да защити виновната страна, които братя са опорочени в следното:

1-вия псува на Бога брадата, също на умрелите млякото и мъртвите кокали.

2-рия цяла нощ е бил на пир с една блудница в кръчмата, участвувал в една светска сватба, като носел с един бял котел ракия и музиката свири след него демократически марш.

3-тия брат, се е кръстил в реката Лом за 5 кила ракия, както Исав за паница леща: продаде себе си.

4-тия брат два месеца като бяха на работа по селата, е спал между момите езичници, като е бил съветван от единия брат да не спи между светските моми, и той въпреки съвещанието, пак е спал, с което е направил съблазн.

5-тия брат се е залюбил с една мома като вдовец, с което е извършил неща срамни, същия е затварял в заведението си да блудствуват двамата блудници.

6-тия брат е кръстил малкото си дете в православната църква, играл на новата година цяла нощ комар, също и през целия ден.

7-мия брат купува и продава свине в неделен ден, в неделен ден пътува в селата за търговия.

За всичко гореспоменатото ние сме изключили трима от тези братя, от които бр[ат] Трифон Димитров се е наел да ги поддържа, понеже му се е обещаха да станат клон на Ломската църква.

На 31 Януари т[ази] г[одина] ломския пастир Трифон Димитров с няколко братя ломчани е дошъл в църквата ни без да влиза в споразумение с настоятелството, заел Амвона и почна да съди, по въпроса на проповедничеството: кои са били за и кои не. Председателя го попита – заседание ли ще имаме или помирително събрание? А Трифон Димитров му каза заседание. Тогава председателя му рече, ако имаме заседание, нека секретарят да си заеме мястото, да земе бележки, и изключените да напускат заседанието и да се прочетат протоколите от миналите заседания.

Но той без да обърне внимание на това, рече: няма нужда, и продължава, освен това не ни даваше редовно думата, а на онези, които той поддържава, само те говорят, и ние като явно видяхме, че той поддържава тяхната страна, а нас не слуша, и затова стана голям шум и препирня.

След това секретарят му рече: Драги брате, нашата църква е самостоятелна, плюс това църквата не ви е повикала да ни заседавате и съдите. Преди всичко вие не сте компетентното лице на нашата църква, и още повече вие нарушавате реда на Ба[птистката] църква, като позволявате на изключените да присъстват в заседанието ни. Ние сме църква самостоятелна, и вие сте църква, ако сме ние клон на вашата църква, тогава вие имате право да ни заседавате.

Бр[ат] Трифон Димитров казва: Вярно, че вие сте църква, но ние ще Ви наложиме и вие ще приемете.

На 07.II. бр[ат] Трифон е отслужил Господня вечера и даде [да присъствуват] на изключените членове, за да покаже с това, че не признава църквата ни.

На 11.II. дойде госпожица Берта и Петър Минков нарочно за бр[атията] Цигани, но Трифон с противната страна доведоха сестрата в методистката църква. И след като свършиха, върнаха се и започнаха да ни подиграват, видяхте ли че бр[ат]Трифон не ви признава за църква.

На 23.II. пристигнаха братята от съюза в гр[ад] Лом където били посрещнати от няколко братя цигани и ломчани, и на 24 същия м[есец] изпратиха един брат от Лом да ни повика, и ние се отзовохме на поканата и отидохме в Лом. След проповедта откриха примирителното събрание, като ни заявиха че брат Грабоин е председател, бр[ат] Райчев подпредседател, бр[ат] Георги Чомонев съветник, и Трифон Димитров секретар; даде се на гласуване [и] прие се единодушно, след това братята

от съюза ни посочиха две имена и ни заявиха, [че] в отговор на тия писма сме дошли, които писма нема нужда да ви ги прочетат.

Постъпихме на работа, ние помислихме, че съюза ще ни попита от начало кои и какви са причините да ни доведат до такова положение, но! за жалост съвсем обратното, дадоха въпроса кой какво има да каже. Един брат от противната страна се опита да обвини настоятелството и страната, каза: аз чух че брат Геор[ги] Ер[инкин] е казал, че ще раздели църквата и други; бр[ат] Еринкин за свое оправдание каза: който ме е чул, нека вземе Библията в ръката си и [да] се направи [потвърждение]; същия брат побледне, защото знае, че тази отговорност е по-голяма от клетва, [и] веднага промени думите (и рече: той е казал да раздели пейките); [т.е.] хвана се, че е лъжец.

След дълго разискване ние посочихме горепоменатите лица, които са били опорочени в различни видове престъпления.

Претседателят на комисията бр[ат] Грабаин е казал: защо не ги изключите, ето ние сме [ги] изключили и вие не признавате нашето църковно изключване.

Заседанието се закри и се отложи за след обяд.

СЛЕД ОБЯД. Без много разискване даде се на гласуване кои са за клон и кои не. Сега се разбра вече като бял ден, ние се чудихме защо жените от противната страна бяха си оставили бебенцета[та си] на улицата и всички отидоха в ломската църква да заседават. За тях е било казано по-рано всички да присъстват, ние не бяхме съгласни с тяхното решение да гласуваме, защото нашите жени и някои от братята не бяха присъствали [и] понеже знаем, че настоятелството, което съставлява църквата, може и без 4-5 членове да се примирим; и тъй даде се на гласуване получи се 19 гласа – ние не бяхме съгласни, но! Димитров шепна на председателя на ухото и той се изправи да ни брои против желанието, и получи се 15 гласа.

Председателя ни заяви, че ние трябва да се подчиним на болшинството (да станем клон).

Ние казахме, [че] които искат да бъдат клон, нека си останат, а ние ще си останем самостоятелна църква, като с това ние очаквахме окончателното решение.

Всичко това се извърши за един ден, на 25-и, 26-и, 27-и [и] 28-и бяха свободни [за] комисията освен вечерни молитвени събрания:

На 1.ІІІ., понеделник, излязоха братята в с[ело] Голинци, събраха ни всички освен жените и почнаха да ни прочетат протокола.

Не питат има ли бележки по протокола, за това не става въпрос, един брат поиска думата, и рече: правим бележки на протокола ви, за дето нема нищо което да сме писали, че вие сте изпитали всичките причини подробно, за да намерите виновната страна, и второ че не сте ни прегледали протоколите; председателя на циг[анската] църква поиска думата и рече: Нито една църква няма право да ни прегледа протоколните ни книги, освен съюза. Вие нищо не сте сторили подобно нещо, като че не ни признавате за църква. След това комисията ни каза, че ако не се примирим да станем клон, ще ни публикуват в сп[исание] “Евангелист”, че не съществува циганска църква и че никоя църква няма да ни послужи. Същия ден Трифон Димитров

поискал протоколната книга, членската книга, входяща[та] и изходяща[та] книга, Църковните ключове и ги отнесе в Лом, подобно [на писаното в Светото писание] (4 Царете 24: 12-15).

Той попълни своята цел както Ахав за Навутеовото лозе, жално и печално е засега положението с църквата, Боже мой, кой и от де му се даде тази власт да обяви 20 души членове заедно с църковното настоятелство [за] нелегални.

Така също и Съюза не обърнаха ни най малко внимание на всичко гореизложено, коя беше причината не знаеме, имаме обаче едно забележително, че Димитров от време на време шепнеше на председателя на ухото и той действаше по негова диктовка, за сега църковното ни положение е следното: 18 членове, които са клон на Ломската църква и изключени 3-ма. Под предложение на Димитров [да] се черкуват в общото ни заведение, което заехме под наем; освен това тия братя, които желаеха за първенство, получиха целта си, а ние останалите 20 чл[ена] заедно с настоятелството се черкуваме в отделно заведение.

Всичко гореизложено подкрепяме с подписите си саморъчно:

Петко Миленков – Председател, Георги Г. Василев – Секретар, Богдан Марков – Касиер, Георги П. Еринкин, Петко Димитров, Петър Аврамов, Петър Калицев, Яко Петров, Шанко Николчов, Бузи Миленков, Иванчо Кирков, Илия Богданов, Найдена Аврамов, Илия Алексов, Ката Петрова, Бонка Г. Василева, Миша Маркова, Йордана Петкова, Ана Якова, Ивана Богданова.

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The Case of the Gypsy Evangelical Baptist Church in the Village of Golintsi

Praise be to God because by His mercy and many thoughts and His immense love, He revived us, the Gypsies, as the last people, in order to be accepted from our tribe. Praise, honor and thanks. Thank God we have received this grace, God has given us a Church and increased our number to 41 believing members. This is the only church consisting of Gypsies and they constitute the Gypsy Evangelical Baptist Church.

This church is located on a northern end of Bulgaria, two kilometers from the town of Lom on the eastern side of the village of Golintsi [1].

Our church was renowned and gave joy to the whole West: Germany, England and America.

But! alas: sad, sad day! day of grief, day of ashes and abhorrence. Satan succeeded in entering three Absalom brothers [2] who wanted to take the first places of the church – the Presidency, the Secretariat and the Treasury – places which they have not received by regular elections. The same brothers who were unhappy for not having been elected to the Church Board of Trustees, stood up against the chosen Board with harsh and different words through which quarrels were struck, thrashings causing great disgrace in the church where we are being christened. The same three brothers, with a pencil and a paper, walked from house to house to deceive the simple-minded brothers and recorded

them on their lists, which they presented to the Lom's Pastor, and with these names they wished to become a branch of the Lom's Church.

The Pastor, Trifon Dimitrov, who has been encouraged by this to use the case and be the leader of two churches, has earnestly endeavoured to defend the guilty party while the brethren are accused of the following:

The 1st swears by God's beard, also by the milk of the dead and the dead bones.

The 2nd has been drinking all night long with a harlot in the pub, took part in a secular wedding while carrying *rakiya* with a white boiler, and the orchestra has been following him playing the democratic march.

The 3th brother was baptized in the river Lom for 5 kilograms of *rakiya*, like Esau for a bowl of lentil stew [3]: he sold himself.

The 4th brother, while working for two months in the villages, slept with the pagan girls, who had been advised by one of the brothers not to sleep among the worldly girls, and he, despite the advice, slept again with them, with whom he had fallen into temptation.

The 5th brother, being a widower, got into an affair with a young girl with whom he has done shameful things; the same used to close down his premises so that the couple of libertines fornicates.

The 6th brother has christened his little child in the Orthodox Church, has been gambling during the New Year's Eve all night long, also throughout the day.

The 7th brother, buys and sells pigs on a Sunday, on a Sunday he travels to trade in the villages.

For everything mentioned above, we have excluded three of these brothers, whom brother Trifon Dimitrov has endeavoured to support because they have promised him to become a branch of the Church in Lom.

On January 31st this year, the Pastor from Lom, Trifon Dimitrov, along with several brothers from Lom, came to our church without looking for the agreement of the Board of Trustees, took the pulpit and began to judge on the question of preachers: who was agreed to and who was not. The President asked him – would we have a regular meeting or a conciliation meeting? Trifon Dimitrov told him a meeting. Then, the Chairman told him, if we have a meeting, let the Secretary take his place, take notes, and the excluded may leave the meeting and we read the minutes of past meetings.

But not paying attention to this, he said, there is no need and went on talking; besides, he often did not let us speak, but those that he supports, only they spoke, and when we obviously saw that he takes their side while he does not listen to us, there was great noise and strife.

After that, the Secretary said to him: Dear brother, our church is independent, plus the Church did not call you to hold a meeting nor to judge. After all, you are not a competent person of our Church and more importantly you are breaking the rule of the Baptist church allowing the excluded to attend our meeting. We are an independent church, and you are a church as well, if we were a branch of your church, then you would have the right to hold meetings.

Br[other] Trifon Dimitrov said: It is true that you are a church but we will enforce obedience over you and you will accept.

On 07. II. br[other] Trifon gave the Lord's Supper and he [allowed to be present] the excluded members in order to show that he does now recognise our Church.

On 11. II. Miss Berta came and Petar Minkov for the sake of the Gypsy brothers, however, Trifon along with the adverse side took the sister to the Methodist Church. When they were over, they came back and began to make fun, did you see that brother Trifon does not accept your church.

On 23. II. the brothers from the Union arrived in the town of Lom where they were welcomed by several Gypsy brothers and people from Lom and on the 24th of the same month they sent one of our brothers from Lom to call us over and we accepted the invitation and went in Lom. After the sermon, they opened the conciliatory meeting by declaring to us that brother Graboin is a Chairman, brother Raychev a Vice-Chairman, brother Georgi Chomonev an Advisor, and Trifon Dimitrov a Secretary; it was proposed for voting [and] it was accepted unanimously, and after that brothers from the Union pointed to us two names and declared that they have gathered here in relation to these letters which were not necessary to be read out loud.

We began working and we thought that the Union will ask us from the start which and what were the reasons for us to be brought to this situation, however! unfortunately, quite the opposite, they asked everybody what they have to say. One of the brothers from the adverse side tried to put the blame on the Board of Trustees and he said, I heard that brother Georgi Erinkin has said that he will separate the Church and others; brother Erinkin, in his own justification said: whoever has heard me say this, let them take the Bible in their hand and make [a confirmation]; the same brother became pale because he knows that this responsibility is greater than an oath, he changed his words immediately (and said: he has said to separate the benches)[i.e.] it turned out to be a liar.

After a long discussion, we pointed toward the persons mentioned above who have been vitiated in various types of crimes.

The Chairman of the Commission, brother Grabain has said: why don't you exclude them, here, we have excluded them and you do not recognise our church's exclusion.

The meeting was closed and was postponed for the afternoon.

