

REPORT ON THE COVERAGE OF THE ROMA IN THE GREEK PRESS

MAY 1999

(Comments in italics are made by the GHM)

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* page numbers of the articles in the *Avgi* newspaper are not provided, since there is no such reference in the web edition of the paper

1. Roma housing problems

- **12/5/1999: Avgi**

Self-Managed Roma Camps

The creation of self-managed Roma camps is the only solution to the problem with the protection of the so called «dangerous marginal groups» which live in more than 75 Roma camps throughout Greece. This is stated in the draft proposal, which Progressive Left Coalition MP Ms. Alfieri introduced in Parliament yesterday. More than 120,000, out of the overall 250,000 Roma who live in Greece, are nomads. They live in miserable conditions. The proposal -drafted jointly by the Progressive Left Coalition, the Drom Network for Roma Social Rights, the Doctors of the World and the Greek Helsinki Monitor- asks every prefecture with a nomad Roma population within its limits to start at once a project for the creation of self-managed Roma camps and then to cooperate with other concerned authorities in the construction and supervision of the camps.

- **23/5/1999: Vima**, page A49

The Problem of the Homeless Becomes Explosive

In an article about homeless people in Greece, Roma are included in the group of citizens who live in unacceptable and unsanitary conditions. Even though the official number of homeless people in Greece is 15,000, there are tens of thousands who are not included in the official reports. This latter group do not live in houses and their living conditions are absolutely unacceptable, says a report of the European Monitor for Homelessness.

Also:

- **14/5/1999: Eleftherotypia**, page 18-47: 15,000 People Believed to be Homeless

The reports comply with the positions of the NGOs concerning the housing problems of Roma. They characterize the living conditions in the settlements as unacceptable and press the authorities to give a permanent solution to this problem.

2. State announcements concerning Roma

- **26/5/1999: Eleftherotypia**, page 65

Inter-ministerial Institution for the Problems of Roma

Minister of Public Affairs Ms. Papandreou announced at the conference of the Panhellenic Roma Federation the creation of an inter-ministerial committee which will deal with the problems of Roma. Roma will for the first time be represented on such a

committee. Ms. Papandreou attributed the difficulties with Roma housing to their nomad way of life. She based this conclusion on a recently published study on the needs of Roma. She also referred to projects, organized by her ministry, providing financial support to Roma and envisaging their resettlement to areas with basic conditions for leading a normal life. The Minister promised to fund a project organized by the Roma Federation for carrying out a census within the Roma population. The Roma present asked for the solution to their urgent needs, like the lack of water supply and electricity in their settlements. The Federation elected Mr. Randis its President, Mr. Kalamiotis – its Vice President and Mr. Lamprou – its Secretary General.

A neutral report describing the State announcements concerning the problems of Roma.

3. Ways to deal with street children

- **28/5/1999: Avgi**

Support for the Children Working in the Street

The NGO Center for the Support of Children and Families was created two years ago with the aim of supporting the so called «street children,» the children who beg in the streets. The 200 children who go to the Center are usually Roma or Greek Muslims from the region of Xanthi, as well as Albanian Roma children between 5 and 15 years of age. These are mostly boys, since girls get married at a very early age or stay home to look after their small brothers and sisters. The Center teaches the majority of children who do not attend school how to read and helps the rest in their school duties. There, children learn to play together, to draw pictures and to acquire the basic knowledge necessary to children of their age. According to Ms. Lemou, director of the Center, their families are absolutely outside modern civilization. They stay in «no-places» and share perceptions which belong to the past; they cannot read and cannot understand the signs in the streets and stores; they cannot deal with the bureaucracy and cannot benefit of their social rights. The Center has proposed some measures for the protection of street children: penalties for parents who do not send their children to school; special educational programs for parents; special training for teachers, so that they manage to deal with pupils with social and cultural specificities; priority enrollment for unemployed and socially excluded parents in anti-unemployment programs; creation of centers for educational, psychological and social support by the local governments and the State; street workers in every municipality, so that problems are inspected on the spot. Ms. Lemou declares that the Municipality of Athens and the State systematically fail to support the Center financially, so it operates on insufficient private donations. That is why the Center remains a voluntary organization.

A very positive and well-founded report supporting a consistent policy towards street children. It points out the social dimension of the problem with respect of both the rights of the street children, as well as of their different life style.

4. Miscellaneous

- **8/5/1999: Nea**, page 13

Particular Groups

A humorous comment about the Political Spring Party refers to the fact that this time the Party's list of candidates for the European Parliament includes representatives of particular social groups, e.g. a Roma representative.

A slightly scornful and ironic comment.

- **25/5/1999: Avgi**

A Greek Night

She said with indignation that Roma tend to have lots of children in order to take the extra allowance from the State. She was furious at the waste of public money. Then the discussion turned to computer games. One parent said that computers are going to destroy people's brains. «In a while, Jews will be the only people left, who can think,» he added. In the end they discussed the terrible effects following the acceptance of Albanian children to Greek schools. It was a classic night.

An ironic report on the racist and xenophobic attitudes of a part of contemporary Greek society. The article presents the way that some people perceive themselves as the victims of «the Outsiders,» e.g. immigrants and Roma. It is also clear that the ensuing racist discourse labels Jews, Roma and Albanians as a viable threat to the homogeneity of Greek society. People project and determine their own identities onto this threat.

5. Books on Roma

- **23/5/1999: Vima**, page S14

The exclusion of minorities from education (Roma, Minorities, Greeks from Outside Greece and Foreigners in Greek Education/ The Different Goes out of the Classroom, Christos Katsikas, Eva Politou, ed. Gutenberg)

6. Roma criminality

- **17/5/1999: Eleftherotypia**, page 70:

A 24-year-old Roma woman was arrested for possessing sleeping pills without a prescription. The policemen discovered that she had stolen 25,000,000 GRD from houses in Athens.

A short and neutral article presented in the column of police news.