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Romany Issue(s): The Images of Romanian Gypsies at Home and Abroad

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ȚIGĂN, -Ă, țigani, -e, s.m., adj. I. S.m. 1. Persoană ce face parte dintr-o populație originară din India și răspândită în mai toate țările Europei, trăind în unele părți încă în stare seminomadă. **2.** Epitet dat unei persoane brunete. **3.** Epitet dat unei persoane cu apucături rele. **II. Adj. (Rar) Țigănesc.** – Din sl. **ciganinŭ.** Cf. rus. *тáган*.¹

[Gypsy, gypsies n., adj. I. n. 1. Person belonging to a population that has its origins in India and that is spread in almost every country of Europe, living in some parts in a semi-nomadic way. **2.** Surname given to a brunette person. **3.** Surname given to a person with bad habits. **II. Adj. (rare) bohemian, in a bohemian manner** – from the sl. **ciganinŭ.** Cf. rus. *Țáган*.¹.]

ȚIGĂNÍ, țigănesc, vb. IV. Refl. A insista mult (și în mod dizgrațios) pentru a obține ceva; a cere ceva cu încăpățănare; *p. ext.* a se târgui, a se tocmi (mahalagește). – Din **țigan**.²

[To be, to act like a gypsy, v. Reflex., To insist a lot (and in a disgraceful manner) in order to obtain something; to ask something stubbornly; (extended sense) to bargain, to haggle (in a vulgar way) – from Gypsy]

May 2007. The president of Romania, the new member state of the European Union, harassed by the questions of a reporter during his private activities, called her “filthy gypsy”. The next day, in front of the Parliament, members of the Romany minority protested against what the civil society and the press considered as discrimination. The representative of the Romany minority in the Romanian Parliament stated in the following

¹ <http://dexonline.ro/search.php?cuv=TIGĂN> [12/04/2008], *Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române*, Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică "Iorgu Iordan", Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 1998

² <http://dexonline.ro/search.php?cuv=TIGANÍ> [12/04/2008], *Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române*, Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică "Iorgu Iordan", Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 1998

days that the President made this observation during a private conversation, in a private place, while he was nervous and it cannot be qualified as a racial and discriminative statement against the gypsy minority³. Most Romanians, he explained, are using the term “gypsy” (țigan) in a pejorative sense when they are angry. This negative and discriminatory meaning of the word is accepted by the Dictionary of the Romanian Language of the Romanian Academy.

November 2007. Ilie Măilăț, a Romanian immigrant robs an Italian woman, seriously injuring her and abandoning her in a deserted place, where she dies after three days of suffering. After discovering Măilăț is a Romany ethnic, the External Affairs minister, Adrian Cioroianu (a historian and a politician) said during an international press conference that “all gypsies who are trespassing the law must be deported in the Sahara desert”. During the press conference organised two days later in order to give an official apology, he still insisted on saying that “maybe the deportation of the gypsies will not happen too soon”⁴.

Neither Mr. Băsescu, nor Mr. Cioroianu resigned. Moreover, the two episodes weren't isolated. Ironically, they happen during the “Decade of Roma Inclusion”⁵.

I will try to analyse the manner in which the Romany minority is perceived in the Romanian press. As the subject is so large and so important, the analysis is to be limited in time and space.

I will mainly deal with the written daily press. My theoretical frame will be helped by extracts from two weekly papers and a Fulbright conference⁶ that opened, in 2005, the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

I settled my research to a time period of 13 months, from the beginning of April 2007 to the end of April 2008. I chose this particular period first of all because of the two episodes

³ CDI, “Reprezentantul rromilor în Parlament: Băsescu nu e rasist” [Romany representative in the Parliament: Băsescu is not a racist], Romania liberă, May 23rd, 2007, www.romanialibera.ro [25/04/2007].

⁴ Costel Oprea, “Cioroianu recidivează” [Cioroianu reoffends], România liberă, November 13th, 2007, www.romanialibera.ro [27/04/2008].

⁵ The Decade of Roma Inclusion” it's a human rights initiative in which committed governmental, corporate and non profit organizations in the European Union, Romania and the United States. The Decade is settled from 2005 to 2015.

⁶ Fulbright Commission, Transcripts of the Promoting Human Rights for the Roma conference, June 1st, 2005, http://bucharest.usembassy.gov/Fulbright/Roma_Conference_Strategies_en.html [17/05/2008]

described previously. Secondly, 8th of April is the International Day of the Gypsy communities, so it seems natural to follow up on the manner in which the press covered the event for two consecutive years. Last, but not least, I wanted to observe the manner in which the Romanian Romany community is seen after the country joined the European Union.

I analysed the on-line archives of three Romanian daily newspapers: Evenimentul zilei [The Event of the Day], România liberă [Free Romania] and Adevărul [The Truth]. They are influential general newspapers with a national distribution⁷. Apart from having a large audience among the Romanians, they have a history of more than 10 years each, so are also seen as the traditional newspapers.

The weekly opinion papers are Dilema veche [The Old Dilemma] and Revista 22 [22 Magazine]⁸. The reason for choosing them was that I wanted to see the manner in which the Roma minority is represented in the milieu of the elite, for the large public perceives the two magazines as more sophisticated and elitist. Dilema veche is a weekly cultural magazine specialized on thematic editions. The accent is put on essays, debate and literary journalism⁹. The second one, Revista 22, is an independent weekly political analysis and cultural newspaper that is published by the first Romanian NGO, *Grupul pentru dialog social* (The Group for Social Dialogue). It defines itself as “the best weekly Romanian newspaper of political culture”¹⁰.

The manner in which the information and the materials were researched and collected needs also some explanations. Even though it is politically correct in Romanian language to speak about “Rroma” or “Roma” minority, most Romanians use the word “țigăni”¹¹. For

⁷ According to BRAT (*Biroul Român de Audit al Tirajelor* [The Romanian Audit Office of Newspapers Circulation]), between April 2007 and April 2008, the three mentioned papers had an average distribution of: 27.939 (out of 45.872 printed copies) Adevărul; 59.484 (out of 79.429 printed copies) Evenimentul zilei; 79.004 (out of 102.840 printed copies) România liberă, www.brat.ro [05/05/2008].