AFTERNOON. Without much discussion, it was brought up for voting who was in favour for a branch and who was against. Now, it became clear as day, we were wondering why the women from the adverse side have left their babies on the street and everyone went in the Church in Lom to [attend] the meeting. They were told earlier that everyone should be present, we did not agree with their decision to vote because our women and some of the brothers were not present [and] because we know that the Board of Trustees of the Church can [sit] even without 4-5 members, we can reconcile; and so, it was brought up for voting [and] it 19 votes turned out – we were against it but! Dimitrov was whispering to the Chairman's ear and he stood up to count [our votes] against our wishes and it turned out to be 15 votes.

The Chairman stated to us that we ought to obey the majority (to become a branch).

We said, whoever wants to be a branch, let them be, while we will stay an independent church after which we were expecting the final decision.

All of this took place in one day on the 25th. The 26th, 27th, and 28th were free days [for] the Commission, besides evening prayer meetings:

On March 1, Monday, the brothers came out in the village of Golintsi, they gathered all of us together except for the women and began reading the report to us.

They did not ask us whether there are notes on the report, it is not about that; one of the brothers asked to speak and said: We make a note on your report because there is nothing from what we wrote that you have listed to all the reasons in detail, so that you could find the guilty party, and secondly that you have not reviewed our Minutes books; the Chairman of the Gypsy Church asked to speak and said: No church has the right to review our Minutes books besides the Union. You have not done anything like this, as if you do not recognise us as a church.

After that, the Commission told us that if we do not accept to become a branch, they will mention us in the *Evangelist* magazine [4], saying that there does not exist a Gypsy Church and that no church will be at our service. On the same day, Trifon Dimitrov asked for the Minutes Book, the Membership Book, the Incoming and Outgoing books, the Keys from the Church and took them in Lom, just [as it has been written in the Holy Scripture] (4 Kings 24: 12-15).

He fulfilled his aim just like Ahab for the Naboth's vineyard [5]; for now the situation in the Church is sad and lamentable; God willing, who and from where were they given authority to proclaim 20 persons members along with the Board of Trustees of the Church as illegal.

Equally, the Union [6] did not pay any attention whatsoever to everything mentioned above; what the reasons for this was, we don't know; we have, however, one remark that Dimitrov was whispering from time to time to the ear of the Chairman and that he was acting on his instructions; for now, our church situation is as follows: 18 members who are a branch of the church in Lom and 3 are excluded. As proposed by Dimitrov, they gather together in the common amenity that we rented; besides, these brothers who aimed to be leaders got what they wanted while the rest of us, 20 members together with the Board of Trustees, gather together for church services in a separate amenity.

All of the above-mentioned we supplement with our own signatures:

Petko Milenkov – Chairman, Georgi G. Vasilev – Secretary, Bogdan Markov – Cashier, Georgi P. Erinkin, Petko Dimitrov, Petar Avramov, Petar Kalitsev, Yako Petrov, Shanko Nikolchov, Buzi Milenkov, Ivancho Kirkov, Iliya Bogdanov, Nayden Avramov, Iliya Aleksov, Kata Petrova, Bonka G. Vasileva, Misha Markova, Yordana Petkova, Ana Yakova, Ivana Bogdanova.

Notes

1. The former village of Golintsi is now called *Mladenovo* and is a neighbourhood in the town of Lom.
2. A reference towards the Holy Scripture (2 Samuel 13).

3. A reference towards the Holy Scripture (Genesis 25: 31-34).
4. Here it refers to the newspaper *Evangelist*, a publication of the Evangelical Baptist Union in Bulgaria; it was issued in the period 1920-1938.
5. A reference to the Holy Scripture (1 Kings 21: 18-19).
6. Here it refers to the Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches under the auspices of which the Gypsy Church in the village of Golintsi also was.

Source: [No Author]. (1926). *Циганска Евангелска Бантийска Църква, с. Голинци*. Лом: Алфа.
 Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.
 Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.4.2 *The Gospel for All*

Евангелието за всички

Евангелистът Марко повествува, че нашият Господ Исус Христос, след възкресението си, се явил на своите ученици и им казал: “Идете на всичкия свят и проповядвайте евангелието на всяка твар” (Марко 16: 15). И ние знаем, че апостолите с голяма ревност, започнаха осъществяването на тази Господня заповед. От тогава до днес всеки ден ни носи славни подвизи в голямото мисионерско поле и крачка след крачка се извоюват нови страни, нови племена и народи за царството на Христа.

В този велик поход на Божиите чада в света, едно скромно място е отредено за евангелската работа между циганите в България. Ние се радваме, че с Божията помощ, можем да сторим нещо за тези забравени от хората, но мили на Бога, създания.

Започваме изданието на малкото вестниче “Светилник” с молитва към Бога, щото то действително да бъде един истински светилник за пръскане светлина всред непрегледния мрак, който обгръща циганското племе в България. С това ние изпълняваме и един дълг към нашите братя човеци – цигани, което ни прави двойно по-радостни и силни да посрещнем мъчнотиите и несгодите на една подобна работа.

Вярваме, че в това трудно дело ще бъдем подкрепени от молитвите на всички, които любят Господа Исуса Христа.

С тази надежда и упование в Бога, ние ви поднасяме първият брой на в[естник] “Светилник”.

Редакцията

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The Gospel for All

The Evangelist Mark narrates that our Lord Jesus Christ, after His resurrection, appeared to his pupils and said to them: “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16: 15). And we know that the Apostles, with great zeal, began to execute the Lord’s order. Since then, every day brings us glorious feats in the great missionary field, and step by step, new countries, new tribes and peoples are won in the kingdom of Christ.

In this great march of God's children in the world, a modest place is dedicated to the evangelical work among the Gypsies in Bulgaria. We are glad that with God's help we can do something for those forgotten by the people, but creatures dear in God's eyes.

We start the publication of the small newspaper *Svetilnik* (Candlestick) with a prayer to God. That it really should be a real candlelight for spreading light amidst the obscure darkness that surrounds the Gypsy tribe in Bulgaria. By doing so, we also fulfil a duty to our brothers Humans – Gypsies, which makes us doubly joyful and strong to face the hardships and difficulties of such a job.

We believe that in this difficult task we will be supported by the prayers of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

With this hope and trust in God, we present you the first issue of the newspaper *Svetilnik*.

The Editorial Board

Source: Редакцията. (1927a). Евангелието за всички. *Светилник*, 1927, January 15, p. 1.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.4.3 *The Stolen Gospel*

Краденото Евангелие

Нито една книга не е имала такова велико влияние върху нравственото преобразование на човечеството и личността, както Евангелието. Всичките поети, философи и литератори, колкото и велики да са били в тоя свят не са могли да съчинят книга, която да има такава благодатна сила да възпитава и обновява човеците, както евангелието.

То е влияело [на] хората при различни случаи на живота.

Наскоро един брат циганин, между другото разказа как причината за неговото обръщане станало едно Евангелие, което бил откраднал от един евангелист.

Как станало това?

Тоя брат е циганин. Баща му работил при един българин (евангелист) в селото. Привечер, брата циганин, тогава голям "панта", отива у дома на евангелиста, открадва една хубава, подвързана книга, и.... за да не го хванат, когато слагал кукулашки в торбата си, за да ги носи в домът си, между тях сложил и евангелието, което той още не знаел каква книга е. Той скрил в чувала така внимателно откраднатата книга, щото никой не могъл да го хване, нито даже да си помисли нещо.

Циганина отива със кукулашките в къщата си, изсипва ги и заедно с тях изсипва и Евангелието. Взима и го отнася на един друг циганин, който също живеял доста светски живот.

Почнали двамата циганина да четат краденото евангелие.

Чели го ден, два, три, седмица, две, три, до като най сетне Господ започнал да работи в техните сърца. Един ден, единия от тях, при когото крадеца занесъл

евангелието се обръща към Бога и намира мир и спасение на душата си. След няколко време и крадеца получил уверението, че Бог е изгладил престъпленията му.

Но не стига това. Та, под влиянието на евангелието, започнали да проповядват и на други. Направили си малко амвонче, носели го от къща в къща, както евреите носели скиинята и проповядвали спасение чрез кръвта Исусова и на другите свои съплеменници.

Така продължавали за дълго време. Днес вследствие тая крадена света книга, повече от 60 души има в това село, които са оставили своите стари наклонности и грехове и се радват на великото изкупително Дело на Спасителя. От тия 60 души, 20 са българи, а останалите 40 човека са от циганското племе.

Ето каква сила има Евангелието дори тогава, когато се намират хора да го крадат или да се снабдят с него по нечестен начин.

Евангелието наистина е “Божия сила за спасение на всеки, който върви към него”.

Днес това село почти всеки знае какво е извършило и какво може да извърши едно евангелие даже тогава, когато то е откраднато!

Няма нищо скрито, което да не се открие.

Божие слово е като барут или като някоя друга сила, която не може да се укрие.

Тя, на своето време, ще избухне и ще даде плод за живота вечен.

Когато ми разправят тая чудна история аз често си шепна в душата, като гледам на масата си 5-тых Библии.

Защо не дойдат крадци да ги откраднат, та след време да чуя още няколко подобни истории.

Да приятели, Евангелието, и само то разполага с тая чудна сила да превъзпитава и спасява и най-отчаяния и закоравял грешник, защото е Божие Слово, което както “двуостров меч прониква до ставите и издирва намеренията сърдечни”.

П[асто]р Тр[ифон] Димитров [3]

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The Stolen Gospel [1]

No book has had such a great influence on the moral transformation of mankind and personality as the Gospel. All poets, philosophers, and literary writers, no matter how great they have been in this world, have been able to compose a book that has such a graceful power to nurture and renew men as the Gospel.

It has been influencing the people at various occasions in their lives.

Recently, a Gypsy brother [2], incidentally, tells the reason for his conversion was a Gospel which he had stolen from an Evangelist.

How did this happen?

This brother is a Gypsy. His father worked with a Bulgarian (Evangelist) in the village. At dusk, the Gypsy brother, then a big “vagabond”, goes to the Evangelist’s house, steals a

nice, bound book, and.... so, that they could not catch him while putting corn cobs in his sack to carry them to his home, he put between them the Gospel which he still did not know what kind of book it was. He hid in his sack the stolen book so carefully that no one could catch him, or even think of anything.

The Gypsy goes along with the corn cobs in his house, pours them out and the Gospel along with them. He grabs the Gospel and takes it to another Gypsy [3] who also lived a fairly secular life.

The two Gypsies began to read the stolen Gospel.

They read it for a day, two, three, week, two, three, until at last God started working in their hearts. One day, one of them, whom the thief carried the Gospel to, turns to God and finds peace and salvation of his soul. After a while, the thief also was assured that God had forgiven his crimes.

But that was not enough. Thus, under the influence of the Gospel, they began to preach to others. They made a little pulpit, carried it from house to house, as the Jews wore the tabernacle and preached salvation through the blood of Jesus and to their other tribesmen.

So they continued for a long time. Nowadays, as a result of this stolen holy book, there are more than 60 people in this village who have left their old tendencies and sins and enjoy the great Redemptive Work of the Saviour. Out of these 60 people, 20 are Bulgarians and the other 40 are from the Gypsy tribe.

Such is the power of the Gospel even when there are people who steal it or get it in dishonest ways.

The Gospel is indeed “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.”

Today, almost everyone knows in this village what the Gospel has done and what it can do even when it was stolen!

There is nothing hidden that cannot be found.

The word of God is like a gunpowder, or like other forces, that cannot be hidden.

It will, in its time, explode and bear fruit for eternal life.

When they tell about this marvelous story, I often whisper in my soul, while looking at my table with five Bibles.

Why do not thieves come to steal them, and after a while I hear a few more similar stories.

Yes, friends, it is the Gospel, and it alone has this wonderful power to re-educate and save even the most despicable and hardened sinner because it is the Word of God, which as a “two-edged sword is piercing both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart”.

Pastor Trifon Dimitrov

Notes

1. This article has been published earlier by Pastor Trifon Dimitrov (Евангелист, 1924, p. 2). Whether and to which extent the presented story is based on real events is difficult to judge but in any case, today it is part of the oral history of the Roma in Lom and the region (Славкова, 2007, pp. 77-79).

2. According to some sources, the name of this brother is Bogdan Markov (or Bogdan Markov Selimov), while according to other, newer sources, his name is Todor (Ibid.).
3. According to one of the versions of this legendary event, this has been Petar Punchev from Golintsi, the first Gypsy to preach the new religion (Ibid.). According to other versions, these were the brothers Todor and Georgi Erinkini from the same village (Славкова, 2007, pp. 77).

Source: Димитров, Т. (1927b). Краденото Евангелие. *Светилник*. 1927, January 15, pp. 1-2.
 Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.
 Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.4.4 News

Известия

Този брой от “Светилник” изпращаме до наши приятели и познати, като вярваме, че ще обичат да го получават. Онези от тях, които не желаят да получават “Светилник”, се умоляват да го изпратят обратно в редакцията, като запазят екземпляра чист.

Циган[ското] Женско Мисионерско Д[ружест]во в с[ело] Голинци е дало новогодишна вечеринка. За тази вечеринка сестрите бяха подарили разни предмети, които се разпродадоха с успех. Приход 708 лв. Това д[ружест]во развива много полезна работа между циганките в махалата. Молете се за работата на тези усърдни работнички.

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News

We send this number of the newspaper *Svetilnik* to our friends and acquaintances believing they would like to receive it. Those who do not wish to receive *Svetilnik* are asked to send it back to the editors and keep the copy clean [1].

