

THE UNTOUCHABLES

*A Survey of the Roma People
of
Central and Eastern Europe*

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A Report to the Office
of the
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Mark Braham

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THE UNTOUCHABLES

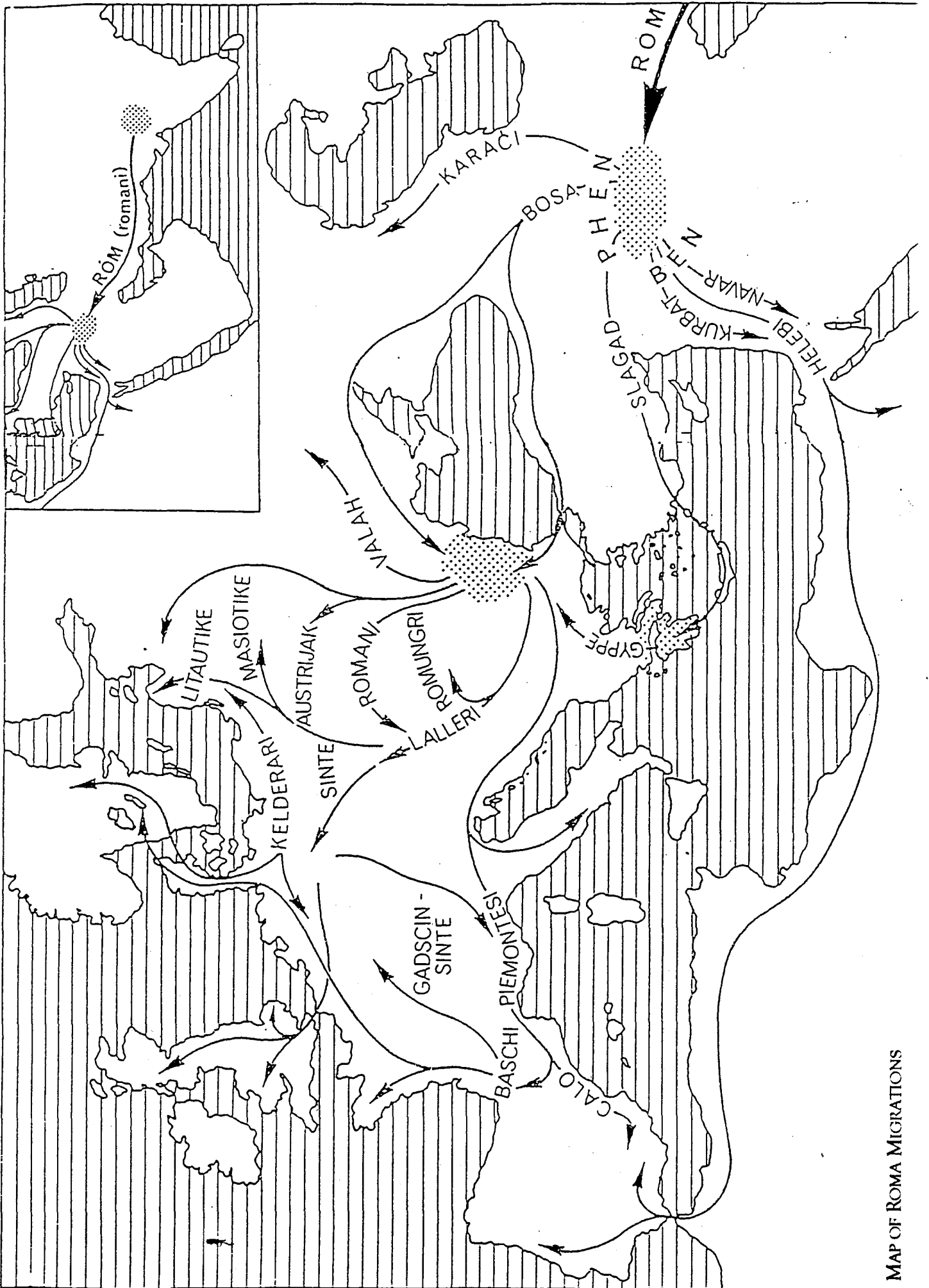
*A Survey of the Roma People
of
Central and Eastern Europe*

A Report to the Office of the
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Mark Braham
March 1993

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MAP OF ROMA MIGRATIONS

THE UNTOUCHABLES

A SURVEY OF THE ROMA PEOPLE OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Mark Braham

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This survey, necessarily compact, attempts to synthesize information from seven weeks of library and field research undertaken during October and November of 1992 and further enquiries since that time. It concerns the background and present condition of the Roma people (Gypsies) of Central and Eastern Europe - specifically in Romania, Hungary, the Czech and Slovak Republics and Poland, and Roma asylum seekers in Germany.

As the allotted time was short, and the reliability of information sometimes questionable, there can be no pretence that this work has been undertaken within the canons of accuracy of the social sciences. I believe, however, that there is sufficient coherence in the information that has been received to justify the overall conclusions and recommendations indicated in the final chapter. In sum:

1. There are perhaps six million Roma people inhabiting Central and Eastern Europe (not including some 550,000 in the CIS), the majority of whom live close to, or well below, the poverty line for their respective countries;
2. They are, for the most part, an 'underclass': undereducated, unskilled, unemployed, in poor health, primitively housed, and subject to both passive and active ethnic prejudice. They are a 'third-world' people, living under 'third-world' conditions in the 'second world'. They are Europe's 'untouchables'. If the Roma were citizens of a third-world nation they would be eligible for international development aid.
3. Should their situation further deteriorate, as it may well do without international assistance, the Roma are increasingly liable to become 'scapegoats' for the growing numbers of non-Roma who, facing the decline of their national economies, look for those upon whom they can vent their frustration and anger. In the short period following the collapse of communism, the Roma have become principal targets of nationalist and neo-fascist sentiments as the psychopathology of 'ethnic cleansing' now spreads its way across Central and Eastern Europe.
4. Central and Eastern European governments, faced with deepening economic and political crises, and conditioned by centuries-old public antipathy towards the Roma, appear to be unable - perhaps even unwilling - to provide the protection and assistance their respective Roma populations require. By default, if not by intention, they may be fomenting increasingly violent confrontations between Roma and non-Roma leading to widespread social conflict. It has been to escape such conflict that a number of Roma people now in the West have fled their countries.
5. Despite the recent appearance of numbers of Roma associations across Central and Eastern Europe, reports suggest that for the most part they are too new, too fragmented, under-financed and, with notable exceptions, too inexperienced to conceive and implement the required strategies for change without international assistance. The Roma are not prepared for the coming century's technological society.

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6. While no widespread Roma interest in a westward migration could be ascertained, further deterioration in their circumstances may well create asylum pressures as ethnic prejudice not only subjects them to physical violence, but further undermines their economic and cultural survival.
7. Although UNHCR's traditional role has been directed towards the protection and assistance of asylum seekers *after* their flight from actual or perceived danger, present circumstances may require this role to be reconsidered. The *1951 Convention* and later *Protocols*, upon which it is based, may prove to be too restrictive to deal with the failure of governments to protect their citizens and other residents from racist attacks and the ethnically prejudicial circumstances that deprive them of the opportunities for gainful employment and appropriate conditions of health, education, shelter and welfare.
8. Based on the observations and conclusions of this survey, a series of recommendations towards improving the effectiveness of UNHCR's protection of and assistance to asylum seekers such as the Roma have been made. They are outlined following this summary, and are fully discussed in Chapter Seven.
9. Within the context of the recommendations, it is suggested that UNHCR could undertake a *preventive role*, through the use of its 'good offices' to intercede with governments, and by initiating and coordinating comprehensive humanitarian inter-agency programmes of asylum mitigation. It is recommended that UNHCR convene a *Round-Table Strategy Meeting* on the problems of European Roma, comprising *effective* representation from appropriate United Nations agencies: Centre for Human Rights, FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNRISD and UNV; the Council of Europe; EEC; CSCE; IFRCS; interior ministries of Western asylum and Central and Eastern states, and representatives of essential Roma organizations, in order to instigate the preparation and implementation of needed action.
10. On the basis of discussions held while undertaking this survey, it is also suggested that consideration be given to initiating three levels of activity:
 - 10.1 An inter-disciplinary *European Commission for Roma Affairs*. The task of the Commissioner would be to oversee the implementation of the international and constitutional provisions to guarantee the Roma their rights as a recognized ethnic minority in each country; to seek to assure that all states concerned honour these rights; to negotiate with national governments concerning such rights, and to assist in the preparation of such additional international and national legislation as may be required.
 - 10.2 A *European Roma Institute* under the direction of the European Commission for Roma Affairs to bring together the expertise already extant in the international community to concentrate on the following five areas of research and development which it will then make available to the National Roma Institutes. Such an Institute should concern itself with the following sectors:
 - A. *Economy, Employment & Regional Development;*
 - B. *Human Development, Education, Science & Culture;*
 - C. *Human Rights, Law, Protection & Jurisprudence;*
 - D. *Community Health & Welfare, Medicine & Sanitation;*
 - E. *Urban & Rural Habitats.*

10.3 A *National Roma Institute* in each European state according to the size of its Roma population, and not restricted to nations of Central and Eastern Europe. The function of each institute would be to undertake research and development in the same five areas designated for the European Roma Institute, upon whose resources it can draw, but in specific application to its own national situation.

M.B.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

(From Chapter Seven)

RECOMMENDATION 1: that UNHCR consider the forms of 'in-country' protection it can instigate for, or offer to, those Roma who are subject to persecution, despite the contrary avowals of their governments, and in the face of their government's failure to protect them. It is recognized that similar protection should be available to other ethnic and cultural minorities.

RECOMMENDATION 2: that UNHCR establish some regular form of observing and reporting on border-crossing procedures and further, organize a more extensive system for border monitoring through the collaboration of such international and national NGOs as Amnesty International, Helsinki Watch, *et cetera*, to assure, in so far as possible, the fair and legitimate treatment of asylum seekers.

RECOMMENDATION 3: that UNHCR request each state to provide asylum seekers information concerning their statutory rights, along with the necessary application forms/questionnaires, legibly printed in a language they can comprehend at each border post, and that border guards be required to make such information and forms available to each person who requests asylum. Thus for asylum seekers from Central and Eastern Europe, information and forms should be provided in Bulgarian, Czech, Hungarian, Slovakian, Romanian, and 'standard' Romany. In the event of illiterate applicants, translation assistance must be made available.

RECOMMENDATION 4: that UNHCR, through its Branch Office in Bonn, seek to engage or widen, the availability of the voluntary services of human rights, and related non-governmental organizations in the Federal Republic of Germany (and in other asylum countries, as applicable) to increase the range of, and information about, legal assistance to asylum seekers.

RECOMMENDATION 5: that UNHCR negotiate with appropriate humanitarian organizations in each country of asylum to maintain a regular watch over asylum centre conditions under the coordination of its nearest Branch, Sub-, or Liaison Office.

RECOMMENDATION 6: that UNHCR, through its Branch Office in Bonn, arrange with appropriate German NGOs for the monitoring of the collection and departure procedures of Roma asylum seekers now in the Federal Republic of Germany, who are to be involuntarily repatriated, to assure the protection of their human rights.

RECOMMENDATION 7: that UNHCR, through its Liaison Office in Bucharest, arrange for Romanian Roma, or human rights organizations to monitor the return of the Roma from Germany, and to report any infractions of their civil rights to the Bucharest Liaison Office, which in turn will inform the Regional Bureau for Europe for its action.

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RECOMMENDATION 8: *that UNHCR directly, on its own behalf, or indirectly, through an appropriate NGO, employ observers at the relevant arrival points in the Romanian republic at appropriate local levels of remuneration.*

RECOMMENDATION 9: *that each UNHCR Branch, Sub- or Liaison Office be staffed with a permanent field information officer whose task is to familiarize him- or herself with the major categories of information relevant to potential refugee movements. The field information officer should be responsible for providing a monthly up-date – weekly, or more frequently, in case of emergencies – on all events liable to lead to a heightening of tensions and refugee situations. It should be the responsibility of the Senior Liaison Officer to be aware of such information, and the task of a regional information officer to coordinate the reports from the Liaison Offices, for the attention of the Regional Bureau for Europe.*

RECOMMENDATION 10: *that UNHCR initiate a 'Round-Table Strategy Meeting', among the principal parties who are, or should be, involved in Central and Eastern European Roma affairs, in order to formulate the needed policies and strategies for addressing the Roma situation. Such a meeting could be held in Geneva because of the availability of relevant international organizations, or in Budapest because of its proximity to Central and Eastern Europe's Roma populations. It should be held as early in 1993 as possible.*

RECOMMENDATION 11: *that UNHCR initiate discussions among Western asylum nations, and particularly with the Federal Republic of Germany, to assist in local and regional development projects within the context of eradicating 'root causes' of asylum-seeking, particularly in areas of high concentrations of impoverished Roma in Central and Eastern European states in the first instance, and consider approaching the international corporate community to contribute to the costs of special programmes, such as the proposed Round-Table Strategy Meeting, and related projects concerned with alleviating the 'root causes' of asylum-seeking.*

For additional options please see Chapter Seven, Section 8.

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PREFACE

1. The Task

In September 1992, I was asked by the Regional Bureau for Europe of UNHCR to undertake a short-term survey of the overall condition of the Roma people of Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in the light of the attack on a hostel housing Roma asylum seekers in Rostock, Germany, that began on 22 August 1992, and the *Convention* signed by the Interior Ministers of the Federal Republic of Germany and Romania for the return of rejected Romanian asylum seekers.^{1,2} The survey itself was undertaken between 1 October and 30 November 1992; this report was prepared over the following months.

