

ELNA UPDATE

Esperanto League for North America, Inc. • Box 1129, El Cerrito, CA 94530 • (415) 653-0998

Issue 2, 1991

WORLD LANGUAGE & WORLD LANGUAGE PROBLEMS

Turkish Plan to Permit Kurdish is in Trouble

A government bill to ease restrictions on the use of Kurdish has encountered resistance in the Turkish parliament and may die there.

The bill would lift a ban that made it a crime for Kurds to speak their own language in public or listen to their traditional songs.

The ban was instituted in 1983 when Turkey was under military rule, but even before that the Kurds had been subjected to a harsh assimilation campaign.

The bill has apparently stalled in parliament because of fears that giving language rights to the Kurds now would lead to demands in the future for an independent Kurdish state.

In fact, the word "Kurdish" does not even appear in the bill, and it would not affect restrictions on teaching Kurdish in schools or publishing newspapers and books in Kurdish.

Government officials still predict that the bill will pass, although some foreign diplomats are doubtful. (San Francisco Chronicle, Mar. 14, 1991).

French Language Forbidden in Algeria

The Algerian parliament has approved a law, similar to one introduced by Col. Khaddafi in Libya, which makes Arabic the sole official language of the country. Its use is now obligatory for all government documents, as well as in trade and schools.

It is now a crime in Algeria to use a foreign language (French is the one most often used) for any of these purposes. Punishments range from invalidation of documents to fines from \$100 to \$500. Businessmen who use French words on their products risk having their factories and shops closed.

100,000 people recently protested in the streets of the Algerian capital against "the political and religious intolerance of the new law", and accused the government of imposing rapid Arabization on the country. (Heroldo de Esperanto, #6, 1991.)

French Spelling Reform Fizzles (Continued)

Opposition to the proposed French spelling reform (see ELNA Update #1, 1991) is increasing. The goal of the reform is to make French spelling more phonetic.

Strong opposition is growing not only in France but in Canada and Switzerland as well. Among the groups which have formed to protest the proposed changes are The Association to Save the French Language (l'ASLAF), and The Committee Robespierre which proposed "a moral guillotining to everyone who dares to profane the French language."

This is not the first time that proposed French spelling changes have failed. In 1975 similar changes were accepted by the government but never took effect. They were finally abandoned in 1987. (Heroldo de Esperanto, #6, 1991.)

Dutch Spelling Changes

Spelling changes are being introduced in the Netherlands, although more successfully than in France. (See article above).

French loan words such as bureau, château and cadeau are now being written as buuro, sjato and kado by some newspapers, while English imports "showroom," "session" and "social unit" are now being written as sjooowroem, sesien and soosjel joenit. (Heroldo de Esperanto, #6, 1991.)

Statehood for Puerto Rico Opposed

Despite a proposal in Congress to let Puerto Rico vote on statehood, some commentators (and some Puerto Ricans) are opposed to the idea. They point to the language problem as the main reason to deny statehood to the island. "We should not delude someone in Congress over who we are and what we are," said Jaime B. Fuster, the island's non-voting delegate in Congress. "We are a Spanish-speaking country...if this happens to give some people more concern, so be it." (Quoted by Patrick Buchanan)

Commentators cite examples of other countries being torn apart by language problems. "Statehood is a marriage of the strictest, most old-fashioned kind, no way out," writes Patrick Buchanan. "What is the urgency of taking so irrevocable a vow? What is lost by waiting and watching, as we see Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, India come apart in this new age of separatism and nationalism?... Canada, too, is being torn apart by the questions of language and culture that are present in the Puerto Rico statehood matter. "

Other commentators are opposed to Puerto Rican statehood

because they fear that bilingualism would then become institutionalized in the United States. "Puerto Rico's religious and political values present no obstacles to statehood," writes George Will. "However, language...is another matter.

"Puerto Rico is a Spanish-speaking community. Sixty percent of Puerto Ricans do not speak English. An America with Puerto Rico as a state would be bilingual in a way which... today (it) is not.