⁸ According to BRAT, between April 2007 and April 2008, Dilema veche had an average distribution of 8.069 copies out of 13.286 printed copies, www.brat.ro [05/05/2008]. Revista 22 isn't registered in the BRAT and its distribution numbers aren't available.

⁹ http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dilema_veche [05/05/2008].

¹⁰ <http://www.revista22.ro> [05/05/2008].

¹¹ As resulted from the opinion poll realized in December 2007 by the Gallup Romania at the request of the Romanian Agency of Governmental Politics on 1177 persons, 45% of the persons interviewed stated that

this reason, when searching in the archives of the journals, the words searched were “rom”, “rrom”, “Romanes”, “romi”, “rromi”, “țigan” and “țigani.” Such a distinction is a very important parameter, as the analysis of the *Agencția de monitorizare a presei* [The Press monitor Agency] showed in the report of 2002. Mircea Toma, the director of the agency, suggested that even though the centuries-old negative stereotypes about the gypsies cannot be easily changed, something may be modified in the way in which the stereotypes are perceived. It is wrong to associate the word “țigan” to every news or piece of information about Romany minority. And the journalists and the mass-media have to actively implicate and change this perception¹².

During the 1st of April 2007 and 30th of April 2008, the newspapers subject to the analysis published the following number of articles:

	Total articles
Adevărul	132
Evenimentul zilei	186
România liberă	83

I separated the articles upon two criteria:

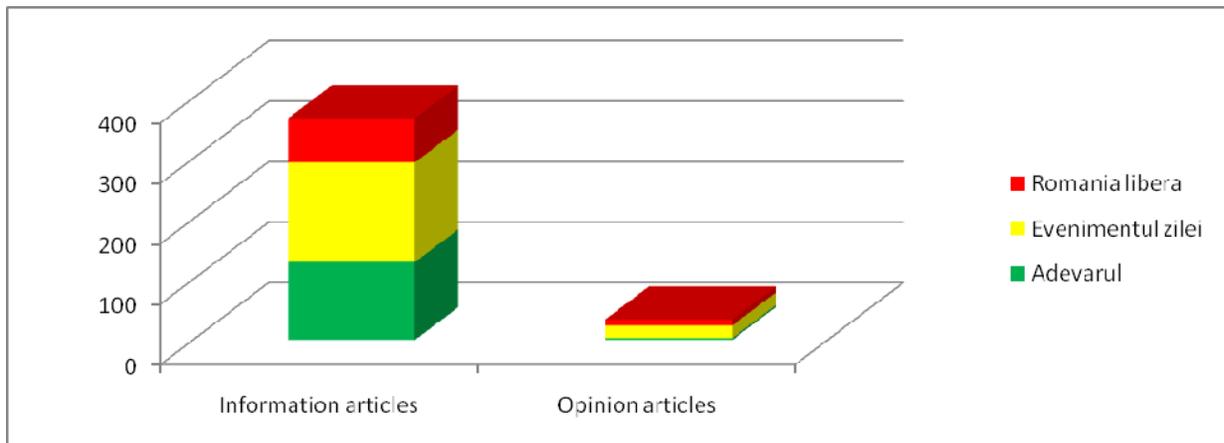
The first one was the type of article that the journal published. Was it a journalistic informative article, answering to the questions “where”, “what”, “when”, “who”, “why”, “how”? Or was it an opinion article, presenting not substantiated information, but the author’s attitude towards the subject?¹³ Since the two weeklies are, by their nature, presenting not informational, but opinion articles, this part of my work concentrated upon the daily newspapers, with the following results:

they are afraid foreigners are making a confusion between Romanians and Rroma – Popescu Andrei Luca, “Românii se tem să nu fie confundați cu rromii” [Romanians are afraid to be mistake with Romany], *România liberă*, December 10th, 2007, <http://www.romanialibera.ro/a113228/romanii-se-tem-sa-nu-fie-confundati-cu-romii.html> [25/04/2008]; “Studiu Gallup: majoritatea românilor vor ca romii să fie numiți țigani” [Gallup Study: the majority of Romanians wants the Romany to be called gypsies], *Adevărul*, nr. 5415, <http://www.adevarul.ro/articole/studiu-gallup-majoritatea-romanilor-vor-ca-romii-sa-fie-numiti-tigani/334441> [20/05/2008];

¹² *Presa de la “Țigani” la “Romi”* [The press from “Gypsies” to “Romany”], Așezământul Cultural Academia Cațavencu, March 2002, p. 6.

¹³ The methodology I used is in accordance with the one used by *Presa de la “Țigani” la “Romi”* [The press from “Gypsies” to “Romany”], Așezământul Cultural Academia Cațavencu, March 2002, p. 8.

	Adevărul	Evenimentul zilei	România liberă
Information articles	129	165	73
Opinion articles	3	21	10