Although this report was initially to have covered both Roma and Cinti people, enquiries indicated that the Cinti, rather than being a distinctive group, are a Roma sub-group. As the vast majority of Cinti have long been settled in the Federal Republic of Germany, they do not come within the scope of this survey. As the small (undetermined) number of Cinti who reside in parts of western Poland and the Czech Lands are liable to be subject to similar conditions that affect the Roma in general, overall comments concerning the Roma can be taken to apply to them as well.³

2. The Method

The survey involved four stages:

- a. a *preparation stage* comprising an 'on-line' literature search of international databases by the UNHCR Centre for Documentation on Refugees (CDR);
- b. *library research* undertaken at the British Library, London;
- c. *field surveys* in Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Germany;
- d. *the collation and writing up of data.*

The time available did not permit travel to Bulgaria nor to the former Yugoslavia, both regions having sizeable Roma populations. Interviews, primarily organized through the auspices of local UNHCR offices, were held with representatives of government departments, human rights and Roma organizations, Roma intellectuals, and members of Roma communities. Documents were received from a number of informants.

Interviews were introduced with the declaration that I am not a UNHCR staff member and that UNHCR is not responsible for the questions that I might ask, nor for the comments that I might make in the course of the interview. In almost every case the interviews were tape-recorded, and then only with the permission of the informants. When requested the tape-recorder was turned off either to assure the confidentiality of the information or to protect the informant. Confidentiality has not been broken in this report.

Information covering the following categories was sought, but not always obtained: Historical and Cultural Background; Economy; Education; Ethnic Conflicts; Health and Medicine; Housing; Human Rights; International Assistance; Law and Jurisprudence:

Migration; National Assistance; Politics; Property Rights; Religion; Self-organization, and Welfare.

3. The Information

Except in certain well-documented cases, objective, empirically valid information has been difficult to obtain. Statistics are minimal and are of doubtful accuracy. 'Hearsay evidence', subjective comments and indirect reports and opinions rather than facts comprise the greater part of information that was received. The possibility of verifying the information has been limited. Much of the published literature is biased, sentimental, and conflicting; press reports are often inaccurate and sensationalistic; rumours abound, and only a few systematic studies have been undertaken.⁴

Consequently it is essential that the reader recognize that this is a report of a short *survey*, and not of a detailed and systemic *empirical enquiry*. Such an enquiry is clearly needed, but will require staff, organization, financing, institutional support, and sufficient time for its undertaking.

Despite the limitations of this survey, and the largely impressionistic and circumstantial nature of much of its information that has been obtained, it has an essential internal consistency which I believe enables a reasonably accurate picture to emerge. That picture is one of up to six million or more people across Bulgaria, the Czech and Slovak republics, Hungary, Romania, Poland and former Yugoslavia who, for the most part, are living well below the poverty line (except in Poland); who are socially and politically marginalized; under-educated; largely unemployed; often primitively housed; in poor health; and increasingly subject to ostracism and physical harassment.

The Roma, perhaps more than any other identifiable trans-national group of people, are subject to three main aspects of contemporary Central and Eastern European life that are giving rise to what may become one of the greatest destabilizing factors in Europe since the 1920s and 1930s. These are: increasing economic deprivation, increasing social instability, and the surfacing of long-suppressed ethnic hostilities, now fuelled by the 'skinhead' syndrome that has made its way from Western Europe.

4. The Report

It is not normal for an author to comment on the quality of his own writing: that is usually left for his critics. In this case, I must pre-empt them. This report is by no means definitive. It could not be, given the available time for its preparation. The history and culture of the Roma people, for example, is as complex as it is long, and only superficially touched upon here. The reader should turn to the specialized literature in the field for a fuller understanding of Roma life.

The report is longer than anticipated. Busy readers have my apologies and should turn to the chapters that concern them; the integration and refinement of the data into a more compact work requires more time than has been available. The report lacks the requisite smoothness in phrasing and balance among its chapters, but there is no opportunity for the present to re-write it; it is already overdue.

Finally, a *caveat*. There may well be objections to some of the comments. Whatever the statements are, UNHCR bears no responsibility for them. Some, in quoted text, whether justified or not, are included because in themselves they are facts, representing current attitudes, beliefs and a climate of opinion. Those in unquoted text include my interpretations

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of the information I have received, or are the judgements that information has led me to make.

Mark Braham
St. Cergue, Switzerland

NOTES

1. See Chapters Two and Six, this report.
2. See the *Convention Between Romania's Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Republic of Germany's Ministry of Interior Regarding the Takeover of Romanian and German Citizens*, Bonn and Bucharest, September 1992.
3. From an interview with Vasile Ionescu, Counsellor for Roma Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Bucharest, 20 October 1992:

There are no Cinti in the Eastern countries. The Cinti are a branch of the Rom who have almost lost their language - become 'Germanised'. In France, there is a group very close to the Cinti, the 'Manouche'. The Cinti are a group in transition between the Rom and the 'Gadjo' who are neither Zigane nor Gadjo, but who have a niche between the two. Then there are the Rom who have not lost their language, who have kept their language; then there is the group of Gypsies, Spanish Gypsies (Gitanes/Gitanos) ... another culture, because at the beginning of the 16th century they were prohibited from speaking their language, if they spoke it they had their tongues cut out; and there is the Cinti which is another group. Each group is a sub-group of the Rom ...

4. See, for example, Rachel Tritt's *Helsinki Watch Report*, 'Struggling for Ethnic Identity', New York, Human Rights Watch, 1992, 152p. UNICEF Romania is undertaking a study on Roma families, and Nicolae Gheorghie, a Romanian Roma sociologist is currently studying local area problems.

ONE

EUROPE'S 'UNTOUCHABLES'

Although Romany people throughout the world have no homeland, they have never risen to arms to fight any other nation. Yet, ever since they have appeared on the stage of the world a war has been waged against them. On this account they are a very unique people.

-Béla Osztójkán

1. The Roma

Their problem is as old as Brahmanical Hinduism when India's caste system was laid down and economic and social functions had evolved into a rigid hierarchy of prestige and power. At the bottom of the scale were, and still are, the *haryans*, the 'untouchables', the 'permanently defiled'.¹ Among them were the *Dom* or *Doma*, whose occupations are proscribed by the ancient *Laws of Manu*:

Trading in horses or cows; driving wagons; professional dancing, singing, or playing instruments; training elephants, bulls, horses, or camels; ...gambling and professional fortune-telling... Those who engaged in these or similar vocations were driven into the ranks of the depressed castes or outcastes, and required to dwell in the mountains and woods...²

For reasons as yet unknown, vast numbers of *Doma* migrated westward in a succession of waves between the 7th and 9th centuries AD³. Leaving the Punjab - there are suggestions they may even have originated in Rajahsthan - they crossed into Afghanistan and Iran. Some travelled a northerly route to Asia Minor, others a southerly route through the Mid-East and along the north coast of Africa. Both branches eventually made their way into Southern, Eastern, Central, Western, and Northern Europe, from where they reached North and South America and even Australia (see map on Page ii). During the course of their travels, the *Doma* became known as the *Roma*, and became Europe's 'untouchables' as well.

There are many designations for the Roma: *Gypsy*, *Tsigane*, *Zigeuner*, *Cygan* and *Chicane*, are examples. The English word *gypsy* refers to their migration through 'Little Egypt' as Asia Minor was once called.^{4,5} Although the Roma tend to refer to themselves as *Gypsies*, in one of its local linguistic equivalents, the developing convention of 'Rom' for the singular and 'Roma' for the plural will be used in this report except in the case of textual quotations where the authors' terminology is retained.⁶ 'Romany' signifies not the people but their language, an Indic tongue related to Hindi and Urdu and modified over the centuries in the regions of their migration. Romany has no connection with either Romanian or Romansch, both Latin-based languages, belonging respectively to Romania and to the Swiss Alps.^{7,8}

'The first historical information on the Gypsies in Europe,' wrote Jerzy Ficowski, a Polish ethnologist, 'comes from the mid-11th century and speaks of wanderers from Constantinople...':

The second mention chronologically does not give the name of the people, but from the description given it may be concluded that these were again the Gypsies. This is

2 THE UNTOUCHABLES

the account of the Franciscan Simon Simeonis, who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, of his meeting on Crete in 1322 with an unusual people...

According to contemporary documents, a *Feudem Acinganorum* existed on the island of Corfu in 1386. For the first time we meet the name for the Gypsies which was the prototype for the German 'Zigeuner', Italian 'Zingaro', French 'Tsigane' or Polish 'Cygan', etc. Still in the 14th century the Gypsies were leaving Greece in great hordes, heading northwards...

In 1384 a document was drawn up in which the *Voivode* of Ugrovlahia, Jan Mirca, confirms the grant to the monastery at Vodica at the foot of the Carpathians of forty families referred to in the documents as *Acigani vel Bohemia*. As a contemporary document reveals, in 1416 they were already in Bohemia.

In 1416 a chronicler noted that 'Emaus from Egypt' appeared at Kronstadt [Brasov], in Transylvania together with 220 followers. On 30 August 1417 the Gypsies reached Zurich, Magdeburg and Lubeck; and in 1418 'poor people from Little Egypt' appeared in Strasbourg and Frankfurt. On 1 October 1419 they were seen at Sisteron in Provence, on 1 November at Augsburg; in 1420 'Master Andreas, the Prince of Little Egypt' appeared before the citizens of Deventer in Holland together with his followers and 40 horses.⁹

The Roma's was perhaps the last of the major Indo-European migrations. Unlike the troops of Genghis Khan who arrived in Europe at about the same time the Roma were entering Byzantium, the Roma came more quietly.¹⁰ Unlike other westward migrants - except for the 'Golden Horde' who, not without leaving their progeny behind, withdrew - the Roma established no nation of their own, nor joined with other peoples to establish one in common. They were, and to their peril still are, perennial 'outsiders', 'a people with identity but no nationality, political rights or freedoms, written history, art or science.'¹¹

Where the Roma settled in regions that lacked long-term, national or cultural stability, as in the Balkans and the more oriental regions of the Ottoman Empire, they seem to have lived in relative safety. In the more established societies of Eastern, Central, and Western Europe their history has been marked by persecution, enslavement, deportation and execution. They have fared better under Islam's sense of hospitality towards the stranger than under Christianity's doctrine of 'brotherly love'. The article in *Everyman's Encyclopaedia* tells us:

At first they were well received, if not welcomed, by the chief towns of Europe. Some of them had been given letters of protection from the Emperor Sigismund who declared that they were Christian pilgrims, but they could also provide several kinds of services to European medieval society on both economic (as smiths, tinkers, traders, and craftsmen) and ideological (as entertainers, musicians, fortune-tellers) levels. But it soon became obvious that European society and the gypsies had very different ideas about their mutual relations, and as gypsies saw no harm in practices which contravened European standards of honesty and propriety, their popularity soon waned. European leaders began to see in them a threat to their own society. The subsequent reaction against gypsies, however, seems in retrospect to have been totally out of proportion to the problems their presence posed, and more akin to racial prejudice and persecution. In 1560 an ordinance of the states of Orleans enjoined all Bohemians or Egyptians to quit the kingdom under pain of death, and similar edicts had been and continued to be issued in many European countries.

At Durham, in 1592, five men were hanged 'for being Egyptians' and at Edinburgh, in 1611, four met with the same punishment 'for abiding within the kingdome, they

being Egiptienis.' In Hungary and Germany gypsies were racked and tortured as late as the 18th century. Although they were certainly used as spies by Frederick the Great, more dreadful crimes than treachery and stealing were attributed, mostly unjustly, to them. The charge of cannibalism was first made in 1547.

In Hungary, in 1782, 45 gypsies were hanged, drawn, and quartered on a charge of having eaten the victim of a supposed murder. The case was subsequently inquired into and the charge was proved false, for there had been no murder. Since the beginning of the 17th century gypsies have frequently been charged with kidnapping children, and many lurid tales have been told and written on the subject. In 1872, 47 gypsies were imprisoned in Germany for child-stealing, but the charge was afterwards proved false. Gypsies have frequently been deported from one country to another, as from Scotland to Barbados and other American colonies in 1665 and 1715, and from the Basque country to North Africa in 1802.¹²

The situation has little changed over the centuries. Romanian Roma were bought and sold as slaves until their emancipation in 1856 (see cover). Under the Third Reich:

...between 1937 and 1944, Dr Ritter was generously supported... his project 'Studies on asocial individuals and on the biology of bastards' (Gypsies, Jews) was allocated funds of 15,000 RM in 1938. Dr Ritter and his co-workers pursued genealogical and anthropological investigations on all Gypsies. Some 30,000 individuals had to be registered and investigated.

For this purpose, they travelled to the Gypsy campsites and, when the Gypsies were interned in camps and concentration camps, they followed them there too. The results of this work 'confirmed' the hypothesis which Dr Ritter put forward in 1935 that most of the 30,000 'Gypsies' were not really Gypsies at all, but were rather 'the products of matings with the German criminal asocial subproletariat'.

In a 'progress report' which Dr Ritter prepared for the DFG in January 1940 he wrote: 'Through our work we have been able to establish that more than 90% of so-called native Gypsies in their racial crosses in our homeland have mated predominantly with non-Gypsy nomad Yenish [Jenisch] and with asocial criminal elements and that this has led to the formation of a Yenish-Gypsy *lumpenproletariat* which costs the state enormous sums in welfare costs... Further results of our investigations have allowed us to characterise the Gypsies as being a people of entirely primitive ethnological origins, whose mental backwardness makes them incapable of real social adaptation... The Gypsy question can only be considered solved when the main body of asocial and good-for-nothing Gypsy individuals of mixed blood is collected together in large labour camps and kept working there, and when the further breeding of this population of mixed blood is stopped once and for all. Only then will future generations of the German people be really freed from this burden.'