"Bilingualism would inevitably be institutionalized to a new degree...Already we have gone too far, even to bilingual ballots..." (Conservative Chronicle, Mar. 27, 1991)

*In a related development, a bill recently passed in the Puerto Rican Senate which makes Spanish the sole official language of the island. (See ELNA Update, #1, 1991)

English as She is Spoke

*From the English-language edition of Soviet Uzbekistan, No. 8, 1990, in an article titled "Great Silk Route": "It's quite for a long time that no 'blank spaces' can be discerned on our Planet's map... 'Blank spaces' in the world exploration have not disappeared by no means, and probably will never vanish for every individual who is irresistibly being attracted by a magnetic force of the universe of different civilizations and cultures, tenors of life and all-human values."

—From the same issue in an article titled "To Act, Not to Waste Time": "I don't think I will make a mistake if suppose that this is just the formula (sic), that has been engraved up on the minds of everyone of 4683 delegates to the XXVIIIth Congress of the CPSU that completed its work last month in Moscow...The society that had been fought for against real, and as it appeared later on, imaginary enemies, for which the people had been starving, suffering privations and hardships, erecting plants and electric power stations with bare hands only, that being done by the millions of communists and by the people carried away by them...Like a magnet the XXVIIIth Congress attracted the long train of burning and sore problems of this society...The inner communication which is being acquired by the public opinion of the West and of the East, is a very delicate process yet, like anything being born in a new unusual cornfield..."

*From an English language want ad in the Rumanian newspaper România libera, (Mar. 7, 1991): "For our Lufthansa cargo office we are looking for a young male person. If you have the following assumptions

- between 20 and 25 years old
- good in English (German recommended)
- willingness to work physical and shifts...

please sent (sic) your written application..."

*A recent joint Swedish-Polish project to plan the cleanup of the polluted Vistula river has ended in complete failure. Reasons given for the failure were cultural differences and language problems. On future projects, organizers have decided not to try to communicate in English, but instead to speak in Swedish and Polish and use interpreters. (Monato, Feb. 1991).

Computer Dictionary in Irish

A constant problem for speakers of minority languages is the lack of up-to-date technical dictionaries. A new computer dictionary has just been published in Irish, which will now allow Irish speakers to use their language in the computer field instead of English, which until now has enjoyed a monopoly there.

In recent years the Irish government and publishers in and outside Ireland have published a large number of technical dictionaries and lists, including ones for medicine, science, the military, music, trade, etc. (Monato, Feb. 1991).

INTERNATIONAL ESPERANTO NEWS

Esperanto for the European Community?

During a session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg on Dec. 11, 1990, a resolution was introduced in favor of Catalan, a language spoken by several million people in Spain, and a smaller number in France. The resolution demands limited use of Catalan at least in basic texts, public information and language teaching. Catalan would be just one of several languages now used by the European Parliament and the European Community.

The introduction of the resolution sparked discussion of the language problem in the European Community. During follow-up debates, a French member of parliament defended—in Latin—his proposal to make Latin the language of the European Community.

Italian MP Marco Pannella responded to the proposal with his own choice of Esperanto for the EC. "For almost my entire life I've been opposed to Esperanto," he said. "But, after considering events in recent years as well as the present state of the world, I've reached the conclusion that—for scientific, social, cultural and political reasons—defense of linguistic pluralism can't submit to the law of the jungle, i.e., to the continuing risk that some languages will overpower others.

"Therefore I believe that adopting a language which would enable both the users of the "imperialistic language" and the speakers of all other languages to have a common linguistic frame of reference is an urgent question for mankind and for Europe." (Heroldo de Esperanto, #6, 1991.)

Esperanto in Space

Not only has Esperanto reached nearly every corner of the globe, but it's gone into space as well. Launched in 1977 and still sending back data to earth, the Voyager 2 space probe has traveled billions of miles, with stops at Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. The probe will continue its voyage even after its mini-nuclear reactor stops providing energy, around the year 2020. In the year 20,319 Voyager 2 will pass close to Proxima Centauri, the star closest to the sun. In the event that extraterrestrials from Centauri or another star system intercept the probe during its long voyage, a record with music and greetings in many languages was placed in the probe, along with a record player.

Among the greetings was one made by Ralph Harry, former Australian ambassador to the United Nations. Harry, an Esperantist for many years, gave his greeting in Esperanto.

