



International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance

2 August, 2015. IHRA Chair Szabolcs Takács at the remembrance day for the genocide of the Roma, at the Roma Historical, Cultural, Educational and Holocaust Centre of Csepel.

Allow me to greet you as Chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA).

IHRA can be considered special for two reasons: on the one hand it is the only intergovernmental organization that exclusively deals with Holocaust education, remembrance and research. On the other hand, it works in close cooperation with not only government officials, but also civil and academic bodies. As incumbent chairman of the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA), I represent this intergovernmental organization, which was created with the aim to prevent the re-emergence of the causes of genocide - through education, remembrance and research - so that it never occurs again.

The "protagonist" of the drama of stupidity and evil is racism, the origin of the Nazi destruction itself. The dilemma of the Aryan gypsies even in theory would have been one of the astonishing and absurd intellectual and moral perversions of the Nazis, but in practice it was one of history's greatest horrors: persecution and destruction of millions of people.

In all the various occupied European countries, local Roma were persecuted in different ways and to different degrees. It is estimated that during the Holocaust 20-30 percent of the two million European gypsies were murdered, almost half of the Roma population of the territories occupied by the Germans. There is no excuse for what happened in Hungary, in Europe, to our Roma compatriots, there is no excuse for the perpetrators of sins.

Commemoration and confrontation are compulsory for all of us. Remembrance is not just the opposite of oblivion. Remembrance is not only a duty towards the past, but a commitment to the future as well. That is, remembrance is not only the awareness of „do not forget”, but also a recognition that there is always hope for reconstruction, and even hope for rebirth in the sense of community. In case of the Hungarian government, this obligation arises from an internal conviction, which is reflected both in words and in deeds, both at home and on the international scene.

Pharrajimos had long been unfairly faded from our shared memory. Today, we remember, moreover: we remind. In the framework of IHRA, now globally, more consciously and in a more specific way, together with those who are survivors of persecution and their descendants.

The priority of the Hungarian IHRA Chairmanship is the promotion of the research, education and commemoration of the genocide of the Roma and the issue of the present situation of the Roma in Europe. During the Hungarian Chairmanship, we organize a conference on the subject at the beginning of March 2016, which is going to deal with not only the past but also with the present, since the full integration and inclusion of Roma is relevant for all Hungarians throughout several generations. Yes, all Hungarians, since the local Roma communities beyond our borders are both linguistically and culturally part of the transborder Hungarian community, a minority within the minority.

This is the keyword. Roma communities in Hungary, in our region and in all Europe have been providing inexhaustible resources for centuries. The creative power of Roma in work and in several areas of art is well-known and captivating and what a pity it is that it is still seen as a curiosity, even though it is much more than that: the manifestation of Roma spiritual creation in buildings, objects, artistic achievements and yes, in the hard work of everyday life. If left to unfold, the Roma community creates wonders in itself and in its environment, because they form dedicated, cohesive and amazingly creative groups. They were forced to, so they learned to constantly re-start, to live and survive overcoming enormous obstacles, to carry on and adapt, to keep and move on, according to the needs and opportunities. These are the additional keywords. Necessity is obvious. Roma people and communities must be helped in their integration, if you will, in their advancement.

It is no exaggeration to say that the outstanding achievement of the Roma Civil Bloc, the creation of this unique centre has opened possibilities, giving a chance for generations. For they can show strength, the strength, talent and determination of their people, to avoid the inheritance of past horrors and present difficulties. But rather what provides advancement for all of us. This exhibition presents Roma people, but is really about humanity: all of us. And about the way that awaits us in the outer and inner world, to advance, doing what our homeland requires. Our homeland.

Who could deny the objective obstacles looming in front of us? We must all gather strength and determination, maybe even for decades, so that one day we can say: the victims of the *Pharrajimos* rest finally in peace and respect, because their descendants are not only granted the very survival but fair, equal opportunities and rights of a free life. The poet Károly Bari was among the first to say openly at the zenith of the previous regime that “freedom in Hungary exists only on paper and in

words". He became one of the greatest Hungarian Roma poets, painters and ethnographers as one of the first, undeservedly hardly mentioned hero of the resistance against the Kádár dictatorship and thank God he is just one of the many famous and noble artists, who are recognized around the world as Hungarian Roma.

Let's remember the victims of the *Pharrajimos* today, not forgetting for a moment what the present and future holds for us: revival.