
Aromanians

REPORT[\(1\)](#)

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Summary

The Assembly draws attention to the critical situation of the Aromanian language and culture. These have been present in the Balkans for over 2000 years, but face today a serious risk of extinction.

To prevent such a cultural loss for Europe as a whole, the Assembly would encourage the Balkan states, where the Aromanians live, to support their language in the fields of education, religion and the media. In particular the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages should be implemented. Other member states and the Council for Cultural Co-operation are also called upon for assistance.

I. Draft recommendation on the Aromanian culture and language

1. The Assembly is concerned about the critical situation of the Aromanian culture and language, which have existed for over two thousand years in the Balkan peninsula.

2. Whereas there were over 500 000 Aromanian speakers at the beginning of the twentieth century, there are now only about half that number, dispersed through Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Serbia, which are their home countries, as well as Romania, Germany, the United States of America and Australia. Most of them are elderly. Aromanian, as a minority language, is under threat.

3. The scale of the problem has become evident since the extension of cultural co-operation to the Balkans, the home of Aromanian.

4. The Aromanian language and culture are facing a similar fate to that of many European cultures which are becoming or have become extinct. However, the acceptance of a pluralist system of cultural values is a prerequisite for stability in Europe, and particularly in the Balkans.

5. The Aromanians make no political demands, but merely want assistance in safeguarding their language and culture, which seem doomed to extinction unless the European institutions, and the Council of Europe in particular, come to their aid.

6. The Assembly recalls the texts which it has adopted on related matters, notably Recommendation 928 (1981) on the educational and cultural problems of minority languages and dialects in Europe, Recommendation 1283 (1996) on history and the learning of history in Europe, and Recommendation 1291 (1996) on Yiddish culture.

7. The latter text recommended setting up, under the auspices of the Council of Europe, a "laboratory for dispersed ethnic minorities" with a mandate, *inter alia*, to promote the survival of minority cultures or their memory, carry out surveys of persons still speaking minority languages, record, collect and preserve their monuments and evidence of their language and folklore, publish basic documents and promote legislation to protect minority cultures against discrimination or annihilation.

8. The Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

i. encourage Balkan states which comprise Aromanian communities to sign, ratify and implement the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages and invite them to support the Aromanians, particularly in the following fields:

- a. education in their mother tongue,
- b. religious services in Aromanian in their churches,
- c. newspapers, magazines and radio and television programmes in Aromanian,
- d. support for their cultural associations;

ii. invite the other member states to support the Aromanian language, for instance by creating university professorships in the subject and disseminating the most interesting products of Aromanian culture throughout Europe by means of translations, anthologies, courses, exhibitions and theatrical productions;

iii. introduce fellowships for artists and writers from Aromanian minority groups throughout the Balkans, so that they can engage in appropriate creative work in the fields of Aromanian language and culture;

iv. request the Council for Cultural Co-operation to ensure co-ordination of the activities of Aromanian academic centres throughout Europe;

v. invite the education ministers of member states to include the history of Aromanian in European history books;

vi. seek to establish co-operation and partnership with organisations, foundations and other interested bodies in the private sector with a view to implementing these recommendations;

vii. take account of Aromanian culture in its follow-up to Recommendation 1291 (1996), particularly where the "laboratory for dispersed ethnic minorities" is concerned.

II. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Lluís Maria de PUIG

Foreword

The aim of this report is to draw the Assembly's attention to the impending threats to a people which, although little known, is an integral part of the patchwork of European cultures. This people, on whose origins there is some disagreement among specialists, has been living in the Balkans for two thousand years. It has never had an independent state and has often been a minority in its states of residence. Throughout its history it has apparently maintained good neighbourly relations with the peoples alongside which it has lived and is still living. Despite a certain tendency to integrate (it has almost completely merged with the host population in the north-western Balkans), this people has managed to remain linguistically and culturally homogeneous. However, it does not constitute a "community" in the sense of an organised group, and it is only since the political upheavals of the last few years in virtually all the countries inhabited by Aromanians that local, regional and national cultural associations have emerged and a number of international contacts developed.