"Friends," the message says, "I am speaking to you from the planet earth. I represent the country of Australia, the island continent in our planet's southern hemisphere. We strive to live in peace with the peoples of the whole world, of the whole cosmos, and work with them for the common good of every living being. I greet everyone who understands. Fare well!"

On its way to the outer planets of our solar system, Voyager 2 passed through the asteroid belt, a region of miles-long planetoids between the orbits of Mars and Jupiter. While there, the probe may have passed near two asteroids named "Esperanto" and "Zamenhof." Both asteroids were discovered and named by Y. Vaisala, a Finnish astronomer and Esperantist. "Esperanto" was discovered in 1936, and "Zamenhof" (named for the creator of Esperanto) was discovered two years later. (Heroldo de Esperanto, #6, 1991.)

Esperanto Course on Chinese Television

On May 15, 1990, China's Central Television Studio began broadcasting an Esperanto course. The television course could be seen nationwide in China.

The Chinese Esperanto movement underwent enormous growth during the years of the reform period (1979-1989). Esperanto groups were founded throughout the country, even in Lhasa, Tibet. China now has more Esperantists than any other country.

Nevertheless, because of economic conditions in China many Esperanto students lacked suitable materials to move beyond

a basic knowledge of the language. They didn't have enough advanced textbooks, teachers, or meeting places to practice Esperanto. So some veteran Esperantists, including some in the government, decided that a TV course might be one step toward improving the situation, as well as reaching the many Chinese who had expressed interest in learning Esperanto. In the city of Qingdao several well-known Chinese Esperantists collaborated on a series of 24 half-hour lessons. The course is titled La Espero (Hope) and was broadcast four times a week for eight months until November 24, 1990.

It's impossible to say how many people studied via the TV course, but at the very least, hundreds of thousands of Chinese learned Esperanto or increased their proficiency in the language. (Monato, Feb. 1991).



NATIONAL NEWS

U.S. Classes and Conferences

July 1 - 19, 1991 - 22nd annual Summer Esperanto Workshop at San Francisco State University. Some partial scholarships available. For more information contact Cathy Schulze, 410 Darrell Road, Hillsborough, CA 94101, (415) 342-1796.

July 8 - 13, 1991 - 4th Midwest Esperanto Classes and Conference. Will be conducted in Esperanto and English. For more information contact Sherry Wells, P.O. Box 1338, Royal Oak, MI 48068, (313) 543-5297.

July 20 - 25, 1991 - 39th annual Convention of the Esperanto League for North America. Will take place in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. For more information contact ELNA, P.O. Box 1129, El Cerrito, CA 94530, (415) 653-0998.

August 12 - August 17, 1991 - Special one-week Esperanto Institute at the University of Hartford. Elementary and intermediate courses will be taught by J.C. Wells, Professor of Phonetics at the University of London and President of the World Esperanto Association. For more information contact Hilda Grossman, Director of Summer Programs, University of Hartford, West Hartford, CT 06117, (203) 243-4401.

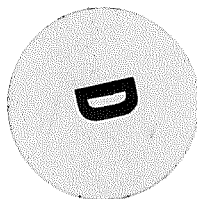
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- ❖ The satisfaction of contributing materially to the propagation of Esperanto in the U.S.A.
- ❖ A bi-monthly newsletter keeping you up to date on issues of importance to Esperantists
- ❖ The quarterly ELNA Update with information on the world language problem and Esperanto as its solution
- ❖ The ELNA Book and Tape Service catalogs and the ELNA Membership List
- ❖ Discounts on most items carried by the ELNA Book and Tape Services

Non-Member "Friend of Esperanto"

A "Friend of Esperanto" is not a dues-paying member of ELNA and therefore not eligible for the regular membership benefits. Instead, a "Friend" offers encouragement to the Esperanto movement by providing financial support. A "Friend" receives:

- ❖ Four issues of the ELNA Update via first-class mail. The ELNA Update keeps you abreast of the world language problem and Esperanto as its solution.
- ❖ A free copy of the year's ELNA Book Service Catalog

ELNA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please show the type of membership or support by an X in the appropriate brackets. All memberships are on a calendar year basis, January 1 – December 31. For items marked (*), we must have your birthdate.

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- [] Friend of Esperanto\$7.50
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