The Gypsy Women Missionary Association in the village of Golintsi [2] hosted a party on New Year's Eve. For this event, the sisters had gifted a variety of items that sold out with success. Income 708 lv. This Association does very useful work among the Gypsy women in the *mahala*. Pray for the work of these diligent female workers.

Notes

1. From here one of the methods of the Evangelical propaganda among the Gypsies becomes clear, which essentially relies on the existence of educated people among them.
2. A picture of the female participants of the Association was published in the newspaper *Evangelist* (Евангелист, 1927, p. 5). The name of the organisation there, however, reads *Gypsy Women's Christian Association 'Romni'* ('romni' is 'woman' or 'wife' in Romani language).

Source: [No Author]. (1927c). Известия. *Светилник*. 1927, January 15, p. 2.
 Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.
 Translated by Aleksandar Marinov

Comments

In the first decades of the 20th century, an important phenomenon in South-Eastern Europe (and especially in Bulgaria) was the emergence of different types of Evangelical denominations among the Gypsies which were different from their traditional religions (Islam and Orthodox Christianity). Similar processes were taking place in the West, after the Second World War, and hence this whole movement was generally referred to as Pentecostal which in the East, however, is not at all accurate or adequate. Pentecostalism here is only one of them and at the same time, it was not the first nor was it the most widespread among the diverse new Evangelical denominations.

The exact date of the arrival of the Evangelical denominations among the Gypsies in Bulgaria is difficult to indicate but in all likelihood, this has been in the first decade of the 20th century, in the period between 1905 and 1910 (Славкова, 2007, pp. 78-79). In any case, it is certain that the first Gypsy preacher was Petar Punchev (1882-1924) from the village of Golintsi, who preached and performed services in the Romani language in a rented room used as a prayer home. At that time, besides Petar Punchev, there were other Gypsy preachers who worked in other places in the country – the towns of Ferdinand (today, Montana), Pernik as well as other places (Ibid.). Since 1921, the religious community in Golintsi received the status of a branch of the Baptist Church in Lom, and on November 11, 1923, during a ceremony in Lom, Petar Punchev was officially ordained as Pastor which legitimised the first Gypsy Baptist Church (Ibid., p. 81).

The events described in the published text took place after Petar Punchev passed away, which led to the conflicts related to the leadership of the Church in Golintsi. This reflects the desire of most Gypsies in the church community to preserve its distinct ethnic character. These controversies came to an end with the election of the Bulgarian Petar Minkov as Pastor of the church on June 13, 1926 (Евангелист, 1926, pp. 48-49). He was received well by the Gypsies; he delivered sermons in the Romani language and preserved the ethnic character of the Church in Golintsi. Pastor Minkov had been active in various areas and has carried out several Evangelistic missions in the region (Славкова, 2007, p. 82). Under his editorship, the newspaper *Svetilnik* (Candlestick) was published in 1927, and two Gospel songs in Romani language were compiled and published – *Романе Свято гили* (Roma Holy Song) (1929) and *Романе Свети гили* (Roma Holy Songs) (1933). These two editions are combined in the series *Романе лила* (Roma books); we succeed to discover yet only the second book (ASR, f. Лиляна Ковачева), which consists of original poems by an unknown author, in all probability a Rom.

The Gypsy Woman Christian Association *Romni* and the Christian Youth Association, which was headed by Todor Marinov, were also established: the former most likely in 1926, and the latter in 1929. Moreover, with the collective effort of all Gypsy believers, a new church building was built and officially opened in 1930 (Славкова, 2007, pp. 84).

In the early 1930s, Pastor Petar Minkov left for the capital Sofia. At that point, the Gypsies Georgi Stefanov, who received training in Austria, and his successor Aleksandar

Toshev, who received his training in Germany, were ordained consecutively as pastors of the church in Golintsi.

By the initiative of Petar Minkov, in Sofia on October 17, 1932, the Committee Gypsy Evangelical Mission was established but the leadership of this group did not include any Gypsies (CSA, f. 264, op. 2, a.e. 9385, l. 7-8). According to the Statute of this Mission, its primary purpose was “to spread the Christian morality and to promote the spiritual, cultural and moral uplifting of the Gypsy people” (Ibid., l. 11). The Mission carried out various activities which included the publication of the *Bulletin of the Gipsies Mission in Bulgaria* (1932), the newspaper *Известия на Циганската Евангелска Мисия* [Bulletin of the Gypsy Evangelical Mission] (1933), the translations in Romani language of the Gospels of John and Matthew (Сомнал Евангелие, 1932ab) and two collections of Gospel Songs – *Романе гуля е Девлеске* (Romani Songs for Lord) (1936a) and *Романе Сомнал Гуля* (Romani Holy Song) (1936b). Only the second publication has been preserved, from which it is clear that these are translations into Romani of well-known Protestant hymns.

The Committee Gypsy Evangelical Mission also prepared a series of Christian-themed propaganda brochures in the Romani language *Барпе придобивке* (Large Gains), *Дуваре бианине* (Born Twice), *О Дел вакярда* (The Lord Said), *О дром ухтавдо* (The High Road), *Саво пересарла Библия* (What the Bible Tells), *Спасител ацал безаханен* (The Saviour Remained Unharmed), *Спаситело светоско* (The Saviour of the World), *Щар безспорне факте* (Four Indisputable Facts), which were issued by the Scripture Gift Mission in London. However, so far we have not succeeded in discovering them. In 1937, the Common Charitable Association for the Building of a Community House and the help of Poor Families of the Baptised Gypsies was founded, named “Father Paisiy”, in the village Vasilovtsi, Lom District (CSA, f. 264K, op. 6, a.e. 1461).

The activities of the Gypsy Mission were not limited to Bulgaria. A mission of evangelisation was carried out in Romania in 1934, which also included Gypsies (see Chapter 6).

The increased activity of the Gypsy Mission among the Gypsies provoked a backlash from the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and from the Bulgarian State. On May 26, 1933, the Committee Gypsy Evangelical Mission submitted its organisation's documents to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and National Health for approval, in which was specifically indicated that the organisation is under the honorary patronage of US Ambassador, Henry W. Shumaker (CSA, f. 264, op. 2, a.e. 9385, l. 5a). The Ministry in turn sent the documents for an opinion to the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (Ibid., l. 5). Shortly before that, the Gypsy Mission had sent a letter to the District Chief of Vidin requesting permission to open a ‘prayer hall’ in the town, to be used for the education and the conversion of local Gypsies. On this regard, the Metropolitan of Vidin, Neofit, sent to the Holy Synod a letter of May 23, 1934, in which he wrote:

[...] We are surprised by the fact that the Protestant propaganda has devised some kind of “Gypsy Evangelical mission” so that it [could] sneak in everywhere among the Bulgarian Orthodox people in order to undermine its spiritual unity and to corrupt it. [...] We are surprised by the fact that this Gypsy mission was allegedly under the auspices of the American

Plenipotentiary Minister, Mr. Shumaker! ... We do not accept that a political representative of great power can be given to the service of reckless propaganda and to openly patronise it. [...] First of all, the Gypsies of Vidin are not American but Bulgarian subjects; second, these Gypsies, in their great majority are Christians; thirdly, the homes of the Mohammedan Gypsies are among the homes of the Christian Gypsies; fourth, the Orthodox Christian mission has been working for a long time with them and has so far succeeded [without making much noise], without irritating the Mohammedans in the town, attracting to the church a large Gypsy majority. [...] The purpose of the Gypsy Evangelical Mission in Sofia is clear [...], it wants to justify the large subsidies that America sends [...] so that they could spend carelessly the dollars that were sent [...]. (Ibid., l. 3-4).

Following this letter, the Holy Synod, in its letter to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Public Health of August 4, 1934, expressed the view that “this Statute of the Committee of the Gypsy Evangelical Mission in Sofia should not be affirmed because the goals of the mission are purely proselytizing” and that “in Bulgaria, foreign religious propagandas cannot have missions but only the Holy Orthodox Church” (Ibid., l. 2).

To put it in brackets, the conversions of Gypsy Muslims by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church were not always done in ‘silence’, and in all such cases, they were used by the more or less open support of the Bulgarian State. Moreover, the first such ‘voluntary’ attraction to Orthodoxy and, accordingly, baptizing with new, Christian names, was done even during the April Uprising of 1876 against Ottoman Empire (Стоянов, 1887, Vol. 2), i.e. before the creation of the new Bulgarian state.

Mass conversions to Christianity were performed irregularly and in certain regions throughout the whole historical period (1878-1944), e.g. in the period from 1878-1888 in the region of Vidin (Елдъров, 2001, pp. 597). During the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), in the newly liberated regions of the Rhodopes and Western Thrace, with the assistance of the army and the new administration, the Bulgarian Church began the mass conversion of Bulgarian Muslims – the Pomaks. This violent mass Christianisation mostly did not include Gypsies while the leadership of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church presented Islam as a ‘Gypsy religion’, therefore indecorous of decent people (Ibid., p. 616). However, there were some cases (e.g. in the village of Chepelare, on June 1, 1913) when such mass conversions included Gypsies too (Георгиев & Трифонов, 1995, p. 367). Subsequently, in 1915, the Bulgarian State dropped the processes of forceful baptism of Bulgarian Muslims but this did not include Gypsies at all.

After the coup d’etat of May 19, 1934, the Bulgaria State commenced an active one-nation state policy. This policy also included the sporadic campaigns for the conversion and respectively re-naming of Gypsy Muslims, which was however one of its least important objectives. From 1933 to 1939, the Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church dealt with Gypsy Muslims at a dozen meetings. The campaign for their conversions was not strict or consistent. For example, in 1938, in the Dioceses of Vidin and Vratsa, there were about 500 baptised Gypsies (Елдъров, 2001, p. 631) while at the same time, according to the oral history of the community, there were conversions in that period also in other places of the country – the regions of Vidin, Lom, Montana, Vratsa, Byala Slatina, Veliko Tarnovo,

Dupnitsa and elsewhere. These conversions increased during the Second World War and although they were declared as “voluntary”, in many cases they were caused by various forms of pressure (see below). There were such baptisms in the regions of Veliko Tarnovo during the period 1937-1944 (DA Veliko Tarnovo, 61, 62), Vratsa during the periods 1934-1935, 1937-1938 and 1942-44 (DA Vratsa, f. 391, op. 1, a.e. 1-4; f. 437 K, op. 1, a.e. 1; f. 484 K, op. 1, a.e. 18, 27, 38, 42, 44), Sliven in the period 1940-1944 (DA Sliven, f. 44 K, op. 1, a.e. 11, 43), Pazardzhik in 1942 (Църковен вестник, 1942, pp. 321-322), Sofia in 1942 (Подкрепа, 1990, p. 8), and elsewhere. Although the procedure designated for baptisms with special circular letter No. 373 of January 21, 1943, by the Holy Synod (Църковен вестник, 1943, p. 49) was bureaucratised and synchronised with ordinances of the Law on Amendment and Supplement to the Law on Persons (Държавен вестник, 1943, pp. 1-2), according to which such renaming had to be done in court. In practice, however, according to testimonies of the oral history, this was not observed with regard to the Gypsies and baptisms and renaming were done without any procedural problems.

The topic of baptizing Gypsy Muslims is important also from another point of view. It reveals complex relationships and even contradictions between documentary sources, later date memoirs, and oral history evidence. Describing the baptism of Gypsies in Sofia on January 19, 1942 (on Epiphany according the so-called to the old calendar style), the famous Roma activist Manush Romanov (Mustafa Aliyev) wrote about a police blockade of the Gypsy neighbourhood, fire trucks chasing Gypsies with jets of water toward the church (Подкрепа, 1990, p. 8). In the oral history of the Gypsies in Sofia, it is consistently repeated that at that time only a part of the Gypsies was converted and this happened voluntarily, because of the distribution among the converts of additional food coupons (“they converted per kilogram of sugar”). In the state documentation, this baptism is only recorded as an event, without any explanation. What the truth actually was, is hard to guess.

Returning to the topic of Gypsy Evangelism, it should be noted that during the Communist Regime, the religious activities (especially of various Protestant denominations) were severely restricted by the State (including by repressive measures). In spite of this, the Evangelical movement among the Gypsies did not disappear but it even expanded significantly and encompassed a number of new regions, even incorporating new Evangelical denominations (the Pentecostal Church being the first place). The Baptist Church in Golintsi continued to exist throughout this period and even in the Gypsy neighbourhoods of some localities (e.g. Yambol, Kazanlak, Pernik, Kyustendil, Sofia, etc.) emerged illegal Evangelical communities (Славкова, 2007, pp. 91-95).

After 1989 and the changes that followed, there has been a real explosion of the spread of various Evangelical denominations and branches among the Roma, such as the Adventist Church, Methodist, Pentecostal, Bulgarian Church of God, etc. At the same time, these processes quickly acquired distinct ethnic characteristics. Many Gypsy/Roma churches (both terms are used) were created in the mahalas and even it is a common occurrence for several such churches to exist at the same time and in one and the same mahala. The Gypsy Evangelical movement thus spread throughout the country, including

among Turkish-speaking communities with a preferred Turkish ethnic identity which, in some cases, leads to a return to the Roma identity (Ibid., pp. 96-102). The stress in the pastoral discourse on new Roma, who through conversion receive a new right to a new life trajectory and a new history is an excellent nourishing platform for the formation of the emancipation movement. Moreover, Gypsy/Roma churches immediately appear at the level of organisations and tend to expand across the regions (cf. Podolinská, 2015, pp. 480-552; 2017, pp. 146-180). There is also a new phenomenon – kindled civic and political activities of Evangelical Roma in the new social conditions while many of them creating their own organisations and/or are actively involved in political affairs. All this shows that, after all, the development of the Gypsy/Roma Evangelical movement leads to the prevalence of ethnicity in the complex balance with religiousity, and ultimately, to its transformation into a specific component of the processes of Roma civic emancipation.

Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov

2.5 Socio-Political Struggles

2.5.1 *The Memoirs of Shakir Pashov (Part 2)*

Шакир М. Пашов

История на циганите в България и в Европа. “Рома”

[...]

Глава 25

Основането на Д[ружест]во “Египет” и вливането му в Комунистическата партия

През 1919 година в София бива основано дружество “Египет”. В него са членували голямата част от циганската интелигенция и всичката прогресивна младеж. Задачата на дружеството бе да издига в културно-просветно отношение, както членовете на дружеството, така също и самото циганско малцинство и най-вече – да работи за политико-общественото осъзнаване на циганското малцинство. В това отношение трябваше да се работи къртовски, тъй като изостаналостта в всяко отношение на циганите бе общепризнат факт. С голям ентузиазъм инициаторите на дружеството са се запретнали за работа. Чрез сказки, лични разговори, екскурзии, забави и пр. се целеше да се подтикне циганското малцинство към по-културен живот. И в това отношение е било направено много.

Няколко месеца само след формиране на дружество “Египет”, по решение на общо събрание, при голям ентузиазъм и повдигнато политическо съзнание, членовете взеха решение да се влее дружеството в Комунистическата партия (тесни социалисти). За деня на сливането бе решено да се състои тържествено събрание, на което бяха поканени и дойдоха секретаря на трети район – др[угаря] Вълчо Иванов, адвокатът др. Александър Ламбрев и други. Вливането на дружество “Египет” [в] Партията е било извършено при най-тържествена обстановка в клуба

на самото дружество на ул. “Татарли” 51. При сливането, ръководството на дружеството се е състояло от следните девет члена: Асен Тотев, Шакир Пашев, Юсеин Билалов, Манчо Шакиров, Мустава Сайдиев, Демир Яшаров, Манчо Арифов, Али Яшаров и Рамчо Шакиров. Последните трима понастоящем са вече покойници.

Дружеството е наброявало в първоначалния си състав около 50 члена.

През 1920 година дружеството, вляло се вече изцяло в Комунистическата партия, се снабдява и със знаме от червено-винен цвят, което се е съхранявало от клуба на ул. “Татарли” 25, минава през София и отива до районния клуб на Партията, който тогава е бил на ул. “Цар Симеон”, където тогавашният млад железничар Шакир Пашев е произнесъл съответна реч.

Начело с същото това знаме дружеството участва в първомайската манифестация, като преминава през целия град.

Когато на 7 май 1924 година почина основоположника на комунизма в България – дядо Димитър Благоев, болшинството от циганското малцинство участва на погребението на любимия водач на работническото движение у нас. А цигани-тютюноработници са носели и поднесли грамадни венци от живи цветя, които положили върху гроба на незабравимия и любим дядо Благоев.

Всички участващи в погребението цигани и циганки са били облечени в национални цигански дрехи – шалвари.

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Shakir M. Pashov

The History of the Gypsies in Bulgaria and in Europe. “Roma”

[...]

Chapter 25

The Setting Up of the Society *Egypt* and its Merging with the Communist Party

Society *Egypt* was founded in 1919 in Sofia. A major part of the Gypsy intelligentsia and all progressive youth were members of the society. The task of the society was to culturally and educationally raise its members, and also the Gypsy minority itself, and, most of all – to work for the political-civic awakening of the Gypsy minority. In that aspect, it was required to work extremely hard because the backwardness, in any aspect, of the Gypsies was a generally acknowledged fact. With great enthusiasm, the society's initiators got ready for work. Through lectures, personal conversations, excursions, entertainments and others, the aim was to persuade the Gypsy minority to a more cultural life. And much has been done in this respect, too.

A few months after the formation of Society *Egypt*, following a decision of the General Assembly, with great enthusiasm and raised political consciousness, the members took the liberty to infuse the society into the Communist Party (Narrow Socialists) [1]. On the day of the inflowing it was decided to hold a gala gathering, to which the

secretary of the third district was invited – the comrade Valcho Ivanov [2], the attorney Dr Alexander Lambrev, and others. The merging of Society *Egypt* into the Party was carried out in a most celebrated setting in the Club of the Society at 51 Tatarli Street. At the merger, the management of the Society consisted of the following nine members: Asen Totev, Shakir Pashev, Yusein Bilalov, Mancho Shakirov, Mustava Saydiev, Demir Yasharov, Mancho Arifov, Ali Yasharov and Ramcho Shakirov. The last three are now deceased.

The Society, in its initial composition, was composed of about 50 members.

In 1920, the Society, which was now fully incorporated into the Communist Party, was supplied with a wine-red flag that was kept by the club on Tatarli Street 25, passing through Sofia and going to the regional club of the Party, which was then on Tsar Simeon Street, where the then young railwayman Shakir Pashev gave a speech.

Headed by the same flag, the Society participated in the May Day manifestation, passing through the whole city.

When the founder of Communism in Bulgaria – Grandpa Dimitar Blagoev [3] – died on May 7, 1924, the majority of the Gypsy minority participated in the funeral of the beloved leader of the workers' movement in Bulgaria. Gypsy tobacco-workers wore and handed over giant wreaths of living flowers that they laid on the grave of the unforgettable and beloved Grandpa Blagoev.

All Gypsies in the funeral were dressed in national Gypsy clothes – *salwars*.

Notes

1. The Bulgarian Communist Party, up to 1919, was called the Bulgarian Social Democratic Workers' Party (Narrow Socialists).
2. Valcho Ivanov (1880-1925) was a prominent functionary of the Bulgarian Communist Party; he was killed by the police in 1925.
3. Dimitar Blagoev (1856-1924) was a Bulgarian political leader, the founder of Bulgarian socialism and of the first social democratic party in the Balkans (Bulgarian Social Democratic Party) in 1891.

Source: Пашов, Шакир М. (1957). *История на циганите в България и Европа. "Рома"*. София, pp. 99-100. Manuscript. In ASR, f. Шакир Пашов.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov.

Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.5.2 *The Autobiography by Shakir Pashov*

[Шакир Пашов]

[Автобиография]

[...] В едно събрание, проведено в Театър "Ренесанс" (сега [кино] "Георги Димитров"), нашата партийна група взе решение да дадем една скромна сума за клуба на партията [на площада до] "Лъвов мост", който беше опожарен от буржоазната власт. Партийната група взема участие в конгреса, който се проведе в Театър "Ренесанс",

където бях делегат през 1922 год[ина]. В него конгрес участваха и международни дейци на комунистическото движение, като Клара Цеткин и др[уги].

През 1923 година в септемврийските събития бях потърсен от агенти и полицията, но аз реших да избягам в Кюстендил, където се включих в строежа на Популярната банка като арматурист железар, а бях оставил жена и три деца без никакви средства. След потушаването на възстанието и свършването на банката се върнах в София и наново се включих в работа, като се срещнах с Вълчо Иванов и почнахме нелегална работа и възстановихме [партийните] групи. За заслугите и борбата ми през 1924 година в образувания единен фронт между комунисти и земеделци, Вълчо Иванов постави моята кандидатура в изборите за народни представители и аз бях избран за такъв от БКП [Българска комунистическа партия].

На 15 април 1925 година за атентата в Св. Неделя бях отново арестуван в участъка, после в 6-и полк, после Дирекцията на полицията и училище "[Константин] Фотинов", където престоях цели три месеци. Поради непрекъснатото ми преследване и обиски в къщи от полицаи и агенти аз реших да емигрирам в Турция, за което решение взех съгласието на другарите, адвоката Александър Ламбрев, Никола Милев и Ангел Бояджията, които ми казаха "стига да успеш, заминавай, защото положението е лошо и ти стана известен на полицията, като народен представител". След завръщането ми от Турция през 1929 година отново постъпих в редовете на БРП [Българската Работническа партия]. След възстановяването на партийната група, която го нарече от другарите Асен Бояджиев, Александър Наумов, Петко Стоев и други, "партийна циганска група", [членовете на] партийната група вземат най-редовно активно участие във всички акци на Партията и във всички избори бяхме посочени като първенци на III-и район. През 1931 година се включих и станах председател на циганската културно-просветна организация в България, а по-късно основавам първия цигански вестник в България "Тербие" (Възпитание), който вестник ратуваше за културно-просветно издигане и политическо съзнание на нашите тютюневи работници в България. През 1933 година бях включен в ръководството на Софийската партийна организация на БРП [със седалище на ул. "Позитано" No. 7.

След разтурянето на Партията [през] 1934 година ме включиха в нелегална дейност, която се провеждаше от др. Иван Дюлгеров, Васил Гарванов, Иван Рахов и други партийни отговорници. От тях получавах материали за вестника "Тербие" (Възпитание), нелегално издаван, подпомагах със събиране [на] средства за политзатворниците чрез разпространение на марки, които получавах от другарите Гологанов и Езекиев, [както и от] партийния секретар Иван Дюлгеров. Участвах в курса на партията, с предложение на др. Георги Димитров във всички акци и изборни борби, [и] съм се отчитал най-редовно. Преди 09.09.1944 година като групов машинен шлосер в общинската техническа работилница през 1934 година бях уволнен на 01.01.1935 година поради стачката, която се водеше от партията, и цяла зима бях без работа. От 1920 година до 1944 година вземах участие във всички

акции на партията, [бях] арестуван, [за]държан с месеци, [но] аз останах верен на партията. [...]

През 1923 година в изборите на народни представители е кандидат и другаря Георги Димитров, който посети урните на III-та районна изборителна секция в училище “Васил Левски” на улица “Димитър Петков” и за миг опозиционната шайка се хвърли върху него с юмруци, но нашата партийна група, която беше там като агитатори, веднага се нахвърли и отървахме от ръцете им др[утаря] Димитров, като дойдоха и други другари. Изпратихме ги до трамвая и той ми каза: “Шакир, един ден, като дойдем на власт, ти ще бъдеш най-голям човек, а пък на мен от гарата до двореца ще постелят килим”, и ето, дойде славната дата 09.09.1944 година и се сбъдна, аз станах народен представител във Великото Народно събрание, закърмен с идеите на Партията, защото целият ми живот премина в борби за тържествуването на марксистическите идеи и антифашистката ми дейност от 1919 година и е до днес [така]. [...]

Подпис С другарска почит: ... (Шакир Пашов).
Автобиографията давам от 1919 година до днес.

∴

Shakir Pashov

The Autobiography [1]

[...] [2]. In a meeting, held at the Theatre *Renesans* (Renaissance) (now Cinema *Georgi Dimitrov*), our party group decided to give a modest sum to the party club [on the square next to] *Lavov most* (Lion's Bridge) which was burnt by the bourgeois power. The party group took part in the congress that took place at the Theatre *Renesans* where I was a delegate in 1922. In the congress, there were also international figures of the Communist movement, such as Clara Zetkin and others.

In 1923, during the September events, I was sought by agents and by the police but I decided to escape to Kyustendil where I got involved in the construction of the Popular Bank as an ironworker, and I left my wife and three children without any funds. After the suppression of the uprising and finishing the construction of the bank, I returned to Sofia and I got back to work and met Valcho Ivanov and we started illegal work and restored the party groups. Because of my merits and my struggles in 1924, in the creation of a united front among Communists and Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, Valcho Ivanov put my candidacy forward in the elections for MPs and I was elected as one by the BCP [Bulgarian Communist Party] [3].

On April 15, 1925, regarding the assassination at the Cathedral Sveta Nedelya, I was arrested again in the police station, then in the 6th regiment, then by the Police Directorate and in the School *Konstantin Fotinov*, where I stayed for three months.

Because of my constant persecution and house searches by police officers and agents I decided to emigrate to Turkey and for this action I took the consent of the comrades, the lawyer Aleksandar Lambrev, Nikola Milev and Angel Boyadzhivata who told me “as long as you are able to, leave because the situation is bad and you already are known to the police as a Member of Parliament”. After my return from Turkey in 1929, I again joined the ranks of the Bulgarian Workers’ Party [4]. After the restoration of the party group, which was named by the comrades Asen Boyadzhiev, Aleksandar Naumov, Petko Stoev and others as the “Party Gypsy Group”, the members of the party group took very regularly active participation in all of the activities of the Party and in all elections, and we were identified as champions of the 3rd Region. In 1931, I joined and became Chairman of the Gypsy Cultural-Educational Organisation in Bulgaria [5] and later I founded the first Gypsy newspaper in Bulgaria, *Terbie* (Upbringing), which advocated for the cultural and educational uplifting and for the political consciousness of our tobacco workers in Bulgaria. In 1933, I was included in the leadership of the Sofia Party Organisation of the Bulgarian Workers’ Party [6] with headquarters on Pozitano Street 7.