The Aromanians are a very exceptional, indeed unique historical, linguistic and cultural phenomenon. And yet this highly original culture is at risk and the Aromanian language is doomed to extinction unless the European institutions, especially the Council of Europe, come to its aid. In fact, it would be unthinkable to remain inert and watch such a rich language and culture disappear. In contrast to other minority groups, the Aromanians make no political demands; all they want is assistance in protecting their language and culture, which form part of the European cultural heritage.

Introduction

In May 1994, Mr Ferrarini and others, including myself, presented a motion for an order on the Aromanian community. The Bureau of the Assembly referred this motion to the Committee on Culture and Education for a report and to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and the Committee on Relations with European Non-Member Countries for an opinion.

As soon as I was appointed rapporteur, I began to collect documentation on the matter and made contact with several representatives of the Aromanian communities in Europe and the United States of America. I made plans on several occasions to visit eastern Europe in order to meet Aromanians in their ancestral villages, and finally visited Veria in May 1996 to meet members of the Vlach Association. In September I briefly attended

the Colloquy on Aromanian Language and Culture at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau.

In September 1995 I had sent a questionnaire on the status and cultural rights of Aromanians to the competent authorities in Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Romania, through the intermediary of their respective parliamentary delegations. I wanted to ascertain how the Aromanians are seen by the authorities of their countries of residence. However, only "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Romania replied. The same questionnaire was sent to the Union for the Aromanian Language and Culture (Freiburg) for distribution to the various Aromanian associations. I received ten replies from both associations and individuals on the situation of Aromanians in Albania, Greece, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Romania. Professor Max Peyfus of the Viennese Institute for Eastern and Southern European Studies and Professor Hans-Martin Gauger, specialist in Romance languages at Freiburg University, whom I would like to thank, sent us their comments on the successive versions of the preliminary draft report. I would also like to thank my Greek colleague Mr Aristotelis Pavlidis for all the information which he has given me and which I have naturally taken into account.

This report is based on the replies to the questionnaire, the material supplied by various Aromanian associations, the information supplied by the permanent delegations to the Council of Europe of Bulgaria, Greece, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Romania and consultation of an extensive bibliography on the Aromanians, their history, language and culture, as well as a number of more general works on the history and languages of the Balkans. I will devote the first section to a brief historical overview, and then examine the current situation and the problems encountered by the Aromanian authorities in the various countries in which they have been living for two thousand years.

Origins and history of the Aromanian people

The Macedo-Romanians and Vlachs, who are sometimes called Mavro-Vlachs, Kutzovlachs or Tsintsars and who call themselves Aromanians, are related to the Romanians living on the left bank of the Danube. Their language, Macedo-Romanian, belongs to the Romanian branch of the Romance languages, as do Daco-Romanian (spoken in Romania), Megleno-Romanian (still spoken in a number of villages in the Gevgelija area on the border between "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Greece) and Istro-Romanian (now virtually extinct). The earliest Aromanian text was found in Albania and dates from 1731, and therefore the documented history of the Aromanians begins only in the eighteenth century, even though there are several earlier historical references to the "Vlachs", a word which stems from the general name given by the earliest Slavs to peoples speaking Latin (or a Latinised language).

Opinions diverge on the origins of the Vlachs. It is, however, likely that they originated in the Roman colonisation of the Balkans, which began in the third century B.C. According to some historians the Aromanians are the descendants of Latinised Illyrian

peoples and Roman legionaries who had settled in the Balkans following the conquest of Macedonia by Paulus-Emilius in 168 B.C. On the other hand, the Greeks consider them to be Latinised Greeks,⁽²⁾ the Bulgarians say that they descend from the Thracians, while the Romanians identify their origins in a branch of Romanised Dacians. Comparative linguistic studies show that Aromanian has a similar structure to Albanian, the only surviving Illyrian language, which lends some credence to the first hypothesis.⁽³⁾ The fact that the Roman colonisation of Macedonia began earlier and lasted longer than that of Dacia would suggest that the Aromanians preceded the Romanians in Balkan history.

During the Roman occupation the Vlach language was intensively influenced by Latin. In the early Middle Ages, during the great Slav invasions of the Balkans, the Aromanian populations were dispersed, the only survivors being those who fled to the mountains to preserve their language and culture.