...the state secretary Pfundtner of the Reich Ministry of the Interior wrote... 'I am still convinced that a definitive solution to the Gypsy problem can only be achieved by making Gypsies and part-Gypsies infertile.'

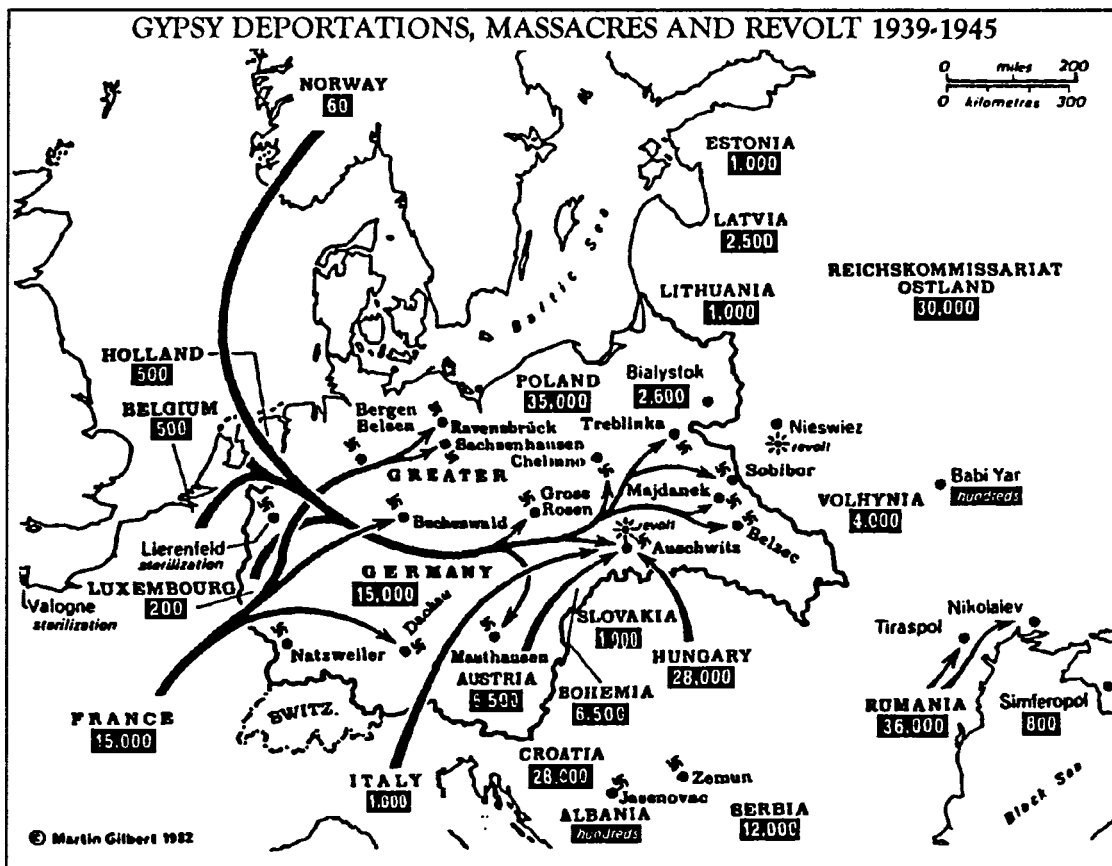
The German Gypsies were arrested at the beginning of the war and deported to Poland. At first they lived partly in camps and partly in relative freedom. The 'racial analysis' which Dr Ritter had made was disconcertingly similar to that which 'race investigators', such as Gunther, had made of the Jews: 'an oriental racial admixture with an asocial European component...'

This is why Heydrich, who had been entrusted with the 'final solution of the Jewish question' on 31 July 1941, shortly after the German invasion of the USSR, also included the Gypsies in his 'final solution.'¹³

1974 ESTIMATE OF THE 'ROMA HOLOCAUST' 1940-1945 ¹⁴			
AUSTRIA	6,500	LATVIA	2,500
BELGIUM	500	LITHUANIA	1,000
CROATIA	28,000	LUXEMBOURG	200
CZECH LANDS (BOHEMIA)	6,500	NETHERLANDS	500
ESTONIA	1,000	POLAND	35,000
FRANCE	15,000	ROMANIA	36,000
GERMANY	15,000	SERBIA	12,000
HUNGARY	28,000	SLOVAKIA	1,000
ITALY	1,000	USSR	30,000
TOTAL EXTERMINATED ROMA POPULATION			219,700

It took almost twenty-five years for the story of what had happened to many of Europe's Roma people during the time of the Nazi conquest to be pieced together. By 1972 D.A. Kendrick and Gratton Puxon had managed to publish accounts that added up to almost 220,000 Roma who died.¹⁵ In contrast to international Jewry, the Roma communities, I was told in Romania, have received no recompense for their members who died in the concentration camps, nor for their gold that was confiscated.¹⁶

Confirming that more evidence has come to light, and that certainly more Roma were killed than was initially believed, Professor J.-P. Liégeois of the *Centre de recherches tsiganes* at the Sorbonne, Paris, suggests that there were some 350-500,000 Roma victims: those who were killed where they were found, or who died in prisons, or in forced-labour camps.¹⁷ 'Ethnic cleansing' - genocide - has a long history. The following map will give an idea of the extent of the wartime situation.



The long shadow of Dr Ritter's 'solution' could still be found in Czechoslovakia years after the Nazi demise. In her recent report for *Helsinki Watch*, Rachel Tritt writes that a significant number of Romany women reported to Helsinki Watch that during the

communist era 'they were sterilised without their informed consent during a caesarean or an abortion...'¹⁸

In Poland, Gypsies were exterminated at Auschwitz, but despite the closeness to their homes of this reminder of man's inhumanity to man, local Poles organized a pogrom against the Roma in 1981, forcing them to leave under threats of death despite their being Polish citizens whose families had been resident in the area for centuries.¹⁹ Another pogrom took place in the city of Mlawa in 1991.

A tally of some anti-Roma events underscores the post-1989 situation:

- 10-11 January 1990, *Romania* - Turu Lung, district of Satu Mare, northwest Romania: thirty-six of the 41 Roma houses were destroyed and set on fire. About 700 local [ethnic] Hungarians and Romanians attacked the Roma quarter.²⁰
- 29 January 1990, *Romania* - Rhegin, district of Mures, central Transylvania: two Roma houses were ransacked and one was set on fire by local Romanian and Hungarian inhabitants.²¹
- 11 February 1990, *Romania* - Lunga, district of Covasna, Transylvania: three houses were destroyed, three were set on fire, four persons died, during an incident between Romanies and Hungarian inhabitants of the village.²²
- September 1990, *Hungary* - Egar and Miskolo, north-eastern Hungary: a group of 80-100 skinheads attacked houses inhabited by Roma. They brutally beat and injured everybody they found in the houses, elderly people, pregnant women, children, without exception, broke windows, smashed furniture...²³
- 9 October 1990, *Romania* - Mihail Kogalniceanu, a rural Commune close to the city of Constantza: twenty-five houses were burned down and five were destroyed when 500-600 local people attacked the Roma quarter...²⁴
- 13 June 1991, *Romania* - Casin, district of Mures, central Transylvania: twenty-six houses were burned down by a crowd of 300 people which attacked the Roma quarter where [ethnic] Hungarians are the majority.²⁵
- 26-27 June 1991, *Poland* - Mlawa, District of Ciechanow: about 100 youths destroyed the houses of the Roma inhabitants... During the attack on the Roma community nine houses were ransacked, six cars were destroyed, two Roma were beaten.²⁶
- 9-10 August 1991, *Czechoslovakia* - in Hradec Kralove, Bohemia: a group of skinheads assaulted a Roma club... Joseph Stoika, 52 years old, was killed.²⁷
- (reported 19 August, 1992) *Poland* - The shack of a Roma couple had been burnt down.²⁸
- 22 August, 1992, *Germany* - Rostock: rioters, with well-organized leaders purportedly from Hamburg, stormed and burned the refugee centre inhabited by Roma asylum seekers, among others.
- (reported 3 September, 1992), *Poland* - the windows of one family's house had been smashed, and they had been confronted with racist leaflets and campaigns against the Roma.²⁹

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- (reported 3 September, 1992), *Poland* - a young Roma couple were attacked. The wife was so badly beaten that she lost her unborn baby.³⁰
- 7 September 1992, *Hungary* - in Kétegyháza polgarai, south-east Hungary: two Roma houses were set on fire and a third destroyed by an estimated 20-30 local Hungarians. The Police arrived, but failed to intervene. A local woman journalist tried to put out the fire but was beaten. One Rom required 36 stitches on his scalp. Although receiving hospital treatment, he was refused a hospital bed.³¹
- 12 September 1992, *Hungary* - in Tare, near Budapest: four local Roma had been picking fallen pears from the grounds of the cooperative farm. Two of them were killed with a shotgun at point-blank range by the cooperative security guard, although they were unarmed and had stopped to talk to him. One of those killed was a woman who had tripped and fallen, and was shot whilst on the ground.³²

In the period January 1990-August 1991 alone, there were forty-four attacks against Roma people in Central and Eastern Europe: twenty-three in the Czech and Slovak Republics; fifteen in Romania, three in Hungary, two in Poland and one in Bulgaria. Overall, twenty Roma were killed.³³

2. The Situation

Authors differ about the size of the world Roma population, the majority of whom live in Central and Eastern Europe. Figures range from Bernard Formoso's 1986 estimate of fifteen million, to Anne-Sophie Tiberghien's six to seven million in 1989.^{34,35} Grattan Puxon, in the 1987 *Minority Rights Group Report No.14*, and Jean-Marc Gonin and Vincent Hugué in an October 1992 article in *L'Express*, indicate between some six and seven million Roma in Europe alone.^{36,37}

My attempts to deal with the ambiguous arithmetic based on governmental, Roma and other sources - none having statistical reliability - result in a more conservative figure of about seven million for the world population and under five million for Central and Eastern Europe. It is doubtful that the numbers are less than shown, they might be twice as high. No one knows because Roma tend not to designate themselves as such on official documents.

Nicolae Gheorghe, a Romanian sociologist and recipient of the French human rights prize, *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, said: 'We cannot oblige people to identify with an identity that will have entirely bad consequences... In 1940 there was a national census here, and in 1942 the Roma were deported'.³⁸ The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe remember too well the mass deportations and the genocide of the Second World War, and they know of too many restrictions on their educational and employment opportunities to be incautious enough to announce themselves if they can avoid doing so.³⁹

The following table has been assembled from available estimates:

ESTIMATED CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPEAN ROMA POPULATION			
<i>ALBANIA</i>	80,000	IRELAND	18,000
AUSTRIA	19,000	ITALY	120,000
BELGIUM	15,000	LATIN AMERICA	300,000
<i>BULGARIA</i>	800,000	NETHERLANDS	40,000
CANADA	25,000	NORWAY	5,000
CIS (EX-USSR)	530,000	<i>POLAND</i>	30,000
<i>CZECH & SLOVAK REPS.</i>	410,000	PORTUGAL	105,000
DENMARK	4,500	<i>ROMANIA</i>	2,000,000
FINLAND	8,000	SPAIN	350,000
FRANCE	280,000	SWEDEN	15,000
GERMANY	100,000	SWITZERLAND	35,000
GREAT BRITAIN	120,000	TURKEY	550,000
GREECE	140,000	USA	200,000
<i>HUNGARY</i>	600,000	<i>YUGOSLAVIA</i>	900,000
WORLD ROMA POPULATION			7,799,500
<i>CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPEAN ROMA POPULATION</i>			4,820,000
<i>BOLD ITALICS TYPE = CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPEAN POPULATIONS (NOT INCLUDING THE CIS)</i>			

In a 1979 article Dr Milena Hübschmannová wrote that: 'the attitude of the dominant society towards Roms was quite analogical to attitudes of the four privileged Indian varnas to doms (chandalas) - the untouchable "pariyas".'⁴⁰ The situation has hardly changed over the centuries, and since 1989 may have even changed for the worse. The disappearance of formerly authoritarian regimes has left people free to express long-felt antipathies towards the Roma in ways hardly possible over the previous thirty or more years.

There are many reasons why the Roma have carried their untouchability with them during the course of their migrations and settling. 'The key that explains the seemingly endless persecution...' wrote Grattan Puxon:

...is the valuation put upon Roma by the 'gadge' [non-Roma]. To the medieval mind, Roma, coming from the Turkish side of Europe or beyond and speaking an unknown tongue, were suspect and inferior. In Holland they were called 'heiden' (heathens) less than a hundred years ago. The Church rejected them because it opposed fortune-telling and the practice of magic, though - ironically - this facet enhanced their popular image...⁴¹

De Vaux de Foletier in *Le Monde des Tsiganes* writes of 'the long-standing mutual antagonism between Roma and non-Roma.' 'If the term "Gypsy" used by the non-Roma is pejorative,' he says, 'so is the Roma word for the non-Roma: Gadjo, signifying "peasant" - or more, a "dumb rustic."⁴²

At the source of the present resurgence of anti-Roma attitudes is a long history of mutual suspicion and mistrust. It is encapsulated in the Roma proverb, quoted by the ethnologist Milena Hübschmannová: '*Rome romeha, gadjo gadjeha, beng bengeha*' ('the Rom with the Rom, the *Gadjo* with the *Gadjos* and the Devil with the Devils'), and represented by what I take to be the Czech side of the story: 'there never was bacon from a wolf; there never will be a human being from a Gypsy.'⁴³

Underlying this is what Milena Hübschmannová calls 'social distance', the self-protectiveness and separateness so common to human groups everywhere - although less evident in modern urban culture - that helps to maintain ethnic and cultural identity at the expense, on the one hand, of what modern jargon calls 'cross-cultural understanding', and on the other hand, of cultural integration. Social distance among the Roma derives from their tendency to maintain the traditional Indian system of crafts, and thus caste-based communities known as *dzati*.