After the dissolution of the Party in 1934, I was involved in an illegal activity which was carried out by the comrades Ivan Dyulgerov, Vasil Garvanov, Ivan Rahov and other party leaders. By them, I received materials for the newspaper *Terbie* (Upbringing), illegally published [7], and I helped in raising funds for the political prisoners by distributing stamps which I received from the comrades Gologanov and Ezekiev, as well as from the Party Secretary Ivan Dyulgerov. I participated in the direction of the party, upon the suggestion of the comrade Georgi Dimitrov, in all actions and in electoral struggles, and I gave reports most regularly. Prior to September 9, 1944, as a group machine mechanic in the municipal technical workshop in 1934, I was fired on January 1, 1935 due to a [participation in] strike which was led by the Party and I was without a job for the whole winter. From 1920 until 1944, I took part in all of the party’s actions, I was arrested, kept for months, but I remained loyal to the party. [...]

In 1923, during the elections for members of parliament, a candidate was also Comrade Georgi Dimitrov who visited the ballot boxes of the 3rd District Polling Station at the School *Vasil Levski*, on Dimitar Petkov Street and in a moment, the opposition group attacked him with fists, but our party group, which was there as agitators, immediately attacked and we took Comrade Dimitrov out of their hands as other comrades also came. We accompanied them to the tram and he said to me, “Shakir, one day, when we come to power, you will be the greatest man, and for me, from the train station to the palace they will lay a carpet” and here, the glorious date came September 9, 1944, and this came true, I became a Member of the Grand National Assembly, nourished by the ideas of the Party, because my whole life was spent fighting for the victory of Marxist ideas and in anti-fascist activities since 1919, and it is so today. [...]

Signature... . With comradely respect: ... (Shakir Pashov).

My Autobiography is from 1919 to this day.

Notes

1. The Autobiography is not dated. It could be assumed that it was written in 1967 when Shakir Pashov submitted his documents for receiving his so-called 'personal people's pension' as participant of the anti-fascist resistance. It may also have been written later, in 1976, when he applied to receive the title Active Fighter Against Fascism and Capitalism, a title he was granted and which brought him various privileges.
2. The first page of the Autobiography is missing.
3. There were no parliamentary elections in 1924. Perhaps, Shakir Pashov may have in mind the local elections in Sofia on May 4, 1924, but in this regards no other information has been found.
4. The Workers' Party was established in 1927 as a legal version of the prohibited Bulgarian Communist Party.
5. Here, Shakir Pashov writes neutrally "the Gypsy Cultural-Educational Organisation" without giving the exact names of the organisations he really has in mind – the *Sofia's Common Muslim Educational and Cultural Mutual Aid Organisation 'Istikbal – Future'* and the *Common Mohammedan-Gypsy National Cultural-Educational and Mutual Aid Union in Bulgaria*. This omission of the exact names was obviously made deliberately – in order not to mention their definition as 'Muslim' and 'Mohammedan'.
6. There is no other historical evidence to support the participation of Shakir Pashov in the City leadership of the Bulgarian Workers' Party; on the contrary, Shakir Pashov's various biographical references make no mention of this (ASR, f. Шакир Пашов).
7. There is no other historical evidence that newspaper *Terbie* was published illegally. The actual purpose of this notice is to suggest that the newspaper has been propagating communist ideas.

Source: ASR, f. Шакир Пашов.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova, Vesselin Popov and Lilyana Kovacheva.

Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

2.5.3 The Memory of Vasil Chakmakov

Спомен

И тази година българският народ ще посрещне тържествено своя най-голям празник Девети септември. На 09.09.1944 г. под ръководството на БКП с решаваща помощ на Съв[етската] армия работническата класа в съюз с трудещите се селяни и народната интелигенция осъществиха деветосептемврийската социалистическа революция и поеха съдбата на страната в собствените си ръце. Изминаха 40 години от този паметен ден, през който нашата родина възкачи 40 стъпала на възход и все-странен подем. Една малка, изостанала в миналото и изтощена от войните България се превърна в силно развита индустриално-аграрна страна с модерна промишленост, с уедруено и механизирано селско стопанство, с неимоверно нараснали национални, духовни и културни ценности, със завиден международен авторитет. Деветосептемврийската социалистическа революция е най-великото събитие в многовековната история на българския народ.

Победоносен край на мъжествени борби на пролетариата и другите трудещи, тя се извисява по своето социално-класово съдържание – Пролетариата, който в създадените благоприятни вътрешни и международни условия поведе Народните маси на последния и решителен шурм.

В тази подготовка и нашето население от кв[артал] "[Георги] Кирков", сега "Н[икола] Кочев", не беше безучастно. Още в 1918 година в бунта на жените масово се стекоха на площада с плакати "Искаме хляб, върнете мъжете ни от фронта" дадохме първите жертви Пею Дачев и Теня Недева, арестувани бяха и изпратени в затвора: Иван Стефанов, Стефан Селята, Йордан Големанов, Васил Будаков Минчоолу като политически дейци. Септемврийското въстание през 1923 год., първото антифашистко въстание в света и най ярката проява на нашия народ, след първата световна война, ръководено от БКП, което [е] преломен момент в нейната болшевизация и генерална репетиция за победоносното въстание през 1944 год. Това героично въстание е голяма революционна школа на трудящите се в това число и на Комунистите от кв[артал] "[Георги] Кирков", сега "Н[икола] Кочев". В пролетарския Сливен организационната и военна подготовка на въстанието започна по-рано от август 1923 г. БКП постави началото на нелегална организация. За инструкции и указание беше определена къщата на Деко Тенев с партиен секретар отговорник Петър Терзобалиев, тогавашен глашатай на сливенската община. От доставеното оръжие: пушки, картечници, пистолети бяха раздадени и на нашите комунисти от квартала, а именно: Теню Деков, Петър Бобушков, Георги Желязков, Димитър Руков, Недю Вичев, Нади Урумов, Недялко Кръстев, Недю Чакъров, Недялко Куртев, Димитър Селята, Илия Худов, Йордан Колев, Петър Терзобалиев, Петко Терзобалиев, Кръстю Вачев, Никола Чакмака, Киро Господинов, Тодор Брошков, Йордан Цандев, Тодор Бохуров, Димитър Кръцов, Курти Кръцов, Михал Бончев, Димитър Цандев, Тодор Деков и др. Неоченима бе помощта на Младежите: Захари Вачев, Михал Големанов, Ташо и Васил Николови. Разпределени бяха на три квартири, а именно в къщите на Петър Бабушков, Димитър Кръцов, който укриваше Г[еорги] Кирков при идването му в Сливен, и Теню Деков.

Въстанието не се вдигна, фашистите започват своето отмъщение, почват масови арести на комунистите, някои от които бяха изпратени в казармата. Тодор Бохуров, Илия Худов, Георги Желязков, Недялко Куртев, жестоко бити и изпратени в затвора. Останалите бяха закарани в дола на Бармук баир[,] бити с прикладите на пушките със счупени крака и ръце, окървавени, докарани всред мегдана в махалата. Караха да влизат в клозетни ями, да вадят оръжието, което укриваха. Въпреки жестоките и варварските побоища не сломи духът на другарите, героичното Септемврийско въстание се осъществи.

Историята на гражданите от кв[артал] "[Георги] Кирков", сега "Н[икола] Кочев" е твърде дълга. Тя ни показва много и разнообразни събития из техния живот изпъстрен с много страдания. Тия хора в този квартал бързо се нагодили с местните условия. Представата за тези граждани някога е била, че са бездомници, окъсани, дрипави, без занятие, в една къщичка магаре, дърва, покъщнина, сутрин с мотичка на гърба чакат повикване за копане. Други с магаре натоварено с дърва [и] чакат по цели дни да продадат и изхранят семействата. Битовите им условия – вечер с кандилца и фитил, потопен в мас. При сватби взимаха пари с лихва, при условия

ще ги върнат от жътва. Водата беше оскъдна. Имаше само три чешми, до Миленков, Стефан Панайотов Каварджиков, и Гюр Чешма носеха с кобилицы бакъри кофи на рамене. И наистина в далечните времена е бил такъв облика, но в нашата ера – в ерата на социалистическото общество, картината е съвсем друга. [От] занятията преобладават железарство, дърварство и работа в текстилната промишленост.

Историческите документи, а и живата история – участниците в политическия живот в нашата страна, че това население в политическо отношение не са изоставали никога, рамо до рамо с българите са водили борба и стачки ръководени от БКП. Още от създаването на партията в нейните редове са включени голям брой активни членове – между които са текстилните работници: Н[икола] Кочев, Петър Терзобалиев, Никола Чакмаков, като двамата – Кочев, Чакмаков са в музея в Лайпциг в [Германската Демократична Република] (ГДР) по записките на Г[еорги] Димитров. Петър Бобушков, Димитър Руков, Васил Стамболов, Никола Кокала касиер [в] бившата фабрика Калеви, Димитър Кръцов, Георги Палев, Тодор Гачев, Стефан Гачев, Васил Станков, Недю Чакъров и др. Безспорно челно място се отреджда на Н[икола] Кочев. Имена, много имена са в списъка на партията, които не само че не посрамираха, но и издигнаха честта на квартала. И в разгънатия строй на бойните партийни единици Кочев беше кумира на гражданите комунисти в този квартал. Неговите последователи в лицето на Ник[ола] Терзобалиев, Димитър Кочев, Захари Вачев, Ташо и Васил Чакмакови, Атанас Василев, Михал Големанов, Тодор Дончев, Петър Такев, Иван Станчев, Петър Тодоров Кокев, Велико Николов, Андон Чакъров, Дечо Куртев, Петър Ганушев, Ради Стамболов, и десетки още не опетниха имена на партията. Същите бяха ядрото на Младежкото дружество на [Работническия младежки съюз] (РМС) в квартала, участници в съборите, организирани от БКП и спартакисти (юнаци) в клуба “Хр[исто] Ботев”, на сегашното място на централния супер.

След завършване на войната движението нарастна, Партията се преименува [на] БКП [...]. Партията укрепна революционно. Тогава се откриха квартални партийни организации и такива комсомолски, защото градския клуб “Хр[исто] Ботев” не можеше да задоволи и осигури организационен живот на партията и масовите организации. Такава беше основаната и в нашия квартал “Георги Кирков”. За секретар на младежкото дружество беше избран Никола Терзобалиев, [и] дейността [на дружеството], която [той] ръководеше, помогна да израсне и беше изпратен на тримесечна партийна школа в София, където беше приет и за член на партията през 1921 г.

След атентата 16 май 1925 година Монархофашисткото правителство предприе такава распра с комунистите от цялата страна, която по жестокост беше равна на септемврийските. Във връзка с априлските събития бяха арестувани др. Георги Желязков, Никола Терзобалиев, Захари Вачев, Ташо и Васил Чакмакови, Недялко Куртев и др. обвинени във военни организационни т.н петорки съдени по 33Д [Закона за защита на държавата].

След освобождението им духът и желанието за работа в Комсомола не угасна. Младежта, която надброяваше над 100 души включени в гимнастически упражнения, образуване на младежка музика с ръководител Васил Гачев.

Не малък дял имат другарите в анти-фашистката борба. Младежите, през 1939 год. т.н група “Седморката” др. Йордан Русчев, Йордан Ганев, Никола Кочев, Господин Рускиев, Русчо Денев, Иван Костов, Петко Костов, Кирил Савов, Кирил Кръцов със секретар Господин Колев. Последните четирима бяха заловени от полицията за разпространение на нелегални позиви, бяха жестоко бити и съдени по ЗЗД [Закона за защита на държавата]. През нелегалния период 1940-1941-1942г. бяха интернирани в Концлагерите др. Никола Терзобалиев, Кръстю Големанов, Васил Мандев, Сотир Панайотов, Дечо Тодоров. Цялата тази мрежа през нелегалния период се ръководеше от Н. Терзобалиев като партийен секретар. В нашия квартал намираха убежища нелегални дейци от ЦК на партията, в домът на къщата укриваха др. Пиронкови, Георги Цанков, в къщата на Йордан Панайотов, шура на Терзобалиев, др. Райко Дамянов и Никола Чернев. Чести срещи с Иван Лилов и др.

Не малка дейност разви и продължава да развива кварталното ни читалище. Дълбоките икономически, социални и политически промени, които са разтърсвали живота на народа и в това число и на квартала не са били в състояние да загасят този светилник, неговата дългогодишна дейност за нас е радост. Основателите на читалището застават: Никола Терзобалиев, Стефан Панайотов, Стоян Атанасов, Дечо Куртев, Ганчо Василев, Васил Чакмаков, Захари Вачев, Михал и Кръстю Големанови, Иван Кръцов, Йордан Василев Чорапчиев. Наистина то става център на духовния живот в квартала до това време кипежът, който не прекъсва и до сега. Театрални представления, сказки, обсъждания, литературни вечери. От програмите започват, музикално, театрално изкуство. Играха се пиесите “Разбит живот”, “Голгота”, “Гвоздеят в ключалката”, по-късно “Цигани” по Пушкин и др. Взе-маха активно участие Иван Кръцов, Йордан Чорапчиев, Радка Чакмакова, Сотир Апостолов и др. [...].

м. VIII.1984 г.

Васил Чакмаков.

ул. Преслав 15, Сливен.

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The Memory

This year the Bulgarian nation will again solemnly celebrate their greatest feast of 9th of September. On September 9, 1944, under the leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party, with the determining help of the Soviet Army, the working class in the union with the labouring peasants and the national intelligentsia, accomplished the 9th of September

Socialist Revolution and took over the destiny of the country in their own hands. Forty years have passed since this memorable day during which our homeland climbed 40 steps on the rise and a general upsurge. Small, underdeveloped in the past and exhausted by the wars, Bulgaria has become a highly developed, industrial-agrarian country, with modern industry, with a consolidated and mechanised agriculture, with incredibly grown national, spiritual and cultural values, with enviable international authority.