The Aromanians make their first appearance in history in the tenth century, when they were mostly spread over the mountain areas of the Balkan peninsula, from Istria to Greece and from the Adriatic to the Black Sea, though they broke down into two major groups: one along Mount Haemus and the other in northern Greece, Thessaly and southern Macedonia, but especially in the Pindus massif (see appendix). According to their contemporaries, the Vlachs' main activity was pasturage, but they also engaged in trade, which explains their presence throughout the Balkans.

Benjamin of Tudela, a Spanish Jew who travelled through south-eastern Europe and the Middle East between 1159 and 1173, alludes to the Vlachs in *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*. He claimed that they enjoyed some measure of independence on their Valachian mountain tops.⁽⁴⁾ Historians, notably in Bulgaria, agree that the Vlach mountain-dwellers played a major role in the insurrection led by the brothers Theodore-Peter and John-Arsenius (probably of Bulgaro-Cuman origin) against Byzantium in 1186; this uprising led to the creation of the so-called "Second Kingdom of Bulgaria".⁽⁵⁾

The Ottoman conquest in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries scarcely changed the Aromanians' situation, as they enjoyed some degree of religious and cultural autonomy within the Orthodox Christian *millet*.⁽⁶⁾ According to Pouqueville, Napoleon Bonaparte's Consul to Ali Pasha of Janina, the ruler of Epirus, the Vlachs enjoyed a special status and only paid a modest tribute to the Grand Sultan's mother. Other historians confirm that the Vlachs did indeed enjoy this privileged position. For instance, N. Malcolm points out that they were formally exempted from the law prohibiting non-Muslims from carrying weapons.⁽⁷⁾

The Ottomans realised that the Vlachs' mobility and strong military tradition could be of use to them; they allowed them to maintain a national militia, whose members were called *armatoles* and their leaders *capitani*. By means of special fiscal measures and permission to pillage enemy territory, this militia was used to guard the border between the Ottoman and Hapsburg Empires. It is interesting to note that the Hapsburgs had the same idea and used the Vlachs who had been driven north by the advancing Ottomans against their brethren south of the border.

The Aromanians' Orthodox religion was one of the factors which assigned them a major role in the various wars and revolutions that culminated in the creation of the states which they now inhabit. The Greek patriotic association "Hetaeria" launched an uprising in 1821, and, after intervention by Russia, Britain and France, this led to the creation of the Greek state in 1830 and its independence in 1835.

Many illustrious names of Aromanian origin are to be found among the protagonists of the revolution and the outstanding figures in Greek culture and political life. Three examples are Baron George Sina, Marshal Constantin Smolensky, Patriarch Athenagoras and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Averoff. This is explained by the fact that many Aromanians were won over to Hellenic culture under the influence of the Greek school and church, because at the time the only nationality in Turkey entitled to maintain national schools, churches and cultural institutions were the Greeks. Taking advantage of the privileges granted to the Christians by the earliest Sultans, the Patriarchs of Constantinople _ all of whom were of Greek origin _ had become the ecclesiastical and civil leaders of all the Orthodox populations of the Empire. In fact, the Turks referred to all these peoples by the collective name of *Rum*, designating Christians (of the Eastern Roman Empire).

After independence, many Balkan countries adopted a policy of setting up national schools and granting independence to their churches. This trend was a token of their national emancipation and marked the development of the Romanian, Bulgarian, Greek and Serb societies during the second half of the nineteenth century.

The Macedo-Romanians experienced several movements of national reawakening from the eighteenth century onwards. This trend was centred in Moscopolis, the famous cultural centre of the Albanian Aromanians (now called Voskopoje). This liberation movement resumed in 1862 with the setting up of the first Macedo-Romanian school in Macedonia. At the same time, the Aromanian colony in Bucharest founded the Macedo-Romanian Intellectual Cultural Society, which worked to strengthen the movement among the other Aromanian communities in the Balkans.

Around this time Romania began to take a greater interest in the Aromanians' cause. Furthermore, the Turkish authorities were taking steps to promote the Aromanian national cultural movement. An order issued by the Vizier in 1878 gave Vlachs the right to be taught in their own language and afforded assistance and protection to their teachers. In 1888 the Macedo-Romanians obtained an imperial firman granting them the right to set up national churches. In 1908 Aromanian members were admitted to the Turkish Parliament.