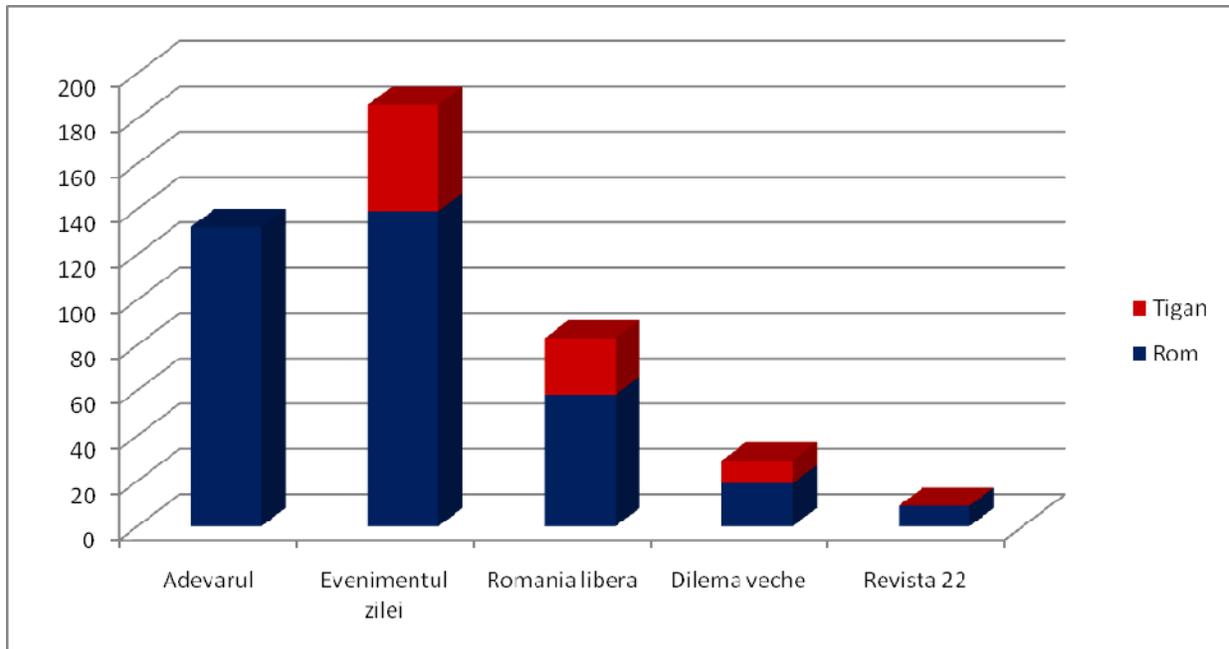
Dilema veche had 29 articles and Revista 22 9 articles dealing with the Romany communities/issue. Each of them had 1 special edition on the Romany minority during the investigated period, to be more precise, after the November 2007 assassination of the Italian woman by Ilie Măilăţ. If Dilema veche concentrated over the political correctness and the integration of the Romany minority within the Romanian society, Revista 22 analysed the way in which the Romanian Romany minority is perceived in the European Union, where it massively immigrated after the Romanian events of 1989.

My attention was first caught by the debate over how the minority should be called: “ţigan” [gypsy] or “rom” [Romany]. It is a debate that appears every now and then in every newspaper cited above. Even the Press Monitor Agency tried to show in their report of 2002 how the shift from one word to another in the Romanian press operates, for “Utilizarea denumirii “ţigan” induce in multe cazuri o tendinţă negativă a jurnalistului în relatarea evenimentelor”¹⁴ [The use of the term “gypsy” induces in many cases a negative tendency of the journalist when relating the event].

¹⁴ *Presa de la “Ţigani” la “Romi”*, p. 15.

When doing my research, I had the following results, depending upon the word used for searching information in the archives of the newspapers:

	Adevărul	Evenimentul zilei	România liberă	Dilema veche	Revista 22
Rom	132	139	58	19	9
Țigan	0	47	25	10	0



The problem of how should the minority be called, “țigan” or “rom” is a very important as well as old issue. If it is politically correct and humane calling someone a Romany and not a gypsy, the mentalities haven’t yet changed enough and you can hear not only ordinary people using the word “țigan” with a negative/pejorative meaning, but even high representatives, like the president of Romania. It is a debate that inflames Romanians – the reactions to each article dealing with the subject are many and passionate. Intellectuals, historians, journalist they are all debating on the subject. Before passing on to the presentation of the articles found during my research, I would like to analyse the main position of the Romanian intelligentsia on this large debate, which has been bone of contention for decades.

How should the Romany minority be called? And why so? The debate that Dilema veche¹⁵ opened in 2006 with 2 special issues of the magazine started from an observation: in Romania one talks about gypsies either in a very pacifying manner, using the word “Romany” and explaining the discriminations the minority suffers, either with a lot of resentments, harshly, by bringing into discussion the social problem the “gypsies” are. So, what is the most important in a person, the colour (the race) or the nature (the character)? What is the most annoying, disturbing for the Romanian majority, the colour of the minority, or their nature?¹⁶ To the question there were multiple answers. I shall try and review their main lines:

There are those, like Mr. Voicu, who considers that by calling a gypsy “Romany”, using the politically correct term, one discriminates even more the minority, for applying a word which is strange to the traditional language. The majority therefore transform them into some kind of extraterrestrial creatures that will be easier to remove from the body of the society¹⁷. The risk is bigger, Mr Voicu continues, as we have the tendency to remove the identity from a population that during the communist period was forbidden to exist. Defining the gypsies as “Romany” discriminates them. Giving media coverage to the Romany issue produces the real problem: Romanians will consider them as strange entities they have to avoid, by socially marginalizing them.

But, in the Romanian language, “țigan” means more than “Person belonging to a population that has its origins in India and that is spread in almost every country of Europe, living in some parts in a semi-nomadic way”. Starting from the lexicological meanings of the word “țigan”, Marina Dumitrescu shows that in the Balkans regions the polysemy of the word “țigan” is more important than in French or English. “Țigănie”, even if at the basis has the meaning of gypsy community, place where this community lives, in Romanian developed a connotation that is very strong in the consciences; it overcomes the proper

¹⁵ “Cine e țigan?” [Who is gypsy?], Dilema veche, III year, no. 127, June 30th, 2006, <http://www.dilemaveche.ro/index.php?cmd=numar&nr=127> [14/09/2007].

¹⁶ Giurgeanu Stela, “Argument” [Argument], Dilema veche, III year, no. 127, June 30th, 2006, <http://www.dilemaveche.ro/index.php?nr=127&cmcd=articol&id=1638> [14/09/2007].