Roms even in European conditions maintained the unique Indian model of social existence: they formed an 'archipelago' of ethnic *dzati* (castes), endogamous groups, characterised by a specific group profession: blacksmith, copper-smith, horse dealers, musicians, etc.⁴⁴

Milena Hübschmannová goes on to say that, 'On the whole, various Rom *dzatis* tended rather to avoid mutual contact.' The result is that social distance lies not just among the *dzatis*, but is even more pronounced between the *dzatis* and the European nations within which the Roma live.⁴⁵ Thus, according to D.P. Singhal:

Whilst they themselves infiltrate everywhere, they allow little penetration from the outside. They consider themselves superior to all other peoples, unequalled in purity, health, and wisdom, and zealously guard the purity of their Romany blood.⁴⁶

Apart from picturesque accounts of care-free, colourfully dressed wandering Roma coming to a cottage door to mend pots and pans, or asking for a palm to be 'crossed with silver' as payment for a fortune to be told, the contemporary European image of the Roma is not a very comforting one.

For the most part Roma are regarded as a largely untrustworthy if not a blatantly criminal group of people, despite the fact that such criminality as is found amongst them - and there is criminality among every human group - is by and large far less violent, and certainly less extensive in its consequences, than found in the 'majority' societies (consider the Robert Maxwell case, for example). But whereas other people - Italians, French, English, Americans - are not identified with their respective *mafiosi* and 'underworld' characters, the Roma as a whole are viewed through the dark glasses of suspicion.

De Vaux de Foletier (among others) writes that the Roma have two moral codes: their own, in which they are (or were) generally respectful of one another, and the second which finds them often working along the margins of non-Roma legality.⁴⁷ 'Along the Danube' writes Bart McDowell, 'there is no denying an outlaw tradition among many Gypsies. Romany words have enriched the argot of the Gorgio underworld.'⁴⁸ The English words 'gyp' and 'chicanery' are derived from Roma practices.

The Roma problem is that they are both *self-* and *socially-*marginalized. Without a major self-engendered transformation of their cultural style and the willingness on the part of the majority society to support and encourage such change, they risk having even a less useful role to play than in the past.

To suggest change is not to deny the right of each ethnic group to its cultural integrity, but to point out the evolutionary fact that such integrity must itself evolve. Cultural evolution - or continual adaptive modification - is an essential requirement of survival and development. While there are clearly those Roma who want to maintain their traditions, there are also those who want a chance to become fully integrated into the life of the nations in which they live.

In a recent (1992) paper, *Preliminary Considerations on the Status of Gypsies in Romania*, by Elena Zamfir, Vasile Burtea and Catalin Zamfir, the authors say:

The traditional occupations of gypsies, which have survived to an important extent, are in themselves a factor leading to marginalization. On the one hand, many of them have the distinctive signs of the ethnic group and are socially stigmatised: on the other hand, most of them offer only minimal earning possibilities, leading to a rather poor standard of living: picking fruits from forests, handicrafts (comb and

broom making, items to be sold at fairs) more or less legal trading of different goods; more or less formal services (sale or purchase of empty bottles, of old cloths, rags), public cleaning, begging, fortune-telling, petty theft.

Apparently those who have changed their way of living most are those who have given up their traditional occupations. They have adopted occupations typical of modern society: workers, farmers, waiters, technicians, intellectuals. At the present moment there is another activity which is attractive to many gypsies: trade, mostly street trade, sometimes exploiting situations of scarcity, often at the boundary of legality or beyond it....⁴⁹

Three terms signify the worsening situation of Central and Eastern European Roma. The first is the Afrikaans *apartheid*, signifying South Africa's habitual racial segregation. It is now a part of the *lingua franca* of Central and Eastern Europe, indicating the region's attitude towards the Roma, who are also spoken of as 'blacks', in contrast to the non-Roma 'whites'.

The second term is the English *skinhead*. Deriving from Britain's incipient violence, and well entrenched in Western European languages, it has found its place in the regional vocabularies of Central and Eastern Europe, signifying the emergence of neo-fascism and the racial hatred that is a particular threat to the Roma.

The third term, emanating from the crumbling morality of Yugoslavia's demise and translated from Serbo-Croat into English is *ethnic cleansing*, signifying the ruthless ejection of people from their homes, and spreading fear among many Roma that they, too, will be forced to flee with nowhere to go, as the psychology of the idea spreads towards Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, the Czech and Slovak Republics, and Poland.

3. Victims and Victimiziers

Thus far this commentary has emphasized the Roma as victims. Victims they are, and there is no place for the prejudice, abuse and violence that has been, is being, and may yet be perpetrated upon them. But, there is another side to the story. The Roma, as any victims, must also understand that their condition is not entirely a function of other people's attitudes and actions. It may also be a consequence of their own lifestyle, i.e., what they have done, or are doing, to generate the reaction against them. It is not just the bullies in the world - the skinheads - of one generation or another who hold the Roma in disdain.⁵⁰

General reaction, although usually more muted than the trumpeting of the 'national front' organizations of various nations, is widespread: Roma are genuinely disliked, even by those who would normally consider themselves people of goodwill. Roma are often banned from shops and restaurants; they face exclusion from employment (often even by their fellow Roma); they are restricted from owning property, or choosing where they wish to live, and they are subject to police harassment, not necessarily because of any misdemeanours, but simply because they are Roma.

While there can be no denying the prejudice to be found in almost every society, few ethnic groups attract as much hostility as the Roma. There are many other groups of ethnic Asian people in European nations: Indians, Pakistanis, the Ugandan Asians (formerly from the Sind) expelled by Idi Amin, Tamils, Malays, Vietnamese, Hmong, Koreans, Chinese and more. Although their lives have not been easy, and finding ac-

ceptability has taken considerable time, by and large their communities have found a place that has evaded the Roma.

It is true, as Katrin Reemtsma of the *Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker*, in Göttingen, Germany, pointed out to me, that many of these ethnic Asian communities are to be found in those 'western democracies' that have seen a marked improvement in their attitudes towards minority and human rights during this century. It is also true that despite Western Europe's neo-fascists, public attitudes towards foreigners are more tolerant than are to be found in Central and Eastern Europe. But the Roma are equally suspected in every country they inhabit, whether they live in Eastern or Western Europe, North or South America or elsewhere, a situation that does not apply to other Asians and particularly to those from the Indian sub-continent, whose heritage the Roma share.

What one senses (for the subject has not been researched), is that while most other ethnic groups, despite their distinctiveness in skin colour, customs, language and dress, seek to establish mutually sustaining relationships with their host society, the Roma do not. Their social distance, attitudes, values and occupations which may at one time have had adaptive value, may now be pushing them into further marginalization.

If they had their own territory in which to live out their distinctive lifestyle apart from the rest of the nations that they inhabit (such as the *Kogi* in Colombia) the story might be different. But they do not. Nor have they a nation of their own to provide them with a positive identity and moral - if not political - support when they are in difficulty, as do Indians, Pakistanis and Turks, or the Jewish people who identify with Israel.

While the former centralized political regimes in Central and Eastern Europe protected the Roma from attack and guaranteed their livelihood, health care, education and housing, it left them without the cultural integrity they need to maintain and develop their lives within the present socio-economic context of the nations they inhabit. They have become a dependent people without anyone to depend upon; refused - as much as they refuse - full participation in their environing societies.

Without major changes on their part, and on the part of the nations they inhabit, they may well be locked into a condition of declining usefulness to themselves and others, one to which many of them may already have become habituated.

NOTES

1. Vekerdi, Jozsef, *Hungarian Studies Review*, Vol. XV, No. 2, 1988, pp.13-26.

The Gypsies' ancestors began leaving Northwest India probably about the seventh century A.D. In ancient Sanscrit sources they bear the name *doma*, or *domba*, (in modern pronunciation, *rhom*, hence their own designation *rom*, or *roma*), and are characterized as robbers, murderers, hangmen and entertainers. These professions were prescribed for them by the rules of the Hindu caste system. Thus they belonged to the so-called 'wandering and criminal tribes' of India and were obliged to lead a parasitic way of life. Among the numerous outcast groups, they occupied the lowest rung on the social scale.

2. Singhal, D. P., *India and World Civilization*, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1972, pp.252 ff.

It is significant that the professions practised by the Gypsies are exactly the ones which were prescribed for the outcaste in caste-ridden Indian society. If the list of curses and occupational prohibitions contained in the 'Manusmriti' (the Laws of Manu) is consulted, it will be seen that the Gypsies have followed precisely those occupations condemned by Manu.

3. Sebkova, H. et al., *Fragments Tsiganes*, Paris, Lierre & Coudrier, 1991, pp.6-7:
- Les Rom ont quitté le continent indien, il y a environ mille ans. D'après leur nom ethnique, ils appartenaient probablement aux différents «djati» (castes) des Doms indiens.
- Les Doms étaient une population primitive, contemporaine de la plus ancienne civilisation indienne de Mohenjodaro et Harappa. Il semble qu'ils aient exercé une certaine influence politique. Néanmoins, au moment où la famine et une situation sociale confuse les ont chassés de leur patrie, leur position d'élite était déjà largement compromise.
4. Singhal, D. P. *op.cit.*, p.252:
- The name 'Zingary', which the Gypsies bore when they first appeared in Germany and which is still in use, is in fact a derivative of the Sanscrit word ('Varna)sankara', meaning children of mixed castes or of adulterous union.
- The Gypsy name for themselves, Rom, is linked with the Dom tribe in India. Dom became Lom in Armenia, and then Rom. These names are in exact phonetic correspondence with the Sanscrit 'domba' and the modern Indian dom, which means 'a man of low caste who gains his living by singing and dancing'.
5. *Everyman's Encyclopaedia*, London, J.M. Dent & Sons, 1978, 6th ed.
- The word 'Gypsy' is a corruption of 'Egyptian' and is found in different forms throughout Europe; Gyptenaer in the Netherlands; Aegypter in Germany (16th century); Gitano in Spain; and Gyphtos in modern Greece. The name no doubt arose from the tale which Gypsies spread on their first appearance in Europe, that, for refusing to apostatise, they had been driven by the Saracens out of 'Little Egypt', by some supposed to be a confusion between Little Armenia and Egypt, and by others identified with Epirus. They are also known as Atzigans or Atzingans, possibly derived from the Athinganoi (not to be touched), a sect formerly inhabiting parts of Asia Minor; thus in Romania Tsigan, in Turkey Tshingian, in Hungary Czigany, in Germany Zigeuner, in Italy Zingari, and in Spain Zinicali. Gypsies have also been known as Faraon and Pharaon-Nephka, again indicating their supposed Egyptian origin, Heydens or Heidens (Heathens), Saracens, Bohemians, and Tatars. They have also been called Greeks, Germans, and Flemings apparently from the country from which they happened to have come last. The Gypsies call themselves Rom, meaning 'man' (feminine romni), which may be derived from romanoi, the name applied to themselves by the Byzantines of the Grecian Empire. From this is derived their name Romanichel in France.
6. See also: *The Romanies in Central and Eastern Europe: Illusions and Reality*, Princeton, (NJ), Project on Ethnic Relations, 1992, p.5: 'This report uses the term Rom to refer to a member of the group, Roma to refer to a plurality of members and to the group as a whole...'
7. Vekerdi, *op.cit.*, p.14:
- Gypsy language is an Indian idiom like Hindi, Bengali, Gujuarati and others. It is split into a number of dialects, or rather, languages. The difference between the individual Gypsy languages is decisive enough to make Gypsies unable to communicate...
- The vocabulary of all Gypsy languages is astonishingly poor: it comprises no more than 1,200-2,000 words, while the smallest pocket dictionary of European languages contains ca. 15,000-20,000 items. Approximately 450-500 of these words are of Indian/Sanskrit origin.
8. Ficowski, Jerzy, *The Gypsies in Poland*, Warsaw, Interpress, 1989, p.9.
- It was not until 1927 that R. L. Turner proved that the phonetics of the Gypsy language had earlier been linked with the central group of Hindi languages, and that the Gypsies had only later migrated towards the north-west where Dardic and Kafir tribes were to be found. It was from there that for unknown reasons they set out into the world and were over the centuries to wander into almost all of its regions.
- Miklosich [F. Miklosich, Polish philologist-MB] not only pointed to the aboriginal abode of the Gypsies in India - a version somewhat later corrected by Turner - but also indicated the routes by which the Gypsies travelled from India right to the North and West of Europe. These conclusions were based on investigation of Gypsy dialects and lexical borrowings made along their way. He showed that almost all the European Gypsies followed a common route from India through Persia, Armenia and Greece, since all Gypsy dialects contained loan words from Persian, Armenian and Greek.