The 9th of September Socialist Revolution is the greatest event in the centuries-old history of the Bulgarian people. A victorious end to the courageous struggles of the proletariat and of the other working people, it rises because of its social-class content – the Proletariat, which due to the favourable domestic and international conditions, led the People's Masses to the last and decisive assault.

In this preparation, our population in the neighbourhood *Georgi Kirkov*, now called *Nikola Kochev* [1], was not impartial. Already in 1918, in the rebellion of the women, they came to the square in their masses and holding placards “We want bread, bring our men back from the front”; we gave our first victims Peyu Dachev and Tenya Nedeva [2]; arrested and sent to jail were: Ivan Stefanov, Stefa Selyata, Yordan Golemanov, Vasil Budakov Minchoolu as political activists. The September Uprising of 1923 [3], the first anti-fascist uprising in the world, and the most distinguished deed of our nation, after the First World War, led by the BCP; which was a crucial moment in its Bolshevisation and the general rehearsal for the triumphant uprising of 1944. This heroic revolt is a great revolutionary school for the working people, including for the communists from the neighbourhood *Georgi Kirkov*, now called *Nikola Kochev*. In the proletarian town Sliven, the organisation and the military preparations for the uprising began earlier, before August 1923. The BCP initiated establishing an illegal organisation. For the purpose of instructions and directions, the house of Deko Tenev was selected; the Secretary of the Party was Petar Terzobaliev, then herald of the Municipality of Sliven. From the supplied weaponry: rifles, machine guns, and pistols were distributed also to our Communists from the neighbourhood and namely: Tenyu Dekov, Petar Bobushkov, Georgi Zhelyazkov, Dimitar Rukov, Nedyu Vichev, Nadi Urumov, Nedyalko Krastev, Nedyu Chakarov, Nedyalko Kurtev, Dimitar Selyata, Iliya Khudov, Yordan Kolev, Petar Terzobaliev, Petko Terzobaliev, Krastyo Vachev, Nikola Chakmaka, Kiro Gospodinov, Todor Broshkov, Yordan Tsandev, Todor Bohurov, Dimitar Kratsov, Kurti Kratsov, Mihal Bonchev, Dimitar Tsandev, Todor Dekov and others. Invaluable was the help of the young people: Zahari Vachev, Mihal Golemanov, Tasho and Vasil Nikolovi. They were spread out between three places and namely in the house of Petar Babushkov, Dimitar Kratsov, who was hiding Georgi Kirkov [4] in his arrival in Sliven, and Tenyu Dekov.

The uprising did not happen; the Fascists began their revenge; the arrest of Communists in their masses began, some of whom were sent to the army barracks. Todor Buhurov, Iliya Hudov, Georgi Zhelyazkov, Nedyalko Kurtev were brutally beaten and sent to jail. All the rest were taken to the place of *Barmuk Bair* – beaten up with rifles' ends, with broken legs and arms, covered in blood, brought in the middle of the neighbourhood. They were made to get into squatting-type closets' pits and to take out the weapons they have been

hiding. Despite the cruel and barbaric beatings, the spirits of the comrades were not broken and the heroic September Uprising took place.

The history of the citizens from the neighbourhood *Georgi Kirkov*, now called *Nikola Kochev*, is quite long. It shows us many various events from their lives, filled with so much suffering. The people from this neighbourhood quickly adjusted to the local conditions. Once, the perception about these citizens was that they are homeless, torn, ragged, without any professions, in a little house [were] a donkey, wood, some house belongings, in the morning [people were] waiting, with a hoe in their backs, to be called for work. Others, with a wood-loaded donkey, wait for days to sell the woods in order to feed their families. Their living standards – in the evening they use small float lights with their candle wicks dipped in fat. For weddings, they borrowed money with interest, on the condition they will return when harvest comes. The water was scarce. There were only three taps, next to Milenkov, to Stefan Panayotov Kavardzhikov and the *Gyur Cheshma*; mares carrying cauldrons and buckets on their shoulders. And truly, in the old times, such was the countenance, but in our era – in the era of a socialist society, the picture is quite different. Predominant occupations are iron-smithery, woodcutting and work in the textile industry.

The historical documents and also the living history – the participants of the political life in our country prove that this population, with regard to politics, has never been lagging behind; side by side with the Bulgarians have been fighting and participating in strikes led by the BCP. Since the founding of the Party, in its ranks have been included a great number of active members – among which are the workers in the textile factories: Nikola Kochev, Petar Terzobaliev, Nikola Chakmakov, as both – Kochev and Chakmakov are present in the museum in Leipzig, in the German Democratic Republic, according to the notes of Georgi Dimitrov [5]. Petar Bobushkov, Dimitar Rukov, Vasil Stambolov, Nikola Kokala, Treasurer in the former Factory Kalevi, Dimitar Kratsov, Goergi Talev, Todor Gachev, Stefan Gachev, Vasil Stankov, Nedyu Chakarov and others. Undoubtedly, the foremost place is given to N. Kochev. Names, many names are there in the list of the Party who not only did not blemish the honour of the neighbourhood, but they raised it. And in the stretched line of the combat party units, Kochev was the idol of the Communist citizens in this neighbourhood. His followers, including Nikola Terzobaliev, Dimitar Kochev, Zahari Vachev, Tasho and Vasil Chakmakovi, Atanas Vasilov, Mihal Golemanov, Todor Donchev, Petar Takev, Ivan Stanchev, Petar Todorov Kokev, Veliko Nikolov, Andon Chakarov, Decho Kurtev, Petar Ganushev, Radi Stambolov, and a dozen more spotless party names. The same were the core of the Youth Association of RMS (Revolutionary Youth Union), participants in the conventions organised by the BCP and *Spartakists* (*Younatsi*) [6] in the Club *Hristo Botev*, the current place of the central supermarket.

After the war ended, the movement increased and the Party was renamed to BCP [...]. The Party gathered revolutionary strength. Then, in the neighbourhood Party-organisations and *Komsomol* organisations were founded, because the town-club *Hristo Botev* was not able to satisfy and provide an organisational life of the Party and the mass organisations. Such was also the organisation found in our neighbourhood *Georgi*

Kirkov. For a Secretary of the Youth Association was elected Nikola Terzobaliev whose activities helped him to grow and thus he was sent for three months in a Party training in Sofia where he was accepted as a Member of the Party in 1921.

After the assault of May 16, 1935, the Monarch-fascist Government launched such an altercation with the Communists from around the country which in its severity was equal to that of the September events. With regard to the April events, arrested were the comrades: Georgi Zhelyazkov, Nikola Terzobaliev, Zahari Vachev, Tasho and Vasil Chakmakovi, Nedyalko Kurtev and others; they were accused of military-organisational [crimes], the so-called *Petorki* (group of five persons), [and] sued under the Law for the Protection of the State [7].

After their release, the spirit and the willingness for work in the *Komsomol* did not go out. The youth, which numbered over 100 people, took part in gymnastic exercises and created music for the youth, led by Vasil Gachev.

The share of the comrades in the anti-fascist struggle was not insignificant. The youth, in 1939, the so-called *Sedmorkata* (*the Seven*), comrades Yordan Rushev, Yordan Ganev, Nikola Kochev, Gospodin Ruskiev, Ruscho Denev, Ivan Kostov, Petko Kostov, Kiril Savov, Kiril Kratsov, along with the Secretary, Gospodin Kolev. The last four were caught by the Police for the spreading of illegal appeals and were severely beaten and judged according to the Law for the Protection of the State. During the illegal period 1940-1941-1942, interned in the concentration camps were the comrades Nikola Terzobaliev, Krastyo Golemanov, Vasil Mandev, Sotir Panayotov, Decho Todorov. This whole network in the illegal period was led by Nikola Terzobaliev in his capacity as the Secretary of the Party. In our neighbourhood, illegal functionaries from the Central Committee of Communist Party found refuge; in the house hid the comrades Pironkovi, Georgi Tsankov, in the house of Yordan Panayotov, the brother-in-law of Terzobaliev, comrades Rayko Damyanov and Nikola Chernev; common were the meetings with Ivan Lilov and others.

Not insignificant was, and continue to be, the activities of our neighbourhood's *chitalishte* [8]. For our joy, the great economic, social and political changes which have shaken the lives of the people, including that in the neighbourhood, were not able to put off this light, and the *chitalishte's* many years of activities. The founders of the cultural reading club are: Nikola Terzobaliev, Stefan Panayotov, Stoyan Atanasov, Decho Kurtev, Gancho Vasilev, Vasil Chakmakov, Zahari Vachev, Mikhal and Krastyo Golemanovi, Ivan Kratsov, Yordan Vasilev Chorapchiev. Truly, the club became a centre for the spiritual life in the neighbourhood whose impetus does not cease even today. Theatre performances [9], lectures, discussions, literature evenings. From the programmes, there emerge musical and theatrical art. The plays that were played were *Shattered Life*, *Golgotha*, *The Nail in the Door Lock*, later *Gypsies* by Alexander Pushkin, and others. Active roles were taken by Ivan Kratsov, Yordan Chorapchiev, Radka Chakmakova, Sotir Apostolov, and others. [...]

August, 1984.

Vasil Chakmakov.

15 Preslav Street, Sliven.

Notes

1. It refers here to the so-called *Gorna Mahala* (Upper Neighbourhood), located in the old part of the town, populated by Gypsy Christians most of whom worked in textile factories.
2. According to other sources, the killed Gypsy woman was Mariela Nedeva Karamalakova (Генов et al., 1968, p. 17).
3. The September Uprising which broke out in the fall of 1923, was organised by the Bulgarian Communist Party against the Government of Aleksandar Tsankov which came to power with the military coup on the 9th of June, 1923, overthrowing the Government of Aleksandar Stamboliyski (Bulgarian Agrarian National Union).
4. Georgi Kirkov (1867-1919) was one of the founders and the leaders of the Bulgarian Social Democratic Workers' Party (Narrow Socialists) and was repeatedly elected as a Member of the Bulgarian Parliament; as trade union leader, he visited Sliven many times.
5. Georgi Dimitrov (1882-1949) was a longtime leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party, an activist of the international communist movement, he was accused in the Leipzig Process (1933), he was a Secretary General of the Comintern (1935-1943) and Prime Minister of Bulgaria (1946-49).
6. It refers to the youth gymnastic associations which were under the influence of the Communist Party, called *Spartakisti* (named after Spartacus) which in order to be distinguished from the widespread analogous youth athletic associations were called *Younatsi* (brave fellows).
7. The Law for the Protection of the State is a special harsh criminal law, passed in 1924 by the Government of Aleksandar Tsankov, which aimed to punish its political opponents.
8. This case refers to the *chitalishte* opened in so called Gorna Mahala (Upper Neighbourhood) in 1928 (Andral, 2000, p. 11; 2001, p. 96). From February 1939 it is called *Knyaz Simeon Tarnovski* (Prince Simeon Turnovski), named after the Bulgarian heir to the throne (Изток, 1939, p. 1).
9. A photo with the caption 'Founders of the 1st Gypsy Theater Group. Sliven. 24.03.1927' is preserved (ASR, f. Господин Колев). On the back of the photo there are written the names of the founders (12 men and 10 women), and as theater directors (in the sense of leaders), are mentioned Ivan Kratsov and Yordan Chorapchiyata. It has obviously been an amateur troupe which has been very active over the years – it used to organise literary and musical social events (Сливенска поща, 1930, p. 2) and it occasionally did theatrical performances, e.g. the plays *Prodigal Son* (Сливенска поща, 1932, p. 2) and *Ruined Life* (Изток, 1941, p. 4).

Source: DA Sliven, f. 157, op. 1, a.e. 11, l. 1-21.

Prepared for publication by Elena Marushiakova, Vesselin Popov, Lyudmila Zhivkova and Plamena Stoyanova.

Translated by Aleksandar Marinov.

Comments

The texts published here, written by Shakir Pashov, offer a new interpretation and even a new factology of the events that are described above concerning the Gypsy organisations and their activities. This new reading of history, from the distance of time, and subjected to the new dominant ideology, poses serious problems in verifying the described events.

In the first place, the case of the Society *Egypt* (including the question of whether it existed at all) and its activities during the period 1919-1924 (a time when the Bulgarian Communist Party was banned under the Law for the Protection of the State) remains unclear. In any case, apart from Shakir Pashov's memoirs, in the historical sources, there is no other evidence of its existence and it has not been officially registered anywhere. The fact that a few years later (the late 1920s and early 1930s) it is mentioned again in the above-published materials does not change things much because, as it became clear

from the presented materials, it is only a sports association. Nevertheless, the existence of the Egyptian Society is still taken for granted in academic literature (Мизов, 2006, pp. 220-221; Нягулов, 2008, p. 34).

This does not mean that Shakir Pashov's materials should not be taken as reliable historical sources. The participation of many of the Gypsy youth in the social and political struggles and their involvement with the Communist movement is beyond doubt and whether it took place in that particular fashion (through Society *Egipet*) is already a secondary issue of our interest in this discourse. In this sense, we have no reason to doubt the truth of the events described by Shakir Pashov as a whole even if there are reasonable doubts about some of their specific details (especially with regard to his personal involvement, which is clearly exaggerated).

A few words about Shakir Pashov himself are needed, a man who has been referred to repeatedly, and whose life experience reflects the vicissitudes of different historical eras. Under the conditions of the Communist Regime, established after September 9, 1944, Shakir Pashov was the first Gypsy who became a Member of the Bulgarian Parliament. As the result of a special decision of the Politburo of the Bulgarian Workers' Party (Communists) of February 28, 1947, he became a regular deputy (replacing another resigned deputy) in the Grand National Assembly (CSA, f. 1 B, op. 6, a.e. 235, l. 4) which, at the end of the same year, adopted the new Constitution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria (the so-called Dimitrov Constitution). It is interesting to note that the proposal-recommendation for Shakir Pashov to become a Member of Parliament was made on behalf of the 'General Organisation of the Gypsy Minority for Fighting Fascism and Racism'. The recommendation letter is stamped with a seal with the inscription 'All-Gypsy Cultural Organisation – Sofia' and depicts a five-pointed star, under which is written '1945' (Ibid., l. 5), its founding year. An organisation with such a name is not mentioned in other historical sources and, in all probability, this refers to the Organisation *Ekiye* which, in this case, used another name and symbol, more suitable to the time.

Shakir Pashov was also the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Romano esi* (Romani Voice) and a chair of the Gypsy Musical-Artistic Theatre *Roma* (ASR, f. Шакир Пашов). He was quite popular among the Gypsy population, as evidenced by one of the poems of Aliya Ismailov, which ends with the verse:

Long live Stalin, Tito, Dimitrov,
And the Comrade [Shakir] M[ahmudov] Pashov! (Романо еси, 1948, p. 4).

On April 7, 1949, the Central Directorate of the Cultural-Educational Organisation of the Gypsy Minority in Bulgaria excluded Shakir Pashov for a "manifested anti-national activity before September 9, 1944, as a collaborator of the Police and for manifested, after this date, corrupting activity" (AMVR, f. 13, op. 1, a.e. 774, l. 30). In 1951, he was interned into the concentration labour camp (officially called 'Labour-Educational Camp') on the Island Belene where he remained between September 10, 1951, and August 10, 1953 (CSA, f. 2124 K, op. 1, a.e. 108107, l. 1-2).

Shakir Pashov was officially rehabilitated in 1956 but in 1959 he was again exiled for three years in the village of Rogozina, in Dobrudzha (ASR, f. Шакир Пашов). He was finally rehabilitated in the 1960s and he began receiving his so-called people's pension and, in 1976, he received the title Active Fighter Against Fascism and Capitalism. Shakir Pashov died on October 5, 1981, in Sofia, as an Honorary Pensioner (ASR, f. Шакир Пашов).

Coming back to the participation of Roma in Bulgaria's socio-political struggles, it is only natural that Gypsy activists join precisely the left-wing political movements because the latter expresses the interests of the poor and the oppressed social classes, to which the Gypsies belong as a community. Such processes take place not only in Sofia, where the social stratification is relatively strong but also elsewhere in the country. It turns out that the inclusion of Gypsies in the socio-political struggles is differentiated according to the degree and forms of their social integration which is related to their place of residence, based on the differentiation between town-village, or the urban and the rural. In these socio-political struggles, the Gypsies had their first casualties during the events in the period between 1923-1925.

The political situation in the first half of the 1920s was troubled. The left-wing Government of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, led by Aleksandar Stamboliyski, implemented an agrarian reform thanks to which many Gypsies who were living in the countryside received their own land. After the military coup organised by the Military League, which took place on June 9, 1923, Gypsies became involved in the armed resistance of the Bulgarian peasants in defence of the legitimate government. As a result of the suppression of the resistance, the Gypsies Asan Lalchov from the village of Dragor, Ali Durakov and Muto Asanov from the village of Karabunar, Pazardzhik District, were killed (Генов et al., 1968, pp. 22-24). Gypsies from North-Western Bulgaria joined also the September Uprising in 1923 which was organised by the Bulgarian Communist Party and by the left-wing of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union. Seven Gypsies were killed in the attack on army barracks in Lom (Романо еси, 1946, p. 2). During the suppression of the uprising, the Gypsies Shinko Kalishev, and Biryam Aliyev from the village of Milin Bryag, Yusein Abdulov from Berkovitsa, Mecho Demov Gyulov from the village of Yalovo, Nano Banov Munov from the village of Doktor Yosifovo, Dervish Bayramov from the village of Archar, Veli and Kurto Mangovi Seferovi from the village of Gradishnitsa were killed (Генов et al., 1968, p. 20).

A special place in the history of Gypsy participation in the socio-political life of Bulgaria is the town of Sliven. This case is unique not only for Bulgaria but also for the history of Gypsies around the world. In fact, as incredible as that may sound (especially for readers from the West), the Gypsies from Sliven appear to be the first factory proletariat in the Balkans. When, in 1836, during the Ottoman Empire, the Bulgarian Dobri Zhelyazkov created the first modern textile factory in the Balkans, a major part of employees there were Gypsies (ethnic Bulgarians preferred to be small artisans and farmers and avoided working as hired labourers). Under the conditions of the new Bulgarian State, many new factories opened in Sliven and the town became a centre of the textile industry in Bulgaria.

At the beginning of the 20th century, 80 per cent of the textile workers in Sliven were Gypsies (Генов et al., p. 1968, p. 16), and by the end of the Second World War, this figure had fallen slightly to 60 per cent (NA BAN – IEFEM, No. 295 II).

Due to their class position, the Gypsies in Sliven became a natural target for the propaganda of the ideas of the Bulgarian Workers' Social Democratic Party (which later grew into the Communist Party). At the 9th Congress of the Party in 1902, 2,447 Party members were counted, among them 6 Gypsies (Генов et al., 1968, p. 16; Колев, 1985, pp. 11-12). Two years later, in 1904, only in Sliven, there were 17 Gypsies reported as members of the Bulgarian Workers' Social Democratic Party (Narrow Socialists), which in 1919 was renamed to Bulgarian Communist Party, and which in the same year won the Municipal Elections in Sliven, as a result of which the so-called Sliven Commune emerged and among the Municipal Councillors was a Gypsy, namely the party activist Nikola Kochev (Ibid.). In 1929 Gypsy textile workers set up their own food cooperative, which lasted for two years; it was restored in 1932, one of its main functions being to support the families of striking workers (Horváthová, 1964, p. 94, Note 83). The active participation of the Gypsies from Sliven in the political struggles led by the Communist Party continued throughout the whole period until the end of the Second World War, which is reflected in detail in the manuscript published above.

Gypsies from different regions of the country were also participants in the partisan movement organised by the Bulgarian Communist Party during the Second World War, in which Bulgaria was an ally of Nazi Germany, e.g. Osman Bilalov and Sashko Germanov from Shumen (DA Shumen, f. 1119, op. 1, a.e. 11, l. 1; Демирова, 2017, p. 40), Trayko Dzhevelev from Lom, Petko Kanchev from Pleven region, etc. Bulgarian Gypsies were also involved in the partisan units in other countries, such as Dimitar Nemtsov from Sliven who, as a soldier in the Occupation Corps in Yugoslavia, deserted and joined the local partisans (Генов et al., 1968, pp. 24-25) and Ivan M. Stoyanov in occupied Macedonia. In the anti-fascist movement, the Gypsies also gave victims, such as the partisan Yusein Kamenov from the village of Gorna Kremena, Vratsa District, who was killed in 1944; the *yataks* (partisan's helper, from Turkish) – Velichka Drumcheva from the village of Radetski, Gabrovo region, Mustafa Yovchev from the village of Ledenika, Vratsa region, and Yusein Mutov Musov from the village of Varbitsa, Vratsa region, were also killed in that movement. When Bulgaria declared war on Germany after 1944, dozens of Gypsies also joined as volunteers. From Sliven alone, eight young people left for the front, three of whom died (Ibid, p. 20). The exact numbers of Gypsies, participants in the anti-fascist movement during the Second World War are difficult to ascertain, some of them were partisans, others were *yataks*, and a third group were political prisoners. In any case, during the so-called Era of Socialism, at least a few dozens of them received the title called Active Fighter Against Fascism and Capitalism which offered them a number of social privileges; only from the town of Sliven holders of this title are 22 persons (20 men и 2 women).

In general, the number of Gypsies who have actively participated in the anti-fascist resistance in Bulgaria is relatively small. They represent only a small proportion of the

entire Gypsy community but they are nevertheless an important phenomenon that deserves special mention. Not less curious is the question of the contemporary reading of their involvement which shows how difficult it is to achieve a consensus between the different historical discourses which try to assess the past. During the so-called Era of Socialism, a commemorative plaque was put in honour of Ibra[h]im Kerimov, a member of the Workers' Youth Union (a youth unit of the Communist Party), who was shot dead on the street by police in Sofia at a communist demonstration in 1919. Following the changes in 1989, during a time of democracy, this plaque was removed because it was considered as a legacy of repudiated Communism.

Viewed from the perspective of the Roma civic emancipation movement, the involvement of Gypsies in social and political struggles appears to be one of the main directions that this movement takes. There is a search for a new way to solve the problems of the Gypsy community through the participation of the community's representatives in mainstream political activities based on Gypsies' class consciousness and their self-perception as a unit of the general social structure of the civic nation which they are an integral part of. This is not a historical curiosity but a legitimate development which is a result of the achieved level of social integration.

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Summarising Comments

When analysing the development of the Roma civic emancipation movement in Bulgaria during the period under review (from the creation of the new Bulgarian State until the Second World War), it is imperative that this movement is placed in the general social and political context of the time. This would mean taking into account the public policy (or lack of it which is also a kind of policy of negligence) towards the Gypsies and, more generally, the attitude of the macro society towards them on the whole. In this regard, laconic, but quite accurate in his overall assessment, is the already mentioned Bernard Gilliat-Smith who wrote at the beginning of the 20th century:

Bulgarians, the lords of the land, might be expected to know something more concerning the Gypsies, who are, after all, in Bulgaria, numerically no negligible quantity. Such is, however, not the case. To them, every Gypsy man is just a gypsy, a dirty scoundrel, while every Gypsy woman is the fitting subject for some soak joke. At best some lawyer may give you a belated copy of a futile by-law, which never interested anyone save perhaps its author, and has remained a dead letter since its unfortunate birth. I would add, that the Bulgarians' ignorance on this subject is only surpassed by their inability to understand that there is anything in it worth learning. (Gilliat-Smith, 1915-1916, p. 2).

The text above explains why, in the end, the Bulgarian society as a whole, on the grassroots and (especially) on the national-political levels, pays so little (or in many cases, almost no) attention to the Gypsies. A particularly illustrative example in this regard is the perceived problem with the travelling lifestyle of Gypsies (which was a major issue in Central Europe at the time and continues to be relevant in some Western countries today).

In fact, from a legal point of view, there is no problem here (or more precisely, there should be no problem at all). As early as 1886, “nomadism throughout the Bulgarian Principality is forbidden” according to Art. 7 of the Urban Municipalities Act (Държавен вестник, 1886a, p. 2) and Art. 8 of the Rural Municipalities Act (Държавен вестник, 1886b, p. 3). The laws are unambiguous, they make no exceptions, and the “current nomads are obliged to settle down within the boundaries of the municipalities” (Ibid., 1886ab). In spite of this, the amendments of the already mentioned Election Law of 1901 explicitly refer to “Gypsies without any fixed abode” (Държавен вестник, 1901, p. 2), i.e. it refers not just to persons without any fixed abode but explicitly to travelling Gypsies which is de facto legalising the existence of Gypsy nomadism. This restriction of voting of nomadic Gypsies is also retained in the subsequent amendments in 1919 to the Election Law (Държавен вестник, 1919, p. 1) which became removed only in 1937 with the Ordinance-law on the Election of Members of Parliament for Ordinary National Assembly (Държавен вестник, 1937, pp. 138-145).

Although outlawing nomadism has existed as a legal rule, it has almost never been put into practice. Only a few cases are known when it was observed, e.g. in 1906 the Mayor of the Municipality of Aytos forbade the travelling of Gypsies within the Municipality (DA Burgas, f. 102 K, op. 1, a.e. 116, l. 89-90). However, there is no information on whether this Municipal Ordinance was really applied. In 1927, with a Circular of the Police Directorate, all the Municipal Directors and the District Police Inspectors were reminded that ‘nomadism throughout the Kingdom is forbidden’ and it was ordered that those who were not Bulgarian subjects should be extradited abroad (DA Sofia, f. 170 K, op. 1, a.e. 1, l. 2). In the Sofia District, this Circular was forwarded to the Chiefs of Districts who respectively related the message to the mayors of villages demanding that “in future, there should be no Gypsy-travellers in the region” (Ibid., l. 3). What the actual results of these bans have become clear from another Circular of the Police Directorate, dated November 24, 1931, which reiterates that “nomadism in our country is forbidden” and it states: “For 45 years these legal decrees have been in force and almost no one observes them! [...] A sad fact!” (Ibid., l. 3).

In 1934, a new *Ordinance-Law for Rural Municipalities* was issued in which it was again explicitly stated that “nomadism is forbidden” (Държавен вестник, 1934, p. 1633-1642). The consequence of this Ordinance, were the following Circulars from the District Governor of the Sofia District of 1936 and 1938, which again reminded the legal norms with regard to Gypsy-nomads (DA Sofia, f. 170 K, op. 1, a.e. 1, l. 21, 25) but apparently, the results remained the same (i.e. there was a lack of any results whatsoever). In the meantime, on November 26, 1937, a Bill was submitted for discussion to the Bulgarian Parliament ‘For the Abolition of the Wandering of Gypsy-Nomads’ (CSA, f. 190 K, op. 3, a.e. 114, l. 7-8), prepared by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and National Health. The motion has been discussed in the Parliamentary Committee, revised several times, evaluated by external experts, etc., and after almost four years (1941, June 28) it was deemed as “wholly outdated” (CSA, f. 190 K, op. 3, a.e. 114, l. 48) and thus it was not tabled in the Plenary Hall at all.