¹⁷ Voicu Bogdan, “Roma Issues”, Dilema veche, III year, no. 127, June 30th, 2006, <http://www.dilemaveche.ro/index.php?nr=127&cmd=articol&id=1643> [14/09/2007].

meaning of the term. The word is associated with filth, disorder, lack of honesty, noise, abhorrent smells, half animal, non-civilised world¹⁸.

D. Domuța gives that in between the linguistic and sociologic questions, gypsies do not need to integrate into the society proper, for they are already part of the society¹⁹. They belong to the Romanian nation for centuries and as Romanian citizens they enjoy the same rights and also the same responsibilities. Maybe the real problem is that the mentality of some gypsies must change – after all, we are talking about members of the minority that refuse to respect the common sense rules and the Romanian laws by putting forward their belonging to another type of culture. Mr. Domuța suggests to eradicate first of all the customs that lead to the violation of the law (like the tradition of organizing the marriage of children) or those that put in danger the safety, the good health and the wellness of entire communities (and here education plays the most important role).

But the confusion appears even among members of the minority. As Mălina Voicu shows²⁰, changing the name of minority doesn't lead to a change of the identity. The Gypsies are an ethnic group that had during the centuries an inferior status and of course, the idea of changing the name is part of a larger programme that has as main objectives redefining their ethnic identity and integrating them in the society not by assimilation, but by the acceptance of differences. Apart from the name, the most important is the general attitude and the behaviour of the majority towards the minority. From another perspective, the Gypsies are a very heterogeneous group. Romany people aren't only those with colourful dresses and scarves, with a traditional way of life – the players of traditional music bands are also Romany. Gypsies are those living in the periphery part of cities, poor and miserable, and gypsies are also those living in palaces with 10 turrets. Between all these groups are important cultural, educational and social differences. The only thing they have in common is the colour of their skin. A large part of the gypsies do not accept to be called Romany and the confusion arises maybe from the fact that the label "rom" was artificially invented but not assumed by the large majority.

¹⁸ Dumitrescu Marina, "Delimitări : țigănie fără țigani" [Demarcations: gipsydom without gypsies], Dilema veche, III year, no. 127, June 30th, 2006, <http://www.dilemaveche.ro/index.php?nr=127&cmd=articol&id=1643> [14/09/2007].

¹⁹ Domuța Dorin C., "Despre integrarea țiganilor" [About the integration of gypsies], Dilema veche, III year, no. 127, June 30th, 2006, <http://www.dilemaveche.ro/index.php?nr=127&cmd=articol&id=1642> [14/09/2007].

²⁰ Voicu Mălina, "Țigani sau romi?" [Gypsy or Romany?], Dilema veche, III year, no. 127, June 30th, 2006, <http://www.dilemaveche.ro/index.php?nr=127&cmd=articol&id=1672> [14/09/2007].

But against the conclusion of Ms. Voicu, that every person should have the right to call him/herself as he/she desires, Ms. Margareta Matache, the executive director of the NGO Romani CRISS is absolutely convinced that the “Romany” appellation is the correct one, for “țigan”, “gypsy” or “zigeuner” have all a negative connotation²¹.

The opinion of Ms. Matache (the only Romany that gave her opinion about the matter in the special issue Dilema veche published) is advocated by a series of other Romany intellectuals in the second part of the debate²². Delia Grigore states that the present identity of Romany in Romania is based upon a history of social exclusion and institutionalized racism, rooted on a negatively-stereotyped thinking. “Țigan” is a false name, for in Romany language this word does not exist : it is a Greek origin word²³ referring, in the official religious orthodox system, to the “impure”, “pagan”, “untouchable” ones. In the XIV century, when the word “ațigan”²⁴ is mentioned for the first time in the religious papers, the term was a reference to the social condition of gypsies’ slaves, and had nothing to do with their ethnic group. It should be mentioned that the slavery of the gypsies was a disease of the Romanian nation, for even after its abolition²⁵, the Romany minority has been considered to be a parasitic subculture, a socially excluded group formed of entities that have not been allowed to enjoy their fundamental human rights. Ms. Grigore draws attention towards a very important aspect of the development this collective image of the majority towards the gypsy minority has taken: the self-stigmatization. “Modelul unic de referință se circumscrie autarhic și inflexibil valorilor majorității.”²⁶ [The

²¹ Giurgeanu Stela, “O etapă esențială: educația interculturală” [An essential phase: the intercultural education], Dilema veche, III year, no. 127, June 30th, 2006, <http://www.dilemaveche.ro/index.php?nr=127&cmd=articol&id=1742> [14/09/2007].

²² “Noi suntem romi” [We are Romany], Dilema veche, III year, no. 141, October 6th, 2006, <http://www.dilemaveche.ro/index.php?cmd=numar&nr=141> [02/10/2008].

²³ “athinganos”, “athinganoy”

²⁴ In Moldavia (1428) and in Valahia (1385) the first mentions of “ațigani” are in documents of inventory of goods of some monasteries – <http://www.rroma.eu/sclavia-rromilor.aspx> [13/04/2008].

²⁵ The abolition of slavery in Romanian countries took place between 1843 – 1855. First the slaves of princes were freed, then the monasteries slaves and in the end the nobility slaves. - <http://www.rroma.eu/sclavia-rromilor.aspx> [13/04/2008]; also “Pe urmele robilor lui Golescu” [Following the slaves of Golescu], Evenimentul zilei, nr. 5052, January 19th, 2008, <http://www.evz.ro/articole/detalii-articol/473863/Pe-urmele-robilor-lui-Golescu/> [19/03/2008].

²⁶ Grigore Delia, “Ecourile de azi ale robiei” [Today’s echoes of slavery], Dilema veche, III year, nr. 141, October 6th, 2006, <http://www.dilemaveche.ro/index.php?nr=141&cmd=articol&id=3993> [02/10/2006].

unique reference model subscribes self-sufficiently and inflexibly to the values of the majority]. This is how the gypsies become the prisoners of a deforming society. By adopting only in the surface the way of life of the majority, they return an image of an imperfect society – and the result is that the majority starts having doubts about its own identity and rejects the stranger that tells them the truth.²⁷

The deformed society is the one that fails to teach the young generations (for the below mentioned subjects are not even mentioned in the history text manuals) about the five centuries of slavery the gypsy minority endured, the Holocaust where the gypsies were as much victims as the Jews, about the Second World War, when the Romanian gypsies were deported to Transnistria, or about the Romanian Orthodox Church which openly associated its name (and also encouraged) the Romanian extreme right movement in between the two Worlds War.²⁸

But all the arguments pro and against calling the Romanian gypsies “țigani” or “rom” are the intellectual ones. In every day Romanian media, things don’t seem to have changed too much. The debate on how the gypsies should be called appear only after episodes like the ones quoted in the beginning of my paper and the arguments presented are few: the word “țigan” has a negative connotation, the Romanians are afraid that there will be a confusion between the “Romany” and the “Romanians” (but nobody says that they are also Romanian citizens) and that in Romani (the gypsy language), the term “țigan” does not exist.²⁹

The newspaper Adevărul launched a campaign, “Țigani, o problemă europeană” [The gypsies, an European problem] that, as stated by the chief editor, had a clear question: Who really cares about the Romany community? Is there a real desire from the part of the European community to integrate these people to normality, since everywhere, Romania

²⁷ Rădulescu Bogdan, “Țigani sunt fericiți când sunt altceva decât ... țigani” [Gypsies are happy when they are anything else than ... gypsies], România liberă, November 10th, 2007, <http://www.romanalibera.ro/a110944/tigani-sunt-fericiti-cand-sunt-altceva-decat-tigani.html> [25/04/2008].

²⁸ Manole Petre Florin, “Omisiuni” [Omissions], Dilema veche, III year, nr. 141, October 6th, 2006, <http://www.dilemaveche.ro/index.php?nr=141&cmd=articol&id=4022> [02/10/2006].

²⁹ Mihalcea Eugenia, “Rom sau țigan” [Romany or Gypsy], Evenimentul zilei, nr. 5051, January 16th, 2008, <http://www.evz.ro/article.php?artid=337529> [16/01/2008]; Gavreliuc Alin, “Despre “țigani” și “țigănităte”” [About “gypsies” and “gipsydom”], Evenimentul zilei, nr. 4833, June 14th, 2007, http://www.evz.ro/index.php?zone=articole&task=detalii-articol&item=447179&page=ALIN-GAVRELIUC-Despre-quottiganiquot-si-quottigantatequot¤t_date=2007-06-14 [05/05/2008].

or European Union, they are treated from the beginning as guilty.³⁰ The Romany is a minority the European Union does not want among its citizens. The statistics show that in EU live approximately 12 million Romany, but few of them are European citizens. The old continent chose to either turn its back to this minority, by chasing it away or persecuting it, or to integrate it by force. One may speak even of a hasty and discriminatory attitude of the European Union against the Romany communities. The European Union is even accused of sending important amounts of money from the Western European countries to Central and Eastern Europe ones, through different “multicultural” programmes that had as declared objectives “cultivating tolerance” or the “multi-ethnic co-habitation” – their only purpose being to stop the Romany from invading the “septic” Occident.³¹ They are the failed exam for the EU and Leonard Orban, the Romanian commissioner states that the global problem was transferred to a local level.³²

The Romany ethnics are considered by one editorialist to be the 28th nation of the European Union, for they are a nomadic people in a Union with no borders in between its member states, where transparency and permeability rule.³³

Another opinion that expresses in a metaphoric manner the way in which the European Union citizens make the distinction between the “Romany” and the “gypsy” is that of Cristea Radu Călin: “Etnicul rrom, privit de occidentalul amator de exotisme contemplete de pe șezlong, e cu siguranță altceva decât țiganul în carne și oase care-i fură occidentalului șezlongul de sub el și îi mai răpește și menționatele reverii.”³⁴ [The Romany ethnic, as seen by the westerner who appreciates the ‘exotic’ from his/her lounge, is for

³⁰ Ciocăzanu Laurențiu, “Nu trageți în rromi!” [Do not shoot the Romany!], *Adevărul*, nr. 5389, November 7th, 2007, <http://www.adevarul.ro/articole/nu-trageți-in-rromi/331324> [07/11/2007].

³¹ Șuteu Adina, “Rromii o minoritate pe care Europa nu o vrea” [Romany, a minority Europe doesn’t want], *Adevărul*, nr. 5389, November 7th, 2007, <http://www.adevarul.ro/articole/de-ce-nu-iubim-tigani/331280> [07/11/2007].

³² Popescu Andrei Luca, “Romii, o restanță pentru Europa” [Romany, a failed exam for Europe], *România liberă*, March 24th, 2008, <http://www.romanalibera.ro/a120765/romii-o-restanta-pentru-europa.html> [27/04/2008].

³³ Stanca Dan, “A 28-a națiune a Europei” [The 28th nation of Europe], *România liberă*, August 22nd, 2007, <http://www.romanalibera.ro/a104176/a-28-a-natiune-a-europei.html> [01/05/2008].

³⁴ Călin Cristea Radu, “Între rrom și țigan” [In between Romany and Gypsy], *Adevărul*, nr. 5398, November 7th 2007, <http://www.adevarul.ro/articole/intre-rrom-si-tigan/331220> [07/11/2007].

sure totally different from the gypsy in flesh and bones that robs the lounge underneath him/her and together with it, the above mentioned dreams].