The Berlin Treaty of 1878 also recognised the existence of the Macedo-Romanians as a separate nation, and placed them on the same level as the other nationalities in the Ottoman Empire. Under this treaty Thessaly and part of Epirus were annexed to Greece; the new borders thus split the Aromanian population of the Pindus in two. The Aromanians protested to the representatives of the great powers against this division, but in vain.

In the twentieth century, the regions inhabited by the Macedo-Romanians were again divided up among the various states in the region. Following the Balkan wars and the subsequent conflicts, sizeable groups of Aromanians were spread out around Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Turkey and Albania.

After the re-drawing of the borders between Bulgaria, Greece and Yugoslavia under the Bucharest Peace Treaty of 1913, the Aromanians proposed incorporating their main groups _ in the Pindus mountains and the regions between Gramos and Bitola _ into the future state of Albania in the form of an autonomous province. Greece put forward the alternative of absorbing the Pindus region into their own territory, undertaking to safeguard its inhabitants' specific national identity. This proposal was accepted, but it did not settle the Macedo-Romanian question. The fact that the Macedo-Romanians were not recognised as a minority at the time prepared the ground for future problems and conflicts. In 1918, Macedo-Romanian schools in Serbia were closed. During the 1920s the same fate befell many schools in Greece, and in 1938 all the Macedo-Romanian schools in Albania were closed. Finally, the last remaining Aromanian schools in Greece were shut down between 1945 and 1948.

Between the two world wars, Romania negotiated the setting up of Romanian-language schools with the other countries hosting Aromanian populations. However, this policy, which was intended as positive support for the Aromanians, had two negative effects: firstly, the Aromanians began to suspect Romania of attempting to assimilate them, and secondly, it also prompted suspicion on the part of the Aromanians' countries of residence, which began to regard them as Romanians (ie foreigners) rather than Aromanians (and therefore nationals).

The current position of the Aromanian community

It is virtually impossible to ascertain the exact number of Aromanians currently living in the Balkan countries. Some states exclude them from censuses and the official figures on them in other countries are disputed. At the same time, there are sizeable communities in Romania, Germany, France, the United States of America and Australia.

The Union for the Aromanian Culture and Language and the Association of French Aromanians estimate that some 1 500 000 Aromanians are currently citizens of various states throughout the Balkans: Albania, Bulgaria, Greece and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". Nevertheless, this is most likely an overestimation.

During the Peace Conference in Versailles after the first world war, the Macedo-Romanian delegation, with which most of the participants had agreed to hold talks, issued a communiqué presenting estimates of the various Aromanian populations: the Pindus region (which wanted complete independence): 130 000 inhabitants; Bitola (Monastir): 83 145; Musakia-Corytza: 77 814; Saloniki: 103 877; and Thessaly: 81 520 inhabitants (total population: some 500 000).

Professor Peyfus of the University of Vienna estimates the number of Aromanians who use their mother tongue at 250 000 (in 1996). Greece apparently has the largest numbers of such persons, followed by Romanian, Albania, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and, lastly, Bulgaria.

The situation of the Aromanian community varies from country to country. It should be stressed that the Aromanians are full Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Macedonian, Yugoslav or Romanian citizens. They are fluent in the various languages spoken in their countries and are integrated into their national societies. I therefore think it would be ludicrous to consider them as any kind of threat to their countries, which, on the contrary, they enrich culturally.

The Aromanians limit their demands to recognition of their cultural rights, particularly the right to learn and use their language. They listed these rights in the resolution which they adopted at the international conferences held in Mannheim University (September 1985) and Freiburg University (September 1988 and July 1993), and at the six regional conferences held in the United States of America. These rights are also set out in an appeal addressed to the Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Balkan States, which took place in Belgrade in February 1988. National conferences have also been held in Albania and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

I will now summarise the situation of the Aromanians in their five countries of origin, that is to say Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, "the former Yugoslav Republic of

Macedonia" and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), as well as in Romania, since this country has special links with the Aromanians.

Albania

The Association of French Aromanians estimates that 15% of the Albanian population is Aromanian. According to the Aromanian Women's Foundation of Albania, the country's population comprises between 150 000 and 200 000 Aromanians. Other estimates vary between 100 000 and 300 000-400 000. In 1995 T.J. Winnifrith wrote that there were "about 50 000 persons who speak the Aromanian language and consider themselves as Aromanians".⁽⁸⁾ There are no official statistics as the Aromanians are usually included in the "Greek Orthodox minority" because of their religion. They are concentrated in the south of the country, especially in Korçë, Lushnjë, Përmet, Gjirokastër, Sarandë, Berat, Durrës, Kavajë and Tiranë.

Albania has not yet finalised the status of the Macedo-Romanians. They are fighting for recognition as a national minority, not a cultural association or an "Albanian folk community, which is how they are considered today".⁽⁹⁾

There is absolutely no Aromanian-language teaching, press, radio or television in Albania. However, the President of the Aromanian Women's Foundation tells us that

there is a church in the town of Korçë which holds religious services in Aromanian. A cultural society called "The Aromanians of Albania" was apparently set up in 1992.

Bulgaria

In Bulgaria, the Aromanian communities have associations in Peshtera, Velingrad, Dupnitsa, Rakitovo and Blagoevgrad, etc. These associations maintain contact with Aromanian communities in other countries. According to the Sofia Aromanian Society, which co-ordinates the activities of the Bulgarian Vlach Association, a distinction must be drawn between the Aromanian Vlachs (2 000 to 3 000, living mainly in the south of the country) and the Romanian Vlachs (20 000 to 30 000, living in the north). Most of the Sofia Aromanians are the descendants of families which emigrated from Macedonia and northern Greece between 1850 and 1914.

The headquarters of the Sofia Aromanian Society, the Church of the Holy Trinity and the Romanian Cultural Institute were built on lands purchased by the Aromanian community (with the help of the Romanian State) at the end of last century. The Romanian Cultural Institute initiated Balkan, Slav and Bulgarian cultural and historical research. Teaching was mainly in Romanian, though Bulgarian language and literature were part of the compulsory curriculum. Latin, Ancient Greek, French and Russian were also compulsory, while German, Italian and English were optional. The Institute closed down in 1948 "owing to a misunderstanding", in the words of Mr Kurkchiev, President of the Bulgarian Vlach Association.

After the political changes in Bulgaria, the Aromanians requested the reopening of the institute and its school, but have so far had no reply. This is their only demand, as otherwise they maintain good relations with Bulgaria and the Bulgarian authorities.

The Romanian Church of the Holy Trinity has never ceased its activities since the beginning of the century, and a Romanian priest dispatched by the Orthodox Patriarchate of Romania conducts services in Romanian.

Greece

The Greek authorities do not recognise Aromanians as a different ethnic group, considering them rather as "Vlach- (or Latin-) speaking Greeks". The Permanent Representative of Greece with the Council of Europe informs us that the Aromanians "are an integral part of the Greek population and have a purely Greek ethnic awareness. Their customs are completely Greek, they speak and write the national language without difficulty, they have never lost the feeling of ethnic belonging to Greece, have never identified with any extraneous element, and have never aspired to identification as a separate national entity. Many members of this group are eminent representatives of the Greek nation in the fields of literature, the arts, sciences and politics".

The Barcelona-based Catalan Socio-linguistic Institute estimates that there are in the region of 200 000 Aromanians in Greece, while the Association of French Aromanians

suggests a figure of between 600 000 and 700 000. Other sources have produced an estimate of as much as 1 million, or even 1,2 million, (only half of whom still speak the language), whereas the official figures, based on the 1951 census, mention 25 000 "Vlach-speaking Greeks". The authorities consider that this number has since "significantly decreased". However, it is difficult to imagine that such a small group could produce so many "eminent representatives of the Greek nation in the fields of literature, the arts, sciences and politics". The Greek Government's official reply to my questionnaire acknowledges that some Greeks "use the Greek language as their main language but, when they meet in small groups in certain isolated communities, use, alongside Greek, an "idiom" (not even a dialect) which comprises words of both Latin and Greek origin". Further on in the same paragraph we read that these same Greeks (the Aromanians) contributed "extremely usefully to the creation of the new Greek state, of which they are one of the most active components in all fields".