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9. Ficowski, *op.cit.*, p.10.
10. Ficowski, *op.cit.*, p.10: 'The great migration of the Gypsies to Central and Western Europe - an extraordinary invasion of great hordes of unarmed people.'
11. Singhal, *op.cit.* p.234.
12. *Everyman's Encyclopaedia*, *ibid.*
13. Muller-Hill, Benno, *Murderous Science*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988, pp.56 ff.
14. Compiled from Kenrick, D.A. and Puxon, G. *Destins gitans. Des origines à la 'solution finale'*, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1974. Courtesy of *Etudes Tsiganes*, Paris.
15. See this survey, Chapter One, pp.34.
16. Ilie Pipoi, Ministry of Education, Bucharest (21.10.1992).
17. Personal communication.
18. Tritt, Rachel, *Struggling for Ethnic Identity: Czechoslovakia's Endangered Gypsies*, A Helsinki Watch Report, New York, Human Rights Watch, 1992, p.19.
19. Informant's name has been withheld for his own safety. M.B.
20. Gheorghe, Nicolae, *Reported Cases of Hostility, Discrimination and Violence against Roma-Gypsy People in Central and Eastern European Countries*, Bucharest, International Romani Union, 1991, p.3.
21. Gheorghe, Nicolae, 'Concerns and Hopes of Romanies-Gypsies in Relation with the CSCE Process' comments and proposals addressed to the participants in the CSCE *Expert Meeting on Minorities*, Geneva, July, 1991, pp. 5ff.
22. *Op.cit.*
23. Bársony, János, and Daróczy, Agnes, *A Report on the Case of Gypsies in Hungary for the International Helsinki Foundation*, Budapest, typescript, 1990, pp. 4 & 15.
24. Gheorghe, N., *Reported Cases...*, *op.cit.* p.4.
25. *Op.cit.* p.5.
26. *Op.cit.* p.3.
27. *Op.cit.* p.2.
28. *Op.cit.* p.2.
29. Confidential information.
30. Confidential information.
31. See 'Tüz, jöjj velem', in *Politika*, Budapest, September 17, 1992, p.14; also *Magyar Hírlap*, Budapest, 11 October, 1992, and transcription of interviews of 29.10.1992 at AMALIPE, Budapest.
32. AMALIPE (29.10.1992).
33. See Gheorghe, N., *Reported Cases...*, *op.cit.*
34. Formoso, Bernard, *Tsiganes et sédentaires*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1986, p.13: 'Dispersés sur plusieurs continents, dans plus de quarante pays, ils formeraient à l'heure actuelle une population de l'ordre de douze à quinze millions de personnes'.
35. Tiberghien, Anne-Sophie, *Tzigane mon ami*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1989, p.12.
36. Puxon, Grattan, *Roma: Europe's Gypsies*, Minority Rights Group Report, No. 14, London, Minority Rights Group, 1987, rev.ed., p.4.

37. Gonin, Jean-Marc, and Hugué, Vincent, 'Les Tsiganes, parias de l'Europe', in *L'Express*, No.2155, 30 October, 1992, pp.24-26.
38. Nicolae Gheorghe (24.10.1992).
39. Zamfir, E., Burtea, V., and Zamfir, C., Preliminary Considerations on the Status of Gypsies in Romania, Bucharest, 1992, typescript, pp.1 ff.
- Statistical data from the census of January 1992 give a total of 409, 723 Gypsies, as against 227,398, the number recorded in 1977. According to census takers, the figure significantly under-estimates the real number of Gypsies. Many call themselves Romanians or Magyars.
- ...there is a significant tendency for many Gypsies in their relationships with others not to describe themselves as such, but rather to identify themselves with the majority of the people in the particular community. In fact, some of them do not fully perceive themselves as Gypsies, and identify themselves totally with the surrounding people.
- According to estimates of the Gypsy organizations, their total number amounts to 1,500,000, and this does not seem to be an exaggeration... At the present moment, the figure estimates by the Gypsy organizations seems to be close to the real one. As a matter of fact, all estimates by specialists vary between 1 million and one and a half million.
40. Hübschmannová, Milena, 'Bilingualism Among the Slovak Rom', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, Vol. 19, (1979), The Hague, Mouton, 1979, p.36.
41. Puxon, Grattan, *op.cit.* p.4.
42. De Vaux de Foletier, F., *Le Monde des Tsiganes*, Paris, Berger-Levrault, 1983, pp.-190 ff.
- L'antagonisme entre Tsiganes et gadje est réciproque. Les Tsiganes tiennent beaucoup à leur caractère spécifique, et le terme gadjo qu'ils emploient pour les non-Tsiganes a quelque chose de péjoratif; il signifie « paysan », où plus précisément « péquenot ». Pour sa part, le Tsigane est un 'Rom' et sa femme, une 'Rommi'.
43. Hübschmannová, M. *op.cit.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*
46. Singhal, *op.cit.*, p.239.
47. De Vaux de Foletier, F, *op.cit.*, p.198:
- De même, il existe deux morales dans le monde gitan: une à usage interne, généralement très stricte, et une autre à usage externe: il est très grave de se voler entre compatriotes, mais on peut se vanter d'avoir roulé des gadje.
48. McDowell, Bart, *Gypsies: Wanderers of the World*, Washington, D.C., National Geographic Society, 1970, p.98.
49. Zamfir, E., Burtea, V., and Zamfir, C., *op.cit.*, pp.34.
50. It might be useful to refer to a comment made by His Holiness, the Dalai Lama in July, 1985 in an interview for the Geneva-based radio programme, *Freely Speaking (Radio 74)*. Replying to moderator Ginna Lewis' question as to why, given the spiritual nature of Tibet's people, they were overrun by China, the Dalai Lama replied to the effect that this happened as an effect of what the present generation of Tibetans, in this life, or in other lives, on this planet or on other planets, had done in the past: 'Every experience is based on one's past actions... the basic cause of suffering is based on our misdeeds in the past'.
- There will be those who may not appreciate the reference to former, and even to extra-terrestrial lives, but the Tibetan's acceptance of responsibility for having created the conditions for their nation's occupation, with the destruction that was wreaked, and with over a million and a half people killed (*which does not excuse the aggressor*), may be a point for serious consideration.

TWO

NOTES FROM ROMANIA

1. Historical and Cultural Background

The Roma arrived in Romania in the 15th century, and until the middle of the 19th century were bought and sold as slaves. Following the dissolution of slavery in 1856 many migrated further west; others remained where they were; and others again, resumed their formerly nomadic lifestyle. Following the communist take-over after the Second World War, 'nomadism' was prohibited. From about 1965 each Romanian was obliged to have a fixed address, employment, and be registered with the local police. Today, only some 5-6% of the Romanian Roma have returned to a nomadic life, and this is generally restricted to travel between communities during the summer months while also maintaining their own residences.^{1,2}

Officially there are only some 409,720 Roma out of the Romanian population of 22,700,000. According to the Roma organizations, however, there are between 2-2.5 million Roma in Romania, making them the largest minority group. They are followed in population size by the ethnic Hungarians who number some 1,062,000.³

Like any other social group, the Roma are structured vertically in a hierarchy of socio-economic levels, and horizontally in terms of traditional clan groupings such as former nomads and settled groups, and then by occupational groups: coppersmiths, woodworkers, metal workers, musicians, and so on. Living throughout Romania, their highest concentrations are in the south, and in particular, eastern Moldavia, south-eastern Transylvania and Dobroja.⁴

At the top of the Roma social hierarchy are the different village leaders or head-men, who both direct, as well as represent, their particular communities. At a higher level they are the equivalent of clan chieftains, functioning as judge and jury, moderator and administrator of their people's interests. Presently, there is a self-proclaimed Roma King, *Majestatea Sa (His Majesty) Ton Cioabà*, whose business card indicates that he is the *International Roma Regal Representative to the United Nations*. This may well be a questionable claim, but in the eyes of many Roma he may be fulfilling an important function, as a figurehead, giving identity to their common existence.⁵ Mr Cioabà clearly does not have full Roma support, and a cousin has recently announced himself as Roma Emperor.

2. Economy

There is no safe data regarding Roma employment. The Ministry of Labour does not keep records concerning the Roma, most of whom, in any case, do not declare their ethnic origin in order not to prejudice their employment and advancement possibilities.

Under the communist regime, employment was compulsory and all work had to be officially sanctioned. Those who were un- or illegally employed could be charged with

'parasitism' and imprisoned. Without legal employment the Roma had no other way of earning a living.

For the most part they were used to replenish the largely feminine and ageing labour force.⁶ Prior to the 1989 revolution, the majority were employed in agriculture, forestry, building and construction, and food processing. Since 1989 and the collapse of the centralized economy, *compulsory employment*, and *compulsory employing* have disappeared. 'Market forces' now dictate the size of the work-force, and have resulted in mass redundancies. It is assumed that approximately 35-40% of the working age Roma population are unemployed.⁷

Although the Roma have the same constitutional rights to employment as any other Romanian citizens, they are the first to lose their jobs.⁸ In addition most Roma women are unemployed, some because of job losses, the majority because the Roma still maintain the tradition that women should stay at home.

While the majority of those employed are unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers - the Roma are Bucharest's road sweepers - there are also skilled craftsmen, tradesmen and professionals among them. No figures are available on Roma self-employment. Of those employed and self-employed, a small number are regarded as 'living very comfortably'; a slightly larger number as doing 'reasonably well', while over 60% are estimated as living close to, or below the poverty line.⁹

According to Ilie Pipoi, of the Ministry of Education, the new economic situation has created a need for job- and skills-training, with 'special programmes to reorient people to "market principles"'.¹⁰ Despite their educational deficiencies and prejudicial situation, the Roma are not treated by the Romanian government as an ethnic or cultural minority, requiring special attention and, therefore, no specific training programmes are provided for them.¹¹

Roma who have become unemployed because of economic restructuring receive unemployment payments. Should retraining be available, they can apply to Ministry of Labour or the appropriate employment office in their region. Most Roma, however, are generally unaware of their legal rights with regard to employment, unemployment and re-training, and do not know that they can turn to the Ministry of Labour for assistance.¹² Under the previous Minister of Labour an attempt was made to establish a network of officers to deal with Roma unemployment, but under the new Minister, of the twenty-four posts previously requested, only eight have been provided for and filled.¹³

A few Roma organizations have formed apparently successful agricultural cooperatives. One reported example in Constantza raises good cereal crops. Other examples are where Roma have joined together to open small industrial workshops, specializing in manufacturing tools, non-ferrous metal products and steel frames. In another case a Romanian and a Roma have joined together to make bricks which the Ethnic Roma Federation is purchasing in order to rebuild houses and to build a school. These are by no means common occurrences, but are indicative of possibilities.¹⁴

3. Education

Although schooling through the primary level (14 years of age) is compulsory, the government, apparently, has neither the ability, nor the interest, to assure that all Roma children attend and complete primary school. A relatively small number attend, and less complete, secondary school.¹⁵

Poor school attendance at the primary level derives from a number of factors: socio-cultural conflicts with non-Roma children; learning difficulties and disabilities; insufficient interest; lack of parental support; and even inadequate clothing.¹⁶ At the secondary level, the early marriages (between 13 and 15 years of age), typical of Roma society; the pregnancies that often follow soon after, and the necessity for the young husbands to find employment also take their toll on Roma educational development.

Unlike most of Europe's ethnic minorities the Roma do not, in general, attach particular value to education, neither for economic achievement nor for social mobility. Instead, they are liable to see it as culturally disruptive, being the means through which young Roma, confronted by ethnic hostility, attempt to assimilate into the majority society and leave their Roma heritage behind.

Consequently, out of the estimated 2-2.5 million Roma, only some 10,000 may have been to secondary school, far less have completed it, and only a handful have gone to university. Of these, only a few maintain their ethnic identity and try to work within, or for, the Roma community.¹⁷

The actual figures, however, are impossible to estimate. There are no specifically Roma educational statistics because of Roma reluctance to identify themselves on official documents. A Roma mother, for example, when asked to indicate her children's ethnic background on a form, stated that if she was required to do so she would take her children out of school otherwise they would be attacked and their home might be set on fire.¹⁸ One study, restricted to a selected group of Roma families that will include some educational data is being undertaken through the auspices of the Romanian Committee for UNICEF.¹⁹

The lack of enforced school attendance has meant a 'drop-out' rate that is now much higher than under the communist regime. Consequently there is a marked decline in literacy in the Romanian language among young Roma, thereby affecting their future employment possibilities. Previously 93-95% of the Roma were regarded as literate in Romanian (or in Hungarian in regions inhabited by the ethnic Hungarian minority).²⁰ Today 7-8% of the Romanian population is regarded as illiterate, and the majority of these are believed to be Roma.²¹

There are no educational programmes specifically oriented towards Roma children in which they can also study their own language and culture except, apparently, in two urban schools. In contrast, a recent government report was cited that indicates a full range of educational opportunities for Romania's other ethnic minorities, e.g. Hungarian, German, Czech and Slovak, including the right to study in their own languages.²²

Apart from assumed prejudice, a major part of the problem may rest on the fact that as, until recently, Romany was not a written language, has a limited vocabulary, it was not taken seriously by most educational officials. Prior to 1989 no provisions were made to include it in the curriculum or for teachers to learn and teach it. Some courses to prepare young teachers to teach Romany have now been instituted.^{23,24}

The development of Roma education requires a very specific infrastructure that must be mutually developed between the Romany communities and the Romanian government. As needed as this is, it will have to be developed with considerable skill. 'The main problem,' says Ina Bardan, of the Romanian League for the Defense of Human Rights,

...is that everyone says the Gypsies don't want education. It is not true. They do not trust...they do not trust the Romanians to come to educate them. They need a longer

period to see the person to obtain a little bit of confidence that they can learn something. And in the moment you obtain their trust, it can work.²⁵

4. Ethnic Conflicts

Conflicts between the Roma and Romanians, or other ethnic groups - such as the Hungarians - have been increasing since 1989, and are one of the reasons for the recent westward migration of Romanian Roma. Of the more than fifty incidents against Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, registered by the Ethnic Roma Federation since 1989, sixteen had been registered between February 1990 and June 1991.²⁶ This does not take into account those unregistered or that have occurred since that time. The incidents include physical violence and arson attacks on Roma houses, and the expulsion of Roma from their villages.