But apart from western spectators loving the exotic culture of Romanian Romany from far away, there are some initiatives made by Westerners with good media coverage that change the life of the minority. Ms. Leslie Hawke created an association, “Ovidiu Rom” that deals with the education of children from Romany minority, organizes charity events and works to improve in a very active way the future life of the minority.³⁵ Leslie Hawke, as director of the association, brought back to school over 500 children; as many as 1700 children, many of whom didn’t know the names of colours or counting could recover their educational gap; more than 300 families are helped to keep their children in school. But, most of all, Ms. Hawke initiated a movement which redefines the integration of Romany as a whole: keeping children in school doesn’t only mean keeping them for 7 hours per day in a building, but it also means teaching them to deal with daily hygiene; keeping them properly fed and having social workers explain to their families the importance of a good education. For some of them, going to school, no matter at what age, helps them also to be registered in the official documents, for there is a large part of the Romany minority which does not exist in the eyes of the state: they aren’t registered in any official paper.

152 years after their liberation from slavery, the Romany are still confronted with the same problems: poverty, inferior status among the other Romanians, lack of education. Should the solution be, as Mr. Iosif Klein Medeşan proposes, a well based coherent policy which implies educational and social integration programmes?³⁶

One of the first impressions when reading all the researched material is that there are two types of newspapers articles: the politically correct ones, the ones that use a non-biased language, based on facts or offering in a non-emotional manner the opinion of the authors; and the negative oriented ones, the ones that present how the gypsy minority is responsible for the negative image Romania has among other countries or how it is a negative element of Romanian society.

I tried to figure out a classification of the articles published. The classification is based on what was considered to keep the attention of the readers. For example, the fact that some

³⁵ România liberă (4); Evenimentul zilei (2).

³⁶ Medeşan Iosif Klein, “Servitute şi dreptate” [Slavery and justice], România liberă, March 21st, 2008, <http://www.romanalibera.ro/a120601/servitute-si-dreptate.html> [28/04/2008].

Romanian gypsies are expelled from other EU countries, gives more audience to a newspapers than the last social integration programme developed from one NGO or other.

Mainly the articles are on three general themes: the Romany in Romania, the Romany in foreign countries and culture of Romany. Each main theme is divided in sub-themes. For each theme there is a mention of the number of articles that each journal published in the investigated period:

1. Romany in Romania

1. Social problems of Romany

The journalists speak mainly about the unacceptable living conditions of Romany minority in Romania³⁷, their poverty³⁸, their recognition as a minority group in Romania³⁹ and their migration inside the borders of Romania⁴⁰, but also the education of the Romany children⁴¹ or even cases of abandoned children coming from Romany communities⁴².

2. Romany crimes

As one of the most important stereotypes in Romania (in the 2002 March report, the “Press Monitor – presa de la “țigani” la romi”, found more that 43,50% of the total registered articles about negative events in which the actors were the Romany – “am remarcat faptul că ziarele care prezintă evenimente conflictuale au tendință pentru prezentarea acțiunilor negative săvârșite de etnicii romi”⁴³ [We noticed that the newspapers which present the conflicting events had the tendency to present the negative actions of the Romany ethnics]), the criminal Romany has an important presence in the Romanian newspapers. The Romany is a violent community that puts in danger the calm

³⁷ Evenimentul zilei (7), România liberă (5).

³⁸ Adevărul (1), Evenimentul zilei (4), România liberă (2).

³⁹ Evenimentul zilei (3).

⁴⁰ Evenimentul zilei (1).

⁴¹ Adevărul (2), Evenimentul zilei (2).

⁴² Adevărul (1).

⁴³ *Presa de la “Țigani” la “Romi”* [The press from “Gypsies” to “Romans”], Așezământul Cultural Academia Cațavencu, March 2002, p. 12.

way of life of the majority⁴⁴ and often are in possession of guns⁴⁵. In order to deal with that, the solutions found vary from sending Romany ethnics undercover in “hot” places⁴⁶ (where they spy among their co-ethnics and report to the Police the future planned crimes), to resorting to the help of the “bulibașă”, the traditional Romany leader⁴⁷ (whom imposes himself in front of the community – a similar solution was tried in the ‘80s and the ‘90s in France – “le Grand frère” from the suburbs – concerning the African immigration communities). If the solutions mentioned above do not work, there is always a third one: reunions between Police delegates and Romany representatives⁴⁸.

An interesting episode took place during the events of November 2007, after the crime committed in Italy by the Romany Romanian. After the discriminatory declarations made by the Romanian Foreign Affairs Minister, during his visit in Italy, Mr. Cioroianu was forgiven, in front of the medias, by an well known Romany Romanian outlaw, Costică Argint, political refugee in Italy.⁴⁹

The Romany community is also involved in organized crime: bank frauds⁵⁰, prostitution, human traffic, beggars networks⁵¹, but also in what has been known as the “afacerea baștanilor” [the affair of the bosses] – a real estate fraud (a case of a Romany organization that by threatening the inhabitants of Timișoara, succeeded in buying a entire district of the city)⁵².

A part of this category is that of the crimes that have as victims the Romany ethnics. We may mention in here either the misappropriation of funds intended for the Romany⁵³, either the use of the Romany communities as an electoral weapon⁵⁴.

⁴⁴ Adevărul (4), Evenimentul zilei (8), România liberă (4).

⁴⁵ Adevărul (2), Evenimentul zilei (3), România liberă (1).

⁴⁶ Adevărul (1).

⁴⁷ Adevărul (1).

⁴⁸ Adevărul (1).

⁴⁹ Evenimentul zilei (2), România liberă (1).

⁵⁰ Evenimentul zilei (2), România liberă (1).

⁵¹ Adevărul (2), Evenimentul zilei (3), România liberă (1).

⁵² Evenimentul zilei (8), România liberă (3).

⁵³ Adevărul (1).

⁵⁴ Adevărul (1), România liberă (1).

3. Discrimination

Discriminating the Romany, in Romania, seems to be so rooted in the mentalities, that starting with the President, passing through the Prime-minister, the teachers in schools, the reporters and journalists, to the ordinary Romanian, everyone speaks about filthy gypsies, about the gypsy thieves or the, now proverbial, gypsy laziness.