At the same time, the Bulgarian state continued its attempts to force the local authorities in the villages (at that time, more than 80% of the population of Bulgaria lived in villages) to comply with the existing legal norms prohibiting Gypsy nomadism. In 1938-39, the Ministry of the Interior and Public Health sent letters to the district police departments, which accordingly sent circulars to the district police stations (DA Kyustendil, f. 35 K, op. 1, a.e. 21; f. 35 K, op. 1, a.e. 150). These circulars reiterated that there was a ban on vagrancy and begging under the Rural Municipal Police Act of 1905, and specified the specific paragraphs that village mayors and police officers must apply to Gypsy nomads. However, there is no evidence that these circulars were executed. Memories from the oral history of former nomadic Gypsies explain the mechanism by which Gypsies avoided these prohibitions. This mechanism was extremely simple and applied everywhere in a similar manner – when Gypsy nomads arrived in any village, the first thing they had to do was give a bribe to the local authorities, who no longer created problems for them. All this once again confirms what has already been said: namely, that actual history cannot (and should not) be reduced to a study of existing legal norms, and it is no less important to understand how they have been applied in everyday life. Or as was the case with the bans on wandering of the Gypsies in the whole history of the new Bulgarian state (until its final ban in 1958), how they were not applied in the first place.

It is worth noting that among the numerous activities of the Roma civic emancipation movement throughout the period, the topic of nomadism is not present at all. This could easily be understood because Gypsy-nomads were a relatively small proportion of the overall Gypsy population while the Roma movement was entirely a matter of settled, and relatively better socially integrated, Gypsies. The only exception to this were the non-Roma missionaries of Evangelical churches who posed a fundamentally important question, namely, whether Gypsies should be forced to settle down in one place or they could become good Christians without breaking their traditions linked with wandering (Християнски приятел, 1939, p. 7). Notably, in this case, the article in question was a translation from German, i.e. this was yet another demonstration of the Orientalist approach in transferring of foreign experiences and offering solutions that are inappropriate and do not apply in other places. The Gypsy pastors themselves clearly preferred to work among their sedentary fellows (or at least there is no historical evidence to suggest that they have tried to work also among Gypsy nomads).

The level of social integration of Gypsies from which the development of their civil emancipation movement sprang, at least in the Balkans, suggests that there was at least some, even quite primary, level of literacy and writing culture in the community (or at least among its leaders). Of course, there were cases of attracting non-Roma in various ways and under various forms, to assist Roma with contacts with the State and with local institutions and to represent the community's aspirations to the macro-society. Moreover, in some cases, these non-Roma individuals even took the leading positions in this movement (e.g. Dr. Marko Markov and Pastor Petar Minkov). But even in these cases, including even when the original initiative and ideas come 'from outside' the community (e.g. Communist ideas or Evangelism), there must be a certain critical minimum of societal

literacy within the community itself so that Roma could appreciate their unequal social and civic position, and in order for a movement that seeks a change to emerge.

Naturally, the Roma elite which brought forward the leading ideas for the development of the community and for changing Roma's place in society was relatively small (or even quite small). However, this could be said for any (or at least almost any) community (national, social, class, religious, cultural, artistic, etc.) elite in their initial stages of inception and development. And it could not be otherwise, especially considering the educational level and the social position of the Gypsies in the new Bulgarian State. In 1905, only 3.9 per cent of Gypsies could read and write (Girard, 1932, p. 43); in 1910, there were 4,191 Gypsies who were literate (3.43 percent of all Gypsies); in 1920-5,917 (or 6.01 per cent); in 1926-11,106 (8.21 per cent) (Статистически годишник, 1931, pp. 42-43, 463). There is no data in this regard in the later years but in any case, according to the 1946 Census, over 81 per cent of Gypsies over the age of 16 were illiterate (Резултати, 1970, Vol. 2, pp. 17-22); in other words, they never went to school. During the period under review, the Bulgarian State did not take any measures in this regard, although according to the legislative norms, at least the primary (four years of) education was compulsory for all children. On the contrary, even in the rare occasions where individual representatives of educational institutions at the local level were concerned about the education of Gypsy children, they did not find the necessary support from national institutions. Such was the case in the town of Kyustendil in 1930 when a check revealed that out of 153 children in the Gypsy mahala who should be enrolled in compulsory education, only 35 children remained in school in their 1st and 2nd grades, and 33 pupils were enrolled in 3rd and 4th grades (DA Kyustendil, f. 177, op. 1, a.e. 48, l. 156-201), i.e. less than half.

Against this background, the presence of Gypsies with higher education was scarce and these would be very rare exceptions. Unique, not only for Bulgaria but on a global scale, is the case of Atanas Dimitrov (according to some unconfirmed data his family name is Mislyakov while according to other it is Valkov). He was born on January 18, 1874, in the village of Gradets, encouraged and financially supported by his teacher, he graduated from High School in Sliven in 1893 and continued pursuing higher education at the University of Jena in Germany where, in 1898, he defended his Doctoral thesis on *Die psychologischen Grundlagen der Ethik J. G. Fichte's, aus ihrem Gesamtcharakter entwickelt* [the Psychological Foundations of Ethics by J. G. Fichte developed according to its general character] (Dimitroff, 1898). When he returned to Bulgaria, he worked as a German language teacher at the High Schools in Ruse and Gabrovo, and since 1904, he was employed as a full-time lecturer in German at the Faculty of History and Philology in Sofia University *St Kliment Ohridski*. He has published several articles in leading philosophical journals, and he is one of the founders of modern psychology in Bulgaria. Atanas Dimitrov died in Sofia on the 20th of January, 1916 and according to the recollections of his contemporaries, throughout his life, he never hid his Gypsy origin (Михалчев, 1939, p. 213; Алманах, 1940, p. 163; Нягулова, 2012, pp. 12-13).

The case of Ivan Kirilov is somewhat similar but much more obscure. He was born on the 21st of May, 1876 in Elena. His family was extremely poor, but with a scholarship from the municipality, he graduated from a pedagogical school in Silistra. He then worked as a teacher, and with the help of his fellow citizen, the famous writer Petko Yu. Todorov, went to study law – initially in Toulouse, then in Freiburg (Switzerland). After graduation, he worked as a judge in various places in the country. He died on the 26th of December, 1936 in Sofia. Ivan Kirilov is the author of more than 40 books in various genres – poems, short stories, short stories, dramas, comedies, short stories, novels, biographical essays, etc. It has been rumored in literary circles for many years that Ivan Kirilov once shared with writer Anton Strashimirov that he is of Gypsy origin (Михалчев, 1939, p. 213; Пенчева, 2012) but there is no other direct historical evidence to support this statement.

Another important issue, however, comes to the fore here. In cases when members of the Roma community manage to be successful as individuals in the general society, they do not necessarily become leaders of their communities, even though they do not hide their heritage (far more common, including today, are the opposite examples). It turns out that the new Roma elite was formed by those activists who did not live apart from their community and were an integral part of it (typical in this regard is the case of Shakir Pashov). As for Atanas Dimitrov today, even in his home village, there are no memories about him in the oral history of the local community.

Overall, the movement for Roma civic emancipation in Bulgaria during the studied period undergoes a long and complex path of development. Starting from local professional associations and incorporating various other forms of civic organisations – religious (Muslim), mutual aid, charitable, etc. – it gradually reaches their merger into one common organisation. This merger, however, leads not only to the mechanical unification of the goals and functions of the former types of organisations but to the promoting of a new type of organisation which has already a national dimension (at least by design) and a new, ideological standing, i.e. it transformed into a completely different type of civic organisation.

During this ideological evolution, not only the religious division of the Gypsies in Bulgaria was overcome, but also their intrinsic heterogeneity as a community. More generally, the main divide goes along the lines of religion. Bulgaria's population Census conducted in 1934 registered 80,532 people with 'Gypsy-speaking language' whose differentiation according to their religion is as follows: Muslims were 67,103 persons, Eastern Orthodox – 13,323 people, Protestants – 69 people, and other religious – 37 people (Преброяване на населението, 1939, pp. 22-29). Provided that in Bulgaria at that time a large portion of Gypsies were Turkish-speaking (Marushiakova & Popov, 2015, pp. 27-33), the percentage of Muslim Gypsies was even higher (in all cases more than three-quarters).

The Roma civic emancipation movement begins its civic (and at the same time de facto political) activity as a struggle for the voting rights of Gypsy Muslims (the Gypsy Congress in Sofia) and includes the attempts to legalise the partial internal

self-government and the representativeness to the authorities (Coptic Muhtarship in Vidin), the aspirations of Muslims to be involved in the management of Islamic municipalities and properties (e.g. the Sofia Common Muslim Educational-Cultural Cooperative Organisation 'Istikbal – Future') and the solving of issues which are related with their everyday lives and their employment (professional, mutual aid/cooperative, charitable, cultural and educational associations).

Ultimately, all this development, whereby the ethnic unity of the community prevailed over its religious division, led to the creation of a national organisation which was inclusive of all Gypsies in the country regardless of their religion and place of residence. Especially revealing in this respect is the case with the day of St George (Gergyovden or Hederlezi in his Christian or Muslim version respectively). The image of St George attends the seal of the Coptic Muhtarship in the town Vidin; at the Mutual Aid Union, he is the union's 'patron saint' (a legacy of professional associations); and at the United Common-Cultural Educational Organisation of the Gypsy Minorities in Bulgaria 'Ekiye' his day is already an 'organisation holiday'. The fact that in the latter case the day of St George is not explicitly mentioned, but only the date of May 7 (one day after the traditional holiday) reflects the unwillingness to publicly demonstrate religious connections or relations in the new conditions of the communist regime. However, this does not negate the existing continuity of the nascent and evolving national symbolism (a direct analogue in this respect are the existing national holidays of the other peoples of the Balkans). From this point of view, the choice of the 'Gypsy feast' is particularly appropriate because *de facto* (despite its various names) it is common to both Gypsy Muslims (the majority) and Gypsy Christians. The holiday is named after the Christian religious calendar because Orthodoxy became the official religion in Bulgaria at that time, i.e. the embeddedness of the Gypsies within the Bulgarian civic nation is emphasised. The fact that the same holiday is solemnly celebrated by all other Balkan peoples is not an issue at all, because each of these peoples (including the Gypsies) perceived it as their 'own' ethnic holiday.

The place of traditional holidays for all peoples living in the Central, South-Eastern and Eastern European region in the era of modern nationalism is of particular importance. As already stated, one of the main pillars of this nationalism in the spirit of Herder is the folk traditions, including the holidays, which are perceived in this sense. The question here is not whether and to what extent a tradition is unique and ethnically specific, but much more important is how it is perceived by its bearers. In this sense, Roma are no exception, and 'traditions' (whatever that may involve), and in particular holidays, are especially important as an expression of the 'National Spirit' (Herder's 'Volksgeist'). It is for this reason that, in the course of historical development, Roma, whose ethnic culture very much incorporates adapted and perceived as their 'owns' forms and elements of the culture of their surrounding population in the region, in many cases, preserve those forms and elements that have already disappeared among majority population (Marushiakova & Popov, 2016c, pp. 35-64).

Domination of ethnicity over religiosity can be noted, however curious it may seem, even with religious institutions – as in the above described cases of Gypsies' struggles to take over in Muslim communities and by entering new Evangelical churches among the Roma (Gypsy Baptist Church). However, this is not some unique specificity, which is found only among Gypsies in Bulgaria. For Eastern Orthodox peoples, religion is subjected to modern nationalism, it is one of the pivots of the nation-state, and the church must necessarily be 'national' (cf. recent events in today's Ukraine).

The new type of national civic organisations, which took shape in the 1930s (the Mutual Aid Union and the *Ekiye*), emerges (at least as a pursuit goal) as a representative of the entire community, and as a result, it desires to be a partner of state and local institutions to solve community problems. In general, the main objective of the new type of national civic organisations was the overall civic emancipation of the community which would involve the achievement of an equal social standing and social integration of the Gypsy community, which would thus be an integral part of the Bulgarian civic nation. However, this does not mean that their purpose was to obliterate the Gypsies as a separate ethnic community or their ethnic assimilation. Even in a religious system such as Christianity, which places in its creed the lack of differentiation of peoples before God, Gypsies wanted, in the spirit of Balkan Eastern Orthodox nationalism, to have their own, Gypsy Evangelical Church. Not only that, but there were also indications (e.g. in the Statute of the *Ekiye*) that, at least as a vision in the distant future, there were ideas for the further development in that direction, including the creation of their nation-state (to what extent these perspectives were realistic would be a completely different question).

However, the vision of one's own Gypsy state presents only abstractly, as a desirable opportunity in the indefinitely distant future, while all efforts are focused on the problems of the present and the foreseeable future. Nowhere in the development of the ideas of the Roma civic emancipation during the historical period in question, however, could be discerned ideas that propose a separation of the Gypsies from the macro-society or the opposition between the two. On the contrary, the desire seems to be for the Roma community to integrate into society and to find the right (and most of all, fair) balance between their community and the macro-society, within which they are perceived as an ethnically different but inseparable part of the Bulgarian civil nation. This is true even when, at first glance, it seems that the ethnic dimensions are not taken into account at all while the leading ideas revolve around the struggle of the social classes (the case of the involvement of Gypsies in the Communist Movement).

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