

VI INTERNATIONAL ROMA SEMINAR: REFLECTION AND MEMORY OF SAMUDARIPEN

Conclusions and recommendations

In three intensive days of Seminar, we could not only remember and bring back memories of one of the most dramatic historical episodes for Roma people, but also we could reflect on the challenges that we still have to face as a community.

Peter has relived with us some of his most tragic life experiences. He has shared his personal memories, his personal pain. He has personified the suffering of Roma people and, through his words, we have come to understand the scope of this underestimated tragedy, that has been forgotten by History, and which is still, in an indirect and subtle way, a daily reality for a lot of Roma people.

The fact of remembering this historical events, is not only an exercise of collective reflection. It is, first and foremost, a way of maintaining our identity alive.

Oblivium has been the mechanism used for sidelining Roma people, denying their history and underestimating their collective identity.

Roma genocide should not only be described in terms of quantity or numeric value. It cannot be only understood according to the number of victims. In other words, it is necessary to underline the quality aspect of the Samudaripen, and to overemphasize the magnitude of the suffering caused by our people being considered, as Marcel Courthiade explained, a mere “freight wagon” and our relatives, “a surplus of elimination”.

Thanks to Aldo Rivera and Iovanca Gaspar, we could understand why all this suffering caused by Samudaripen is still present in our daily life; why and how it is transmitted from generation to generation as a traumatic experience and frustration; how the horror started to become part of the victims and how it was extended to their family and social network.

The refusal of Roma identity is still a tangible reality in the XXI century, but Roma people is known for their capacity to overcome the pain and reinvent themselves, for their capacity to recover through music, art and community. And, ultimately, for their capacity to stay alive.

We should be proud of that, and we should also be proud to be part of a community that is an example of integration and coexistence, because we have never subjugated other people.

Thanks to Violeta, Sandra, Nazzareno, Ana Dalila...we have remembered that Samudaripen was not only a matter of Germany, because many other countries played an active role in order to achieve our extermination. And it is only now when some of those countries begin to apologize for what they did.

Roma people have been socially presented throughout History in a pejorative way, being subjected to cultural denial and to rejection of their identity. When we ask authorities why no actions have been taken to defend actively Roma people, the only answer is silence. We cannot accept that silence anymore. We have to reclaim the incorporation of our History,

genocide and Samudaripen, to be part of the curriculum of schools, secondary schools and universities.

Authorities should be conscious of the mistake that has been made, they should also apologize once and for all, and they should ensure that atrocities like this one, never happen again. But the truth is that anti-Gypsyism is still alive, in a modern way. Discrimination remains and, in many places, gypsy people are still treated in an inhumane manner. Intolerance is growing.

We need to be able to think as a community, as a people. It is necessary to reflect on what we can do in order to prevent this situation and to give talks about Samudaripen in schools and universities where still nobody knows what it was and what it meant. Forgetting Samudaripen is dangerous because we could remain indifferent and vulnerable to the injustices. Remembering the past, passing it on to future generations and increasing the visibility of this problem among people, will allow us to prevent the recurrence of horror.

It is our duty to rebuild our shared History and to provide it with clear concepts, easily comprehensible and that represent our reality as a community.

What is more, we have to overcome victimization and go further, emphasizing examples of gypsies that played and play a role as political actors who can change realities. In addition, it is important to make our people more aware of their real capacity to have an effect on History.

We are a peaceful and diverse community. We are an example to be followed. We have never subjected anyone. We have taught a lesson in humanity to the history. So, it is needed that we play an active role to transform our societies.

However, in order to change other's perception, we need to meld our own perception and to be really proud of what we are. Reclaiming every life that was taken is impossible, but bringing back memories is possible.

WHAT CAN AND SHOULD WE DO?

We have to remember the past and make it visible. What is more, we have to claim a compensation for damage. Memory is the tool that allows us to prevent anti-Gypsyism. Something similar to Samudaripen is not accepted to happen again and we have to prevent it actively.

We must also ensure the knowledge transference to young Gypsies and non-Gypsies, involve civil society in order to remember the past and fight against discrimination and hate crime.

Moreover, we need to join our forces and promote the development of associations of Rroma people. We have to build networks to exchange knowledge, so that we can act together in order to defend ourselves against discrimination and injustice. We must organise ourselves to ensure our right as people, as community.

We must work together to provide tools and answers to the needs of the community, to offer alternatives to our young people, and above all, to implement effective strategies to combat the discrimination suffered.

In conclusion, we hope that all of those reflections become a collaborative effort made by Roma associations, public authorities, and society as a whole, in order to move forward together towards a truly inclusive and tolerant society.