As mentioned in the beginning of the paper, the President of the country, feeling aggrieved by a reporter that kept asking him questions while in a private moment (shopping with his wife), took her mobile phone and said to his wife, when left alone with her that the reporter was a “filthy gypsy”. Unfortunately for him, the phone registered the entire conversation. The echoes were numerous, the President apologised through his speaker, the Romany protested in front of the Parliament with soap, detergents and wearing T-shirts having as logo “Filthy gypsy”. The Romany representative in the Parliament concluded that in his opinion the declaration made by the President weren’t discriminative – since everybody in the country uses this expression and being that we are all aloud to be nervous and express ourselves...⁵⁵

In July 2007, it was the Prime Minister who was accused of discriminatory affirmations against Romany. He declared during his weekly meeting with the press that it didn’t seem normal for him that honest Romanians that go to work in Italy, should suffer because of the criminal acts committed by the Romany in the Peninsula. For associating criminality with the Romany ethnics, the Romani Criss association intended a suit against the Prime Minister. The National Council against Discrimination found the Prime Minister not guilty.⁵⁶

After the above mentioned events, the decision of a school to make separate classes for Romany pupils passed almost unnoticed⁵⁷. Discrimination in schools against Romany children is a phenomenon that arrives periodically in the Romanian press: The teachers call the their Romany pupils either “filthy gypsies”⁵⁸ – following the Presidential declarations – or they are imitating the sound of the crows when addressing to them (for if you want to offend even more a Romany, you do not call him “țigan”, but “crow”)⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Adevărul (6), Evenimentul zilei (3), România liberă (7).

⁵⁶ Evenimentul zilei (3), România liberă (1).

⁵⁷ Evenimentul zilei (1).

⁵⁸ Evenimentul zilei (1).

⁵⁹ Evenimentul zilei (1).

Against all the discriminations, the Romany complained at the Government⁶⁰, sent open letters to the President⁶¹. No result was published in the press.

In November 2007, Adrian Cioroianu, Romania's foreign Affairs Minister followed the non discriminative statement of the Prime Minister and declared that all gypsies should be deported to the Sahara desert, for they are criminals and outlaws.⁶²

"Save the Children", the European Court of Human Rights, the European Parliament are all condemning Romania for discrimination against Romany minority after episodes like the ones mentioned above.⁶³

4. Integration of Romany minority

Little by little, some things are done for the integration of the Romany. Seminars are organized (even too many in the opinion of some journalists⁶⁴), special places in the universities for the Romany students are reserved⁶⁵, jobs for Romany are opened⁶⁶. The President made as one of his priorities the integrations of the Romany, whom he considers to be Romanians with the same rights and the same obligations as the other Romanians⁶⁷. The projects for integrating the Roma minority are made both at local⁶⁸ and national⁶⁹ level, either by the authorities or the NGO's⁷⁰.

Romany ethnics are now to be found in the Police force, media, schools and their leaders are participating in the decisions concerning the minority⁷¹.

⁶⁰ Evenimentul zilei (1).

⁶¹ Adevărul (1).

⁶² Adevărul (4), Evenimentul zilei (4), România liberă (1), Dilema veche (2).

⁶³ Adevărul (1), Evenimentul zilei (2), România liberă (4).

⁶⁴ Evenimentul zilei (1), România liberă (1), Revista 22 (1).

⁶⁵ Evenimentul zilei (1), România liberă (1).

⁶⁶ Adevărul (1), Evenimentul zilei (1), România liberă (1).

⁶⁷ Adevărul (2).

⁶⁸ Adevărul (1), Evenimentul zilei (1).

⁶⁹ Adevărul (1).

⁷⁰ Evenimentul zilei (3), Dilema veche (1)

⁷¹ Adevărul (2), Evenimentul zilei (2).

5. Traditions

The Romany traditions are of two kinds: those accepted by the majority, like their crafts, their laws, their music, dances and their organization⁷²; and those ones that enter in total contradiction with the most elementary human rights. Among the last ones, the most mediatised is the marriage of Romany children. Two important events took place during the investigated period: one of them was the marriage of a 5 years old girl with a 16 years old boy⁷³; the other was the rebellion to this tradition of a 12 years old boy who refused to get married with the girl his parents chose for him – the result was a general battle between the two clans and the image of a gap between generations⁷⁴.

2. Romany in the EU

Between the countries of the European Union, the ways in which the Roma issues are treated are very different. There is no common European policy concerning the Romany. EU puts asides funds, finances programmes for the Romany integration, but leaves to the states finding solutions⁷⁵.

Two neighbours, France and Italy, have radically opposite approaches to the Roma issues. I limited my research to them (I will present the main subjects the Romanian press published), but there are articles about the Romanian Romany beggars that invaded Greece, Finland, Spain, UK and Ireland⁷⁶.

1. The Măilăț case and the Italian crisis

Although the European Union has allocated funds for the integration of the Roma minorities, not all the countries that have Romany ethnics on their territory asked for that money. It is the case of Italy, a country which saw its own transformation from an emigrated into an immigrated state. Since 1996, more and more Romanians decided to

⁷² Adevărul (2), Evenimentul zilei (5).

⁷³ Evenimentul zilei (2).

⁷³ Evenimentul zilei (2).

⁷⁴ Adevărul (1), Evenimentul zilei (5).

⁷⁵ Adevărul (6), Evenimentul zilei (2), România liberă (2).

⁷⁶ Adevărul (9), Evenimentul zilei (12), România liberă (4).

come, work, live and sometimes settle in here. Romanians are the most important minority in Italy (officially more than 600.000 Romanians live here, unofficially, almost 2.000.000) and a part of them are Romany ethnics.