It is not a one-sided problem. The Roma have triggered off a number of the incidents against them by petty theft and violence, including rape and murder. Yet in contrast to the attacks against them, Roma criminality has usually been that of an action by an individual and not of a group.

For instance, in the town of OGREZENI, a Rom killed a Romanian student, and raped a woman. In retaliation, local Romanians attacked the Roma community, on 16 May 1991, setting fire to fourteen houses over two days, forcing the forty Roma families, comprising some 150 people, to flee. For some months many of them slept on the streets of OGREZENI, before making their way to the outskirts of Bucharest, where they live in dilapidated housing.^{27,28}

In Mihail KOGALNICEANU, twenty-five Roma houses were burned in October 1990. Local villagers wanted to expel all Roma. As Nicolae Gheorghe explained they were told: 'Go to other places.' Asked, 'where to?' the response was: 'We don't care, but just go to another place.'²⁹

Roma have been able to return to two of the four villages where there were ethnic conflicts. Local authorities in the other two villages have backed the population's hostility, and forced the Roma to leave. While the majority of these Roma are among those living in the outskirts of Bucharest, some of them left for Germany. According to Vasile Ionesco, 'the people who left these areas had very well-grounded reasons, as well as economic and political reasons, to emigrate.'^{30,31}

The disappearance of Communist rule in 1989 left the Roma vulnerable to reaction and attack. The post-revolutionary governments have taken little if any initiatives to protect their ethnic minorities as ancient antipathies have surfaced: 'It is a period of transition and each tribe seeks to re-find its identity that was destroyed by the communists', said Vasile Ionesco.³²

In addition to the general public antipathy to the Roma, there is:

- discrimination at work: the Roma are either refused work, obtain the most demeaning, and are the first to be dismissed;
- discrimination in education: a lack of educational support;
- discrimination by the police: resulting in harassment, direct attacks, and inaction in the face of attacks by others...³³



Roma Families Outside Bucharest



Roma Families Outside Bucharest

A Roma asylum seeker, later interviewed in Germany, reported that when he appealed to the Romanian Ministry of Labour against the loss of his job on grounds of ethnic prejudice, he was later picked up by the police and beaten.³⁴

5. Health and Medicine

Medical assistance is scarce for all Romanians. Even when it is available it is not widely used by the Roma who believe that they get far less care than the ethnic Romanians. Roma, therefore, prefer not to send their children to hospital. As there is no form of health education, they do not understand the importance of preventive medicine such as inoculations, or of accepting treatment for many of their illnesses.³⁵

Respiratory and cardiac illness, and tuberculosis in particular, are common among the Roma. Smoking is endemic, even among Roma children. Traditional early marriages result in a high birth rate among Roma women, with family sizes of eight to ten or more children being prevalent.³⁶ The high birth rate has its medical consequences in premature births, low birth weight, and infant mortality, which are far higher among the Roma than among other segments of Romanian society. Longevity is fifteen to twenty years shorter than normal, averaging between fifty and fifty-five years.

6. Housing

Roma housing is largely sub-standard. Tent and pit dwellings are reported in the north.³⁷ The majority of residences comprise poor quality apartments, small houses and shacks, with often eight to ten people living in a room.

7. Human Rights

According to Edwin Rekosh of the International Human Rights Law Group, Roma, in general, lack adequate recognition of their human rights.³⁸ The Romanian government apparently provides the Roma with little, if any, protection from attack, a matter recently recognized by one of the German courts, even if not by the German government.

...the Administrative Court came to the conclusion that ROMA are especially exposed to harassment on the part of ethnic Romanians throughout the country. They are not sufficiently protected by the Romanian authorities against discriminatory measures and attacks, and are therefore forced to live on the fringes of society, unable to provide themselves with their basic needs.³⁹

Local residents and even the police in Roma areas are implicated in the acts of harassment and intimidation. The experience of the Ciurar family, interviewed in the Eisenhüttenstadt asylum centre in Germany is an example. In their case local police attacked the family and set fire to their house, causing severe burns to the youngest child who, scarred for life, has required extensive hospitalization.⁴⁰

Questioned about the Romanian government's obligations as a signatory to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Vasile Burtea said the government makes only very 'timid attempts' to protect the Roma's constitutionally guaranteed human rights.⁴¹

Because of the increasing violence, said Nicolae Gheorghe, 'we have established a strategy of informing national and international organizations and lobbying over the past

two years at Geneva at the Commission on Human Rights.' In the last - the 48th - Session, Gheorghe stated, a resolution on the protection of the Roma was passed.

The Commission on Human Rights,

Taking into account Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities resolution 6 (XXX) of 31 August 1977 and 1991/21 of 28 August 1991,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948, by which it adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and its resolution 217 C (III) also of 10 December 1948, in which it considered that the United Nations could not remain indifferent to the fate of minorities,

Recalling also the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the principles contained therein,

Recalling further its resolutions 1990/13 of 23 February 1990, and 1990/45 and 1990/46 of 6 March 1990,

Bearing in mind General Assembly resolution 39/16 of 23 November 1984, in which the Assembly invited the Commission on Human Rights to continue exercising vigilance in identifying actual or emergent situations of racism or racial discrimination, to draw attention to them where discovered and to suggest appropriate remedial measures,

1. Requests the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities entrusted with preparing a study on possible ways and means of facilitating the peaceful and constructive solution of problems involving minorities, in carrying out his work, to accord special attention to and to provide information on the specific conditions in which the Roma (Gypsies) live;
2. Invites States to adopt all appropriate measures in order to eliminate any form of discrimination against the Roma (Gypsies);
3. Invites States who may wish to do so to avail themselves of the advisory services of the Centre for Human Rights for that purpose.

54th Meeting

4 March 1992

[Adopted by 43 votes to none, with 8 abstentions...].⁴²

This resolution, said Nicolae Gheorghe, was considerably weaker than the one that was approved in the meeting of the Sub-Commission on Human Rights. The final Sub-Commission resolution concerned institutional, legislative and economic measures to assure equality of opportunities and to secure the protection of Roma people. Some of the relevant passages are:

1. Urges the Special Rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on the Prevention and Protection of Minorities, in carrying out their work, to accord special attention to the specific conditions in which the Roma (gypsy) communities live;
2. Invites States which have Roma communities living within their borders to take, in consultation with those communities, all the necessary legislative, administrative, economic and social measures to ensure the *de jure* and *de facto* equality of the members of those communities and to guarantee their protection and security;

3. *Emphasises* the need to provide States which request them with the necessary advisory services for that purpose.⁴³

It was the German delegation, said Gheorghe, that 'did everything possible to make the final resolution much weaker than it was intended, under instructions from the German Minister of the Interior.'⁴⁴

One article of concern requested the Special Rapporteur of the Sub-Commission to pay particular attention to the situation of Roma, and requested States to offer them protection and security (§ 2, above). According to Gheorghe, the German delegation said 'security' (*Sicherheit*) would mean that people will ask for 'social security', when in fact, the reference was to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* concerning the elimination of all forms of discrimination, which also implies protection against physical violence and bodily harm.

Moreover, the Sub-Commission wanted to request the Special Rapporteur to pay attention to Roma residing in each nation, on the grounds that States have the obligation under International Law to assure protection and security to all people who are on their territory, citizens or not. But the German government, in Gheorghe's view, does not want to be responsible for the protection of Roma asylum seekers in Germany.⁴⁵

The *Draft Report of the Commission* states: 'The representatives of Germany orally proposed to amend the draft resolution, as revised, as follows: '(a) in operative paragraph 1, after "Roma (Gypsies)", replace "live" by "have been traditionally residing as subjects of these states".', thereby removing the responsibility for the protection of such Roma found to be living there without having been traditionally resident.'⁴⁶

8. International Assistance

Respondents in Romania indicated the importance of assistance from the International community in the resolution of the Roma situation. Nicolae Gheorghe, pointing out that article three of the *Report of the Commission on Human Rights* 'invites States who may wish to do so to avail themselves of the advisory services of the Centre for Human Rights for that purpose'⁴⁷, said:

So perhaps now it is time for the Centre for Human Rights to do something on this problem, and to pursue States to make appeals to its services. As the Commission on Human Rights directed the Centre for Human Rights to offer its consultative services and technical assistance to Roma, the Romanian government is obliged to make use of the Consultative Services of the Centre for Human Rights.⁴⁸

Vasile Burtea indicated the need for help and support from the international organizations to facilitate the dialogue between the Roma organizations, the Romanian Presidency, and the government, and to help set out the structures needed for improving the Roma situation.⁴⁹

Asked what can be done to help protect and support the Roma, at the national and international levels, Edwin Rekosh said that an international presence can be helpful to human rights groups in Romania:

...one obvious way Roma in Romania can be supported is through diplomatic pressure. If the diplomatic community begins to raise concerns about the way the Romanian government is contributing to educating the Gypsies; to solving problems,

and so forth, that will serve as a substitute for what ought to be an internal political constituency, bringing pressure on those issues.⁵⁰

9. National Assistance

I was told that there is a need for close discussions among the Romanian Presidency, the government and the Roma organizations in order to find viable solutions to the Roma situation. Yet, despite their attempts, Roma organizations have been unsuccessful in their requests for meetings. In particular, Vasile Burtea, Nicolae Gheorghe, and others signed an official protest following the violent events in Mihail Kogalniceanu, but they were ignored and their attempts were rebutted on the grounds that there are more important problems than the Roma.⁵¹

10. Law and Jurisprudence

As already indicated, the Roma have a historical reputation for criminal acts, and a number of the recent anti-Roma incidents have been triggered by actual or purported Roma criminality. Although these are probably not much greater, nor as extensive, as the crimes committed by individuals in the majority society, reaction rather than being directed against the person who committed the crime, is against the Roma community in the region where the events took place. In vigilante fashion, the public often take the law into their own hands with the acquiescence of the police.

A fear of increased, and more violent Roma criminality has, however, been indicated among the Roma themselves. But rather than accept that some change may be needed in their own value system for some of their difficulties, the Roma tendency is to place the burden of responsibility on any criminality amongst them on their failing economic prospects, and the prejudice which keeps from finding work. Thus, lacking a socially acceptable means for supporting themselves becomes a justification for illegality; in utilitarian fashion, the end justifies the means. Paradoxically, the justification for illegally attacking Roma settlements, is similar: 'the Roma have brought this upon themselves because of their illegal acts'.

Roma do tend to say that criminal acts do not usually take place within the Roma communities themselves. This, of course is perfectly understandable, although accounts of Roma cheating one another, or stealing among themselves are also given.

While Roma, as any Romanian citizens, have the legal right of recourse against any negative discrimination in education, employment, housing, and in the case of personal violence, the police normally take no initiatives on their behalf, and State prosecutors seldom take up their cases. The Roma lack the financial means for legal representation and there is no system of public legal aid. As Edwin Rekosh put it:

Rights are only as good as the Courts that protect them... There are at least half-dozen to a dozen major incidents that I know about where maybe a dozen homes were burned down in retaliation for one criminal act by one of the members of the Roma community. That's usually the pattern. But there are no prosecutions of the Romanians who perpetrate this kind of vigilante violence.⁵²

For the first time a case is being brought - by the Ethnic Roma Federation - against eighty towns-people from Mihail Kogalniceanu implicated in setting fire to Roma houses. But, Rekosh pointed out that in some cases, as that of Tirgo Morish, where

one of the first incidents of vigilante violence involving Romanians and Hungarians against the Roma occurred, the only arrests that were made were Gypsies who were allegedly, or factually, not even involved.

Nicolae Gheorghe spoke of a case that has been pending for three and a half years concerning four Roma who were killed in a village, with no action having been taken against the killers. When Roma commit criminal acts, he pointed out, they are rapidly identified, tried and punished, but those who attack the Roma are left alone - or the Roma are blamed for the attacks upon them.

11. Migration

There has been a major migration of Romanian Roma to the West over the past two to three years to Germany and France in particular. Three main causes are given: 1) a 'natural nomadic tendency'; 2) economic necessity or desire; and 3) ethnic discrimination.⁵³

As the tendency to travel is as old as humanity and as recent as any Western European seeking better opportunities in other countries, the Roma's travel to the West should be understandable. The West, in fact, has helped to encourage it through the years of short-wave broadcasting (*Radio Free Europe* and *Voice of America*, for example) that promoted its democratic values - including the right of the 'free circulation of people'. And, since 1989 Western manufacturing, commercial and media interests have been constantly adding to the motivation for a shorter or a longer trip to the West with their daily televised advertisements of Western Europe and America as a vast cornucopia of goods, services and possibilities.