The Aromanians are concentrated in the Pindus mountains, Epirus, Thessaly and Macedonia. Many Aromanians fled the fighting during the Greek civil war and more recently, the economic decline in their areas, taking refuge in the major cities (Athens and Thessaloniki). The two Aromanian villages which I visited in the mountains above Veria (Selia de Sus and Kato Vermio, or Selia de Jos) are only inhabited at weekends and during the summer.

In accordance with the Lausanne Peace Treaty (1923), the Greek Constitution guaranteed the rights of the religious minorities settled within the Greek territory. However, since their religion is Greek Orthodox, these guarantees do not apply to them.

Greece accepted Romanian schools within its territory until 1948, when Romania stopped subsidising them. The Aromanian language disappeared from all educational levels until recently, when an Aromanian course was introduced at the Aristotle University in Thessaloniki. Nor is Aromanian used in the judicial and administrative fields or the media, apart from the occasional showing of folk dances and songs on television and radio.

The official Greek reply to the questionnaire also states that "Greece has a Pan-Hellenic Union of Vlach Cultural Associations, which was set up in 1985 and comprises some forty local associations, which conduct a wide range of cultural activities in several different fields".

"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"

According to official statistics (for 1994),⁽¹⁰⁾ there are only 8 467 Vlachs in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", concentrated in the regions of Skopje, Stip, Bitola, Krusevo and Struga, but the Aromanian associations dispute this figure, "which should be 10 or 12 times greater". Some Aromanians also live in Ohrid, Kocani-Vinica, Sveti Nikole, Kumanovo and Gevgelija.

According to a 1994 report by the British Helsinki Human Rights Groups, the figure emerging from the census refers to the number of persons who still use the Aromanian language and who consider themselves first and foremost as Aromanians. However, many Vlach families which have been more or less assimilated linguistically into the majority population are still proud of their origins. Such persons, who consider themselves as Vlachs, had apparently declared themselves to be "Macedonian" in the official context of the census. This being the case, the total number of Aromanians in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" would probably just exceed 100 000,⁽¹¹⁾ a figure akin to the associations' estimates.

The 1991 Constitution officially recognises the Vlachs as a national minority. The Macedonian language must be used in contacts with government departments, but members of minorities can use their mother tongues in court. Under Macedonian law, the choice of name is a personal right. The data printed on identity cards is in the Macedonian language, using the Cyrillic alphabet, but the names of members of national minorities are written in the corresponding languages and alphabets alongside the official language. Despite these provisions the Aromanians complain that they "cannot revert to their Macedo-Romanian names as they were all Slavicised eighty years ago".

Consideration is being given to introducing the Vlach language as an optional primary school subject, and 346 pupils have already expressed interest. In 1995-96, optional one-hour weekly lessons in Aromanian were introduced into state schools.

A Vlach-language newspaper, *Phoenix*, was launched in 1992, but it collapsed after running into financial difficulties. There is a weekly thirty-minute television programme in the Vlach language, and Radio Skopje broadcasts a thirty-minute programme every day. Local radio stations in Stip, Krusevo, Struga and Ohrid also have weekly programmes in the Aromanian language, and Radio Gevgelija broadcasts half-an-hour per week in the Megleno-Romanian language.

The Macedonian Constitution grants Vlachs the same rights as the members of other nationalities, and the Vlach minority has two representatives on the Macedonian Parliament's Council for Inter-Ethnic Relations.

It is on the basis of these rights that the Aromanians are seeking restitution of the buildings formerly used as national schools, such as the Bitola grammar school. They are also demanding more air time for Aromanian on radio and television, as well as State subsidies for their newspaper.

At the same time the Aromanian community of Ohrid is attempting to set up one of the three bishoprics which they were promised in 1913 under the Bucharest Treaty. Activists are hoping that the Bishopric of Ohrid, subservient to the Patriarchate of Bucharest, will provide religious assistance for all Aromanians in their mother tongue.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)

According to the Society of Aromanians in Belgrade, 15 000 inhabitants of Serbia-Montenegro declare themselves to be Aromanian. The majority of these live in Belgrade and the rest mainly in eastern Serbia, that is Vojvodina and Kosovo.

They have no special status and apparently do not want such a status. However, they can use their surnames and forenames in the Aromanian language.

The Belgrade Society of Aromanians publishes a newsletter and organises regular meetings and conferences. The authorities have provided the Society with a meeting room and are paying for its insurance policy. They have also provided financial assistance for publishing a book.

Serbian Aromanians co-operate with other associations abroad and the authorities in no way obstruct their activities. The Society's President and Secretary have also informed us that radio and television programmes are regularly broadcast on the Aromanian community.

According to a representative of the "Yugoslav Vlach and Romanian Movement", there are a 200 000-strong Vlach community in north-eastern Serbia, on the right bank of the Danube between the rivers Morava and Timok, and a 40 000-strong Romanian community in the Banat (Vojvodina region). The Union for the Aromanian Language and Culture informs us that the Timok Vlachs speak Daco-Romanian, which means that they are Romanians rather than Aromanians. Professor Hans-Martin Gauger, specialist in Romance languages at Freiburg University, and Professor Peyfus confirm this view.

Romania

According to the World Union of Aromanian Women (UFAP), the current population of Aromanians who emigrated to Romania from other Balkan countries between the two world wars is between 150 000 and 200 000. The figure is 150 000 according to the President of the Aromanian Youth Foundation "Valahia", 70 000 according to the Romanian parliamentary delegation and the President of the Bucharest-based Macedo-Romanian Cultural Association, and only 28 000 according to the Romanian authorities, who, strangely enough, draw a distinction between Aromanians (21 000) and Macedo-Romanians (7 000).[\(12\)](#)

The Aromanian community is concentrated in south-eastern Romania, particularly Dobrudja (75%), but also in major cities such as Bucharest and Constanta and various other parts of the country.

The Romanian Constitution secures the cultural rights of minorities, but as the Aromanians are related to the Romanians they are considered as a "linguistic and cultural community" rather than as a minority.

None of the educational levels comprises teaching in the Aromanian language, but the parliamentary delegation has pointed out that a structure is currently being set up.

The Romanian Ministry of Cultural Affairs publishes a monthly magazine, *Desteptarea Aromânilor*, but only 25% of the content is in Aromanian. There are Aromanian newspapers and radio programmes, but very few TV programmes. Associations organise a number of cultural and folk events, although they receive no support from the authorities.

Conclusion

The traditional Aromanian lifestyle (including isolation from the other Balkan communities, a very high rate of endogamy, and an emphasis on rural economic activities) was completely disrupted at the beginning of this century by the political and social changes in the Balkans. When their territory was divided up among four different States and the borders were made permanent, the different Aromanian communities found themselves unable to conduct their traditional exchanges. More often than not, their herds and lands were sold, and many Aromanians left their mountainsides to settle in the towns and cities and thus merge with the mass. Compulsory education (in the majority language) and the advent of broadcasting served only to expedite this process.

As a result, the Aromanian language and culture, which had survived for 2 000 years in the Balkan mountains, are today threatened with extinction. The Council of Europe must do its utmost to prevent this risk, by demanding that all states which comprise Aromanian communities respect their cultural rights. This should be facilitated by the fact that all these states (apart from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)) are now full members of our Organisation.

The Aromanians only want official recognition as a national minority and support from the authorities of the states in which they live, particularly in the following fields:

- tongue teaching;
- services in Aromanian in their churches;
- newspapers, magazines and radio and television programmes in Aromanian;
- support for their cultural associations.

This being the case, the Council of Europe should scrutinise the problems of this Balkan people and, in co-operation with their states of residence, help them preserve their language and culture, which are an integral part of the European heritage.

The Balkan states which comprise Aromanian communities should be encouraged to sign, ratify and implement the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (which would not imply automatic recognition of the Aromanians as a national minority). Every state signatory to the charter can choose which of the many measures proposed it wishes to apply to the regional or minority languages spoken within its territory. Even if each state concerned only chose the minimum level of protection for the Aromanian language, this would probably be enough to prevent its extinction.

Other Council of Europe member states should consider the possibility of creating university professorships for the Aromanian language and culture.

The European organisations might consider the possibility of supporting historic research into the Aromanian culture.

In its Recommendation 1291 (1996) on Yiddish culture, the Assembly recommended that the Committee of Ministers set up, under the auspices of the Council of Europe, a "laboratory for dispersed ethnic minorities" with a mandate, *inter alia*:

- a. to promote the survival of minority cultures or their memory;
- b. to carry out surveys of persons still speaking minority languages;
- c. to record, collect and preserve their monuments and evidence of their language and folklore;
- d. to publish basic documents;
- e. to promote legislation to protect minority cultures against discrimination or annihilation.

Such a laboratory or observatory for dispersed ethnic minorities, equipped with modern academic resources, would be the ideal mechanism within the Council of Europe for safeguarding Aromanian language and culture.

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APPENDIX

The spread of Romanian languages in south-east Europe^[13]

Reporting committee: Committee on Culture and Education

Budgetary implications for the Assembly: None.

Reference to committee: Doc. 7091 and Ref. No. 1948 of 28 June 1994.

Draft recommendation: adopted by the committee with one abstention on 17 December 1996.

Members of the committee: Sir Russell Johnston, (Chairman), MM. Berg, de Puig (Vice-Chairmen), Arnason, Asciak, Banks (Alternate: Sir Keith Speed), Bartumeu Cassany, Bauer, Baumel, Berti, Mrs Bielikova, MM. Cem, Corrao, De Decker (Alternate: Staes), Decagny, Diaz de Mera (Alternate: Varela), Domljan, Dovgan, Mrs Fleetwood, MM. Gellért Kis, Mrs Groenver, Baroness Hooper, Mrs Isohookana-Asunmaa, Mrs Katseli, MM. Kirsteins, Kollwelter, Koucky, Kriedner, Kyprianou, Legendre, Leoni, Malachowski, Mrs Maximus, MM. Melnikov, Melo, Mrs Mihaylova, MM. Mocanu, Mocioi, Mrs Naoumova, MM. Paunescu, Pereira Marques, Polydoras, Probst, Prokop, Ragno, Rhinow (Alternate: Mrs Fehr), Roseta, Mrs Schicker, MM. Siwicz, Skolc, Sudarenkov, Szakàl, Tanik, Mrs Terborg, Mr Vangelov, Mrs Veidemann, Mr Verbeek, Mrs Vermot-Mangold (Alternate: Caccia), Mrs Verspaget, MM. Vogt, Walsh, Ms Wärnersson, MM Yaroshynsky (Alternate: Kapustyan), Zingeris.

NB: The names of those who took part in the meeting are in italics.

Secretaries to the committee: MM. Grayson and Ary

[1] by the Committee on Culture and Education

[2] See for example *Vlachs in Greece and the European Union* by A.G. Lazarou.

[3] *Bosnia _ A Short History*, by N. Malcolm.

[4] *Libro de Viages de Benjamin de Tudela*, Volume VIII, p. 63.

[5] *History of the Balkans* by George Castellan.

[6] *Millet* (the Turkish word for nation) status was granted to separate nationalities within the Ottoman Empire.

[7] *Bosnia: A Short History*, p. 66.

[8] T.J. Winnifrith, *Shattered Eagles, Balkan Fragments*, quoted by N. Trifon in *Le Combat* No. 268 of 22 June 1996.

[9] *As pointed out by the Union for the Aromanian Language and Culture in its "Appeal to the Council of Europe and the European Parliament" of 4 October 1994.*

[10] *From the census carried out with the assistance of the Council of Europe.*

[11] *Macedonian Minorities: the Slav Macedonians of Northern Greece and the Treatment of Minorities in the Republic of Macedonia*, a report issued by the British Helsinki Human Rights Group, Oxford, 1994.

[12] *White paper on the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, linguistic or religious minorities in Romania*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 1992.

[13] Th. Capidan, *"MACEDOROÂNII-Etnografie, Istorie, Limbã"*, Bucuresti 1942 (facing page 20)