Before the Măilăț episode occurred, Italy had known already xenophobic and discriminative acts committed against Romanian Romany (a Romanian Roma's camp was intentionally set on fire in Ascoli, the Italian Police forces entered in conflicts with the Romany camps in Milano, Rome, and Napoli)⁷⁷. But the crime committed on the 30th of October started an anti-Romanian Romany campaign in the Italian press, allowed the Italian right to gain the elections and almost opened a diplomatic conflict between the two countries. In Romania the effects were proportional – no other such event had succeeded in bringing extreme right marches on the streets (except the gay parade), inflamed the pages of newspapers and stigmatised in such a way the Romany minority.⁷⁸ The problems are still not solved, Italy tried twice to pass a law against the free circulation of the East European citizens (without success, for it contradicts one of the fundamental rights of European citizens – the freedom of circulation), once a week the press in both countries publish articles about the crimes committed by the Romany ethnics on Italian territory.⁷⁹

2. France integration programme

At the opposite, France seems to have found a way in which the Romany issue could be solved. Basing its actions upon more than 15 years of collaboration between the regions of France and Romania (mainly in agricultural regions, French peasants showed to their Romanian colleagues what modern agriculture means and how EU rules can successfully be put in practice), the French government developed an economic integration programme

⁷⁷ Adevărul (14), Evenimentul zilei (8), România liberă (3).

⁷⁸ Adevărul (43), Evenimentul zilei (56), România liberă (19), Dilema veche (4), Revista 22 (8).

⁷⁹ While the Cultures in Transit Conference took place, Italy started to fingerprint all the Romany ethnics living in nomadic camps in Emilia Romagna, Lazio, Calabria and Milano regions. The measure, although considered by the opposition as fascist and condemned by the Vatican, the European Union and NGOs, seemed to encounter the approval of Romanian president. As explained by the Police forces, the measure was seen as a preventive one (!): if a crime with an unknown author would be committed, the not guilty would not be suspected. During 3 months more than 600 persons were fingerprinted (children included) and while Romanian representatives tried to see the files and wanted to know what happen with the data base, they received no answer from the Italian authorities.

of the Romanian Romany that were forced by the poverty to leave their places of origin. To be more precise, France gives the equivalent in animals (sheep, goats, pigs) of 1.000 Euros for each Romany adult and 500 Euros for each Romany child that agrees to leave the French territory and return at home to start an agricultural business.

Of course, not all the cases are success stories: there are Romany who take the subventions from the French government, sell the animals and after half a year return in France in order to be re-send at home. But the programme is a long term one and nobody can say for now if it's a failure or a success.⁸⁰

3. Romany culture

“United in diversity”. This was the motto of the European Union. But is it a reality when it comes to the Romany minority? Are the EU countries and its citizens united when it comes to a totally different culture than the one they are used with? Could culture create bridges and destroy the walls of rejection, intolerance and racism? Apparently it can, if one judges upon the numerous Romany cultural projects financed by the EU.

1. International Romany Day

In 1971, at the First Roma International Congress, April the 8th was declared the International Romany Day. It is celebrated by all the Romany, everywhere, with parades of traditional costumes, dances, music and meetings.

In 2007, there were few articles in the press relating about the International Romany Day⁸¹. In 2008, after the tumultuous debates, radical opinions and a large mediatization of the Romany minority, their International Day received more attention in the Romanian press.⁸²

⁸⁰ Adevărul (6), Evenimentul zilei (8), România liberă (2).

⁸¹ Evenimentul zilei (1), România liberă (1).

⁸² Adevărul (3), Evenimentul zilei (4), România liberă (3).

2. Romany festivals

The Romany festivals are mainly organized and appreciated by the “gadji” (the white, non Roma) and they are a living proof of how culture unites. A lot of Romany artists participate in these festivals and their main motivation, as Florin Niculescu (the most known Romany violinist in Europe) says, is that they find this movement extraordinary, animated by a fabulous western spirit⁸³.

The festivals include music, dances, photo exhibitions, movies, but also traditional craftsmen that show their creations in metal, wood, etc.⁸⁴

Of course, the classification is not exhaustive and is concentrated on the main subjects that attired the attention of the media during the last year. It’s a subjective classification that opens to debate.

Instead of conclusion, two images

1. 1st of June 2008, local elections in Romania. The opposition tries to gain control on the country, while the two parties that four years ago made a coalition and wan the election, are in an unmerciful war. During 20:00 – 22:00 hour interval, the TV programme that had the biggest audience was Acasă TV. The TV station aired the last episode of a Romanian soap, “Inimă de țigan” [Gypsy heart]. The happy-ending was watched in the urban milieum by 1.422.000 persons, while the TV stations that presented the preliminary results of the local elections were watched by 493.000 (Pro TV), 472.000 (Antena 1), 318.000 (Antena 3), respectively 312.000 (Realitatea TV) viewers.⁸⁵
2. Since Romania, a few years ago, had discovered a new rhythm, the “manele” music, popular culture is associated with the gypsy music. The singers of “manele”

⁸³ “Artist cu parfum de vedetă” [A star artist], Evenimentul zilei, nr. 4923, September 12th, 2007, <http://www.evz.ro/articole/detalii-articol/459752/Artist-cu-parfum-de-vedeta/> [05/05/2008].

⁸⁴ Adevărul(2), Evenimentul zilei (10), România liberă (6).

⁸⁵ Scâteie Floriana, “Serialul Inimă de țigan a bătut alegerile locale” [Gypsy heart soap beat the local elections], Evenimentul zilei, nr. 5188, June 3rd, 2008, <http://www.evz.ro/articole/detalii-articol/806193/Serialul-Inima-de-tigan-a-batut-alegerile-locale/> [05/05/2008].

are the most known and appreciated artists in the country. Names like Adrian Copilu' Minune [Adrian the Wonder Kid], Florin Salam [Florin Salami], Vali Vijelie [Vali the Storm] made visible the Romany minority.

Invisible politically, the Romany culture impregnated the everyday life of ordinary Romanians. And what if, in a world that is moving from the national to the global, where the extreme right movements seem to be only reactionary responses to a fast changing environment, the minority culture will radically change the main stream ones?

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