Certainly increasing poverty, and the need to support their families, on the one hand, and a traditional entrepreneurship that sends them forth to seek to earn what they can on the other, are definite features of the present Roma migration. They do not come to stay, I have been told, but to earn enough so that they can return to their homes and hopefully set up small businesses.⁵⁴

But, there is the very real fear of increasing continuing ethnic violence to prompt a number of Roma to join the others who have travelled to the West. Nicolae Gheorghe's comments are instructive:

But coming to the question of the refugees. I have a very double thinking about this problem... The people who are migrating, are entrepreneurial ones, they are not people from the villages that were destroyed. We tried, as much as possible, in these cases to keep these people in the places they came from.

The people who are entrepreneurial are people who want a chance for a better way of life; who have the right to a better way of life. I am sure about this. But they are not political refugees...^{55,56}

Possibly one of the most important points that was impressed upon me by several respondents is that Roma are travelling to the West, not even so much for money, but for *hope* - to find something, to have something to believe in, to be able to make something of their lives.

The information concerning the number of Roma who have gone to Germany since 1989 is unclear. The German Federal Ministry of the Interior does not segregate its

refugee figures by ethnic group.⁵⁷ The best estimates seems to be as follows, with the Roma computed at 40% of the number of all Romanian asylum seekers:⁵⁸

ROMANIAN ASYLUM SEEKERS IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY 1990-1993	
1990 - 1991	35,345
1991 - 1992	40,504
1992 - 1993	<u>103,827</u>
1990 - 1992	179,676
<i>ROMA ASYLUM SEEKERS AS APPROXIMATELY 40% OF ROMANIAN ASYLUM SEEKERS</i>	<i>71,870</i>

These are cumulative figures covering Roma (and other Romanian) asylum seekers in the Federal Republic of Germany. It is not known how many of this group are still in Germany, how many have travelled to other countries, or have returned, or been involuntarily repatriated to Romania.

11.1 Involuntary Repatriation

A *Convention Between Romania's Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Republic of Germany's Ministry of Interior Regarding the Takeover of Romanian and German Citizens* was signed in September 1992. It is a mutual agreement between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Romanian Republic to take back any of their respective citizens declared to be residing illegally in the other state:

Article 1

The Takeover of German Citizens

(1) Without special formalities, the German authorities shall be able to take over German citizens staying illegally on Romania's territory and whom Romanian authorities intend to return to Germany even when they do not hold a valid passport or identity card, to the extent in which it is proven or it seems truthful that those individuals are of German citizenship...

Article 1

The Takeover of Romanian Citizens

(1) Without special formalities, the Romanian authorities shall be able to take over Romanian citizens staying illegally on Germany's territory and whom German authorities intend to return to Romania even when they do not hold a valid passport or identity card, to the extent in which it is proven or it seems truthful that those individuals are of Romanian citizenship...⁵⁹

If there were a considerable number of German nationals residing illegally in Romania, Germany's willingness to accept them back as a part of a mutual agreement with the Romanian government would be understandable. But, as there are undoubtedly few, if any, German nationals residing there, the intention of this *Convention* is clear: it is directed to unburden Germany of by now (if one includes 1992 estimates) close to 200,000 or more Romanian asylum seekers 40% of whom are Roma. The vast majority of German-speaking people who do live in Romania are ethnic Germans, descendants of those settled there during the reign of Empress Maria-Theresa. They are Romanian citizens.

Once the *Convention* had been signed in September 1992, and the German government signified its intention to forcibly repatriate those asylum seekers not regarded as 'Convention' refugees to Romania, the Ethnic Roma Federation offered to assist the German authorities in identifying the valid Roma asylum seekers. The German authori-

ties refused to meet with Federation representatives. Consequently, neither the German, nor Romanian authorities, nor the Ethnic Roma Federation know exactly who are the asylum seekers; which are Roma, which Romanian citizens, and which are non-Romanians (e.g., Hungarian or Czech Roma).

'Who is who counting who as Gypsies?' asked Nicolae Gheorghe. 'Are they are using self-identification criteria, or identification by others? If you use identification by others then you risk using racial criteria...' - based, for example, on skin colour, when there are many Roma who are sufficiently light skinned to pass as non-Roma, and there are others, who are dark skinned, but who may not be Roma.

Some of the Roma will have had no documents when they escaped from local violence. Others will have discarded them on the way. Some of the Roma will have been victims of racial aggression; most of them will not. Vasile Burtea said:

Actually if they [the German authorities] had known the areas where the Roma came from they would have known the problems. It is too bad that the Germans did not trust the honesty and reliability of these organizations which could have confirmed the quality of the people who emigrated, that is, the legitimate from the illegitimate asylum seekers.⁶⁰

What has not been made clear are the conditions under which this vast number of people are to be returned to Romania; how they are to be located, and what kinds of transportation will be used; whether the deportees will be provided with food prior to or during their departure; and what will happen to them upon their arrival.

In late November 1992, for example, without prior warning, Bavarian officials rounded up Roma in the middle of the night to send them back to Romania. Many returnees will have neither homes, nor jobs, nor any visible means of support to which they can return. Those without documents may find themselves in legal difficulties.

Ina Bardan asks:

What are they going to do with these people the moment they are in Romania? They will have a presumed identity established on the declarations of people they know in Germany. It is not very clear if this is their real identity. Then, when they are on the border in Romania the police have to establish their identity.

They cannot do this in 24 hours and will need weeks. How will they keep these people, and where? If they are arrested, under which legal provision will they keep them - we have no legal provision for arresting people without identity - in what jail, in what camps? We have no camps. They have no answers for this.⁶¹

One of the unfortunate aspects of this episode has been what one can only call the appearance of the 'journalism of hate' which has not helped to develop any public understanding, nor appreciation of the complex issues involved on all sides. For example:

<p>From: The New York Times September 23, 1992 Gypsy Tragedy, German Amnesia Germany has decided to deport Romanian Gypsies asking for political asylum...they are being sent back to Romania. But Romania for some, may be no better than a concentration camp...</p> <p>Copyright © The New York Times, 1992</p>	<p>From: The International Herald Tribune September 18, 1992 Germany to Deport Gypsies In the midst of a wave of anti-foreigner violence, much of it directed against Gypsies, Germany has decided to deport thousands of Romanians, most of them Gypsies. The Gypsies, many fleeing oppression by Romanian nationalists make up about 30,000 of the 280,000 foreigners this year seeking asylum. Copyright © The International Herald Tribune, 1992</p>
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ROMANI-JEWISH ALLIANCE

NEWS RELEASE, October 12 1992

The Romani-Jewish Alliance, a U.S.-based human rights organization, called on the German government to stop the planned November 1 deportation of approximately 30,000 Romanian Gypsies (Roms), many of them victims of attacks by neo-Nazis...

The problem is not in the unavoidable discrepancy between the numbers of Roma mentioned in these earlier articles and in this report, but in the inflation of the situation that makes Romania appear to be a savagely repressive state, something which is as untrue as it is unhelpful.

As representatives of the Ethnic Roma Federation itself have pointed out, very few of the Roma are genuine Convention refugees escaping from ethnic violence. Some are escaping, not so much from skinheads as from local villagers, or from police brutality. The majority of Roma now in the West are economic migrants. They are here not because of violence, but simply because they, like a vast number of other Central and Eastern Europeans, look to the West for its advertised economic advantages.

11.2 DM 30 Million

Statements by the German Minister of the Interior in Bucharest, and a number of press reports have indicated that Germany is paying Romania DM 30 million (\$US 21 million) for taking back its Romanian asylum seekers. This matter needs to be clarified because on one hand it appears as if Germany is bribing Romania to accept back its Roma, and on the other because there have been expectations that the Roma might, at least, benefit from such an arrangement.

1. According to the Refugee Office of the German Ministry of Interior, no such payment is being made, nor was contemplated being made to Romania for the 'take-over' of its citizens determined to be illegally on German territory.
2. These funds had been previously attributed to a project following a meeting in Geneva of the *Informal Consultations on Asylum, Refugee and Migration Policies in Europe, North America and Australia*, in which various Western European states decided to undertake initiatives for dealing with the 'root causes' that lay behind a post-1989 migration of people from Central and Eastern Europe, the majority of whom were Romanians, and among the Romanians the minority were Roma.
3. An initiative arising from the Refugee Office of the German Ministry of the Interior, on the basis of a survey of 1,500 Romanian asylum seekers in March 1991, was to establish three industrial training centres in Romania, directed largely to the reasonably educated Romanians who were appearing on German soil. Germany apportioned DM 30 million for this purpose, to be spent in Germany, to provide the equipment and materials needed for building the training centres in Romania.
4. Unfortunately the German Minister of the Interior created the impression that the funding for the training centres was related to the German-Romanian *Convention*. Nicolae Gheorghe commented:

It was the German Minister of Interior who made a completely unhappy connection between this money and the programme... This was a lie, it is not for the refugees.

The Interior Minister said when he was here; 'this programme has an amount of DM 30 million for organizing three centres for social formation in Timisoara, Arad and Sibiu'. The *Ausbildzentrum* will start in October, so it was already programmed before, and is being presented as a contribution for this measure.⁶²

According to Ina Bardan:

This treaty is a shame... In Romania, and I heard in Germany also, they transformed this treaty into a 'Gypsy Treaty' in order to obtain the agreement of public opinion. Of course in Romania no one cares. If the Gypsies will be sent home maybe public opinion will react in a different way. If they present it that the Gypsies in Germany are destroying our image abroad, and they are sent home everybody will say 'oh, very well, it's exactly what they deserve'...they don't care how these things will be done.⁶³

The training centres, based on now out-of-date statistics may, over the long term, benefit ethnic Romanians. They will probably be of little or no benefit to the Roma for they lack the educational and technical qualifications for entry, and in any case are liable to be precluded because of ethnic prejudice.

12. Politics

The Roma situation is as political as it is racial, economic and social. Without legal protection, enforced by Parliament, the Roma can receive little help. Ina Bardan spoke of their need for a parliamentary lobby. But the Roma's tendency not to identify themselves as such has meant that because their official numbers are between a third and a quarter of their actual population size, they have unwittingly acted in their own worst interests, weakening the strength of their case as Romania's largest ethnic minority, as well as their political possibilities. Edwin Rekosh said:

Gypsies often don't self-identify and that means also that they are not necessarily voting in their interests as Gypsies... And then, as in any community, the more impoverished ones tend not to vote, the less educated don't value voting as much.⁶⁴

The political organization of the Roma is undeveloped. The Roma political parties are neither as powerful nor well organized as those of other ethnic groups, such as the Hungarian party which is an extremely important political force. While the ethnic Hungarians won about 10-12% of the seats in the last Romanian Parliament, the Roma failed to obtain a single seat. They were assigned one, however, because of provisions of the electoral law.⁶⁵

13. Property Rights

De jure, the Roma have as much right to own property as other Romanians. *De facto*, the situation is considerably different. Land ownership for agricultural purposes, for example, is available for those who were land owners prior to the communist take-over, or who, since that time, have been *in situ* on collective farms for at least five years.

According to one report, having owned land prior to the communist period is no guarantee - if one is a Roma - that it will be returned either in full, or that its partial replacement will be of the same quality.⁶⁶

Vasile Burtea pointed out that as the 'principle of work' has been replaced by the 'principle of property' as the basis of individual worth, the Roma are looked upon as a

danger, for should land be returned or granted to them, they will have the rights of tenure which non-Roma would prefer they do not have.⁶⁷

People who had not been property owners prior to the communist period, or - as is the case with many Roma - had moved from place to place and thus did not fall within the five-year residence provision, can purchase land, if they can afford it. For the Roma, this is essentially out of the question as few of them have the necessary funds.

14. Religion

The Roma have no religion intrinsic to their ethnic group, save some remnants of their early Hindu origins, it has been suggested, of a Shivaist type. Evangelical, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and Islam in the south-west, comprise the main religious denominations. No information regarding the relationship of Romanian religious institutions with the Roma, or the nature and levels of religious observances has been obtained.

15. Self-Organization

The most important feature in the survival and development of any group, cultural, ethnic, social, or otherwise, is the extent and quality of its *self-organization* - that is to say, its ability to accept responsibility for its condition and development, rather than to place responsibility upon others. In this aspect of their lives the Roma appear to be particularly vulnerable.

While the communist period, through its authoritarian methods, helped to shield the Roma from civil harassment and overt prejudice, the price of such relative security was the loss of authority of their own leadership, and a disconnection from their cultural heritage. Forced settlement, forced employment, and restriction on their movements, meant that their individual and group lives were largely controlled by the local political commissars, (and there is more than one story of Roma working for the 'Securitate').

With the disappearance of communism, the Roma are thus doubly marginalized: from the society-at-large, which has always been the case, and from the security of their own traditions. They have become a dependent people, without anyone to depend on. The appearance of local, regional and national Roma organizations is an attempt to deal with this situation.

As Burtea put it:

Without support and collaboration of the Roma organizations we cannot do a great deal, nor can the Roma themselves do anything without the support of the government. The government has no plan at present, or at least there is no such plan known to settle the problems of the Roma because they are simply not interested by this problem at all.⁶⁸

The Ethnic Roma Federation was formed to help encourage and coordinate the development of Roma organizations across Romania. Faced with the deteriorating problem of anti-Roma violence, it has become an active human rights organization, documenting violations against Roma communities in Romania and other countries, and undertaking humanitarian and social action projects in Roma villages.

Having been one of the winners of the French human rights prize, *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*, in March 1991, for his project submission on behalf of the Ethnic Roma Federation, *The Effective Promotion of Human Rights through an Education, Social and Health Programme*, Nicolae Gheorghe has been able to supplement its FF. 120,000 with funds from the German Evangelical Church and Romanian regional authorities, to establish a comprehensive community development project.

This project is supporting the families driven out of Mihail Kogalniceanu and other villages. It is helping Roma to rebuild their destroyed homes, is helping displaced Roma to return through a 'social re-insertion' programme, which is designed to improve relationships with local Romanians and ethnic Hungarians.⁶⁹ According to Edwin Rekosh:

...Mihail Kogalniceanu is an example of a very productive programme to try to integrate Gypsies socially back into the town. Gypsy leaders, including Nicolae Gheorghe of the Ethnic Roma Federation and others have mediated with the town to provide funding for the building of houses. Ten million Lei has been liberated from the town budget upon persuasion from the central government.

That ten million Lei together with some money from the German Evangelical Church is going to rebuilding the houses. So far fifteen houses are actually built or are in some stage of being built. The second phase, the authorities say, is to build houses for even those whose houses were not burnt just to improve their condition, but that hasn't been done yet and it's questionable whether that will get off the ground. But the fifteen houses certainly are in some level of completion at this point.⁷⁰

Over the past months, the Ethnic Roma Federation has also been involved in building a school for Roma children and in developing programmes to prepare young children for school and for dealing with illiteracy. There was also programmes of health and economic assistance, the later to create a sense of self-reliance among Roma.

'Now,' said Gheorghe,

we are on the way to start a second programme, they are living in a very difficult situation. We managed to have some small help from a Norwegian association who got some help from the Norwegian Foreign Ministry and we are on the way to negotiate help from the Romanian government. This is to help people where they are living now, they are not houses, but miserable tents in the north-west of Romania...⁷¹

This is but an example, perhaps one of the only ones, that demonstrates what can be done. But Nicolae Gheorghe is one of the few Roma who have achieved the qualifications, competence and stature to undertake it.

As Ina Bardan said:

I think that it is very simple to say they have to help themselves, to work themselves inside the community. But I think that a whole generation of Gypsy leaders have to grow up. And they will have to be helped to grow up.⁷²

The matter of Roma ability and willingness to accept responsibility for their self-organization is critical. They are not used to doing so. Because of the years of dependency upon the State the expectation is that it is the State who must still do everything, and do so to make up for the way the Roma have been treated in the past. But, dependency and expectation often become turned into a means of taking advantage of the donors while doing nothing to help themselves. Nicolae Gheorghe said:

I am rather advocating for self-help initiated by non-governmental organizations with non-governmental money and initiating projects in partnership with governments... I

am advocating a civic society approach to the problem of the Roma. I think it is our role as Roma organizations to begin self-help movements...⁷³

Asked what the cost might be for developing local self-help programmes in selected 'pilot communities' Gheorghe presented a budget of approximately FF. 500,000 (\$95,000) for two years. Already training young social workers to help local Roma in the villages, settlements and towns, Gheorghe said:

So my approach now is a different one. I trust Roma communities, I trust illiterate people, I trust those who have no occupations, because they manage. How they manage, in some ways it is deviant in respect to the general society, because the general society is not willing to accept the way of surviving as they are obliged to do. It is a very dynamic community. The problem is we didn't get yet the answer to how these informal networks could work in such a way as to bring prosperity to the group, to solve the problems of the group.⁷⁴

NOTES

1. Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992).
2. Zamfir, Elena; Burtea, Vasile; and Zamfir, Catalin, *Preliminary Considerations on the Status of Gypsies in Romania*, Bucharest, Ethnic Roma Federation, 1992, pp.1ff.
3. Ina Bardan (21.10.1992):
We are not counting the census, the estimation of the Roma community itself is something over 2 millions. At least this is what I heard from the leaders of the Roma community, leaders of Gypsy parties and groups.
4. Nicolae Gheorghe (22.10.1992).
5. Although an appointment was made to see Mr Cioabă he was 'regretfully called away on urgent business'.
6. Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992).
7. Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992).
8. Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992).
9. Nicolae Gheorghe (22.10.1992).
10. Ilie Pipoi (21.10.1992).
11. Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992).
12. Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992).
13. They were established during the tenure of the first (post-Revolution) Minister of Labour, but his replacement has shown no interest in the matter - Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992).
14. Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992); Nicolae Gheorghe (22.10.92).
15. Ina Bardan (21.10.1992).
16. Ilie Pipoi (21.10.1992).
17. Nicolae Gheorghe (22.10.1992).
18. Ilie Pipoi (21.10.1992).
19. See *Romania's Children*, Bucharest, UNICEF, 1992.
20. Vasile Burtea.
21. Nicolae Gheorghe (22.10.1992) and Ina Bardan (21.10.1992).

22. Edwin Rekosh (21.10.1992).
23. Edwin Rekosh (21.10.1992).
24. Nicolae Gheorghe (22.10.1992).
We have a small number of people now, about forty students who are preparing to be teachers of Roma children. There are some emerging activities here and in other east European countries ...
25. Ina Bardan (21.10.1992).
26. See: *Reported Cases of Hostility, Discrimination and Violence Against Roma Gypsy People in Central and Eastern European Countries*, Bucharest, Helsinki Committee of the International Romani Union, 1991, p.5.
27. Interviews with Roma families, Bucharest, (23.10.92).
28. See also, *Reported Cases of Hostility, Discrimination and Violence...*, *op.cit.*
29. Nicolae Gheorghe (21.10.1992).
30. Nicolae Gheorghe (22.10.1992).
31. Vasile Ionesco (21.10.1992).
32. Vasile Ionesco (21.10.1992).
33. Ina Bardan, (22.10.1992).
34. At Eisenhüttenstadt, (25.11.1992).
35. Ina Bardan (21.10.1992).
36. Ilie Pipoi (21.10.1992).
37. Nicolae Gheorghe (21.10.1992).
38. Edwin Rekosh (21.10.1992).
39. UNHCR.
40. Ciurar family (19.11.1992). See also, *The Guardian Europe*, October 2, 1992.
41. Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992).
42. UN Commission on Human Rights, 'Protection of Roma [gypsies]', *Report on the 48th Session*, Geneva, United Nations, 1992, p. 152. (E/1992/22-E/CN.4/1992/84).
43. See *Convention on Human Rights*; 'Protection of Roma', Resolution 56/1992 of the Commission on Human Rights Sub-Commission on the Protection of Minorities.
44. See also: *Pressetelle*, Hamburg, Rom & Cinti Union, March 5-8, 1992, p.1:
Germany was the only European state that voted against a resolution entitled 'Protection of Roma', adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva on March 5, 1992. The resolution called for the abolition of all discriminatory measures against the Roma, for their recognition as an ethnic minority in Europe and for their protection against racist attacks.
45. Nicolae Gheorghe (22.10.1992).
46. UN Commission on Human Rights, *Draft Report of the Commission*, 48th Session, Geneva, United Nations, 1992, p.3 Para.16(a) [E/CN4/1992/L.10/Add.18.].
47. _____ *Convention on Human Rights*; 'Protection of Roma', Resolution 56/1992 of the Commission on Human Rights Sub-Commission on the Protection of Minorities, *ibid.*
48. Nicolae Gheorghe (22.10.1992).

49. Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992).
50. Edwin Rekosh (21.10.1992).
51. Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992).
52. Edwin Rekosh (21.10.1992).
53. Ina Bardan and Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992).
54. Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992).
55. Nicolae Gheorghe (22.10.1992).
56. Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992): 'On the other hand of all the three categories we spoke about the Roms who had conflicts represent only a minority of those who emigrate...'
57. Ms Keller, Refugee Office, German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Bonn (20.11.1992).
58. UNHCR
59. A Convention Between Romania's Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Republic of Germany's Ministry of Interior Regarding the Takeover of Romanian and German Citizens (translation), Bonn, Federal Republic of Germany, 1992, 4pps.
60. Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992).
61. Ina Bardan (21.10.1992).
62. Nicolae Gheorghe (22.10.1992).
63. Ina Bardan (21.10.1992).
64. Edwin Rekosh (21.10.1992).
65. Edwin Rekosh (21.10.1992).
66. In an interview at the Eisenhüttenstadt, Germany, Asylum Centre, one former Roma landowner pointed out that although his family had previously farmed on 30 hectares, they had only received ten in the recent land reforms, and of this half was scrub land of poor agricultural quality (27.11.1992).
67. Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992).
68. Vasile Burtea (21.10.1992).
69. Nicolae Gheorghe (22.10.1992).
70. Edwin Rekosh (21.,10.1992).
71. Nicolae Gheorghe (22.10.1992).
72. Ina Bardan (21.10.1992).
73. Nicolae Gheorghe (22.10.1992).
74. Nicolae Gheorghe (22.10.1992).

THREE

NOTES FROM HUNGARY

1. Historical and Cultural Background

The Roma first arrived in Hungary in the 15th century. They were musicians at the Court of Queen Beatrix; they were employed as armourers, soldiers and spies in the wars with Turkey. By the 18th century their population was some 44,000, by the middle of the 19th century upwards of 158,000, and by the beginning of the 20th century it had reached 275,000.¹

The present Hungarian Roma population is variously estimated at between 500,000 and 700,000, making it the largest ethnic minority in the country. On the basis of data he has gathered from various Ministries and local government offices, Albert Horvath, President of the National Anti-Fascist Association of Hungarian Roma, believes that there are over one million Roma in Hungary. Of these, 72% or some 780,000 are 'Hungarian' Roma (those whose ancestors arrived in the 15th century) and 28% or some 220,000 are Romanian and other Rom, those who came in later migrations.²

In contrast, János Báthory, Vice-President of the Hungarian Office for Nationalities and Ethnic Minorities, said:

...Nobody can tell you how many Roma are in Hungary. According to the census, there are 1,407 Hungarian citizens who confessed to being Roma, and one-third of those people confessed that their mother tongue is Romany. What is the reality? Surely the census is not the reality. But the self-estimation of the minority leaders are not the reality either. Minority leaders are used to overestimating the numbers of minorities all over the world.³

Since Hungarian Roma, like Roma elsewhere, do not indicate their ethnic background, the population figures have been derived by extrapolating from the number of Roma school children in relationship to their family size. Béla Osztojkan, General Secretary of the Hungarian Roma Parliament, perhaps one of the 'minority leaders' to whom János Báthory referred, said: 'If Hungary were a perfect democracy and the danger of persecution were absent, then maybe the figure would go up to one million':

I have mentioned that there are 200,000 members of the Roma Parliament, and if we multiply this figure by four, then already the 500,000 seems to be a conservative figure. Then probably if the 500,000 is wrong the authentic figure should be over that.⁴

There are three main groups of Roma in Hungary:

- The *Hungarian Roma (Romungro)* comprising over 70% of the Roma population and who, for the most part are Hungarian speaking;
- The *Wallachian (or 'wandering')* Roma comprising some 20% of the Roma population, who are mainly Romany speaking. Because of prohibitions on their wandering under the communist regime, the Wallachians are also settled;
- The *Beash* Roma, comprising some 8% of the Roma population. They derive from Romania, and speak an older - 19th century version of Romanian.⁵

'The Roma have been living in Hungary for centuries,' said Agnes Daróczy of the Roma cultural association, AMALIPE. 'The last immigration was two hundred years ago; they are emotionally attached to their surroundings, to the villages, and to the country.'⁶

Here was a theme which was to reappear several times in the course of discussions: the Hungarian Roma feel they belong to Hungary; they want to belong to Hungary, but Hungarians, they believe, do not want them to. Béla Osztojkán explained:

This is the country which we Rom people love without restrictions... And this is a fact even though we are repeatedly reminded that we are aliens here; even though we are repeatedly deprived of having a share in Hungary's history. The Hungarians, the Magyars, reproach us that 'you Rom people have nothing in common with Hungarian history,' and here, let me mention, that 80% of today's population only speak Hungarian.⁷

For the most part, the Hungarian Roma are settled in the north, north-east, east and south-west of the country spread throughout some 2,000 settlements. Béla Osztojkán explained:

Roma people feel exposed to hardships that are not the fate of others. I don't want to make a secret of the fact that there is ignorance, lower educational standards than among the majority population; superstition and various other ramifications of being prevented from getting the right education are the result. Also criminality is higher - more Roma people are getting into crime. I think this is a logical consequence of their being poorer than the majority population.⁸

2. Economy

The Hungarian Roma are in a generally poor economic condition except for a 'narrow stratum' comprising some successful merchants, and musicians, who tend to live somewhat above the Hungarian average. As for the majority, there are either low paid jobs at best, or there is unemployment.^{9,10} Antónia Hága, an MP of the Free Democratic Party, suggested that some 85% of Hungarian Roma live below the 'poverty line.'¹¹

Agnes Daróczy said that because of this policy, employers intentionally did not encourage the Roma to become skilled. On the contrary, the Roma were encouraged to believe that being unskilled was an asset - a guarantee of employment. 'We also have to talk about racial discrimination in the labour market', she said.

People were employed from 25-30 years in the cooperative, but when they lost their jobs they received no compensation. There is presently a legal case...but they need a lawyer in order to handle the case. The president and vice-president of the village sold the company and left with the money.

- Dula Toldi, Roma village leader, near Budapest¹²

They [employers] have stated openly that they will dismiss Gypsies or will not employ Gypsies. Now the factories are now in a position to make a choice to employ people...they make a clear distinction in discriminating between Gypsies and non-Gypsies...¹³

János Báthory explained that under the previously centralized economy, each employer was allotted a fixed average sum for salaries. In order to offer higher salaries to skilled workers unskilled workers were employed at very low salaries, and most of the Roma were in this category. Now that the 'market economy' is forcing both privatization and employment rationalization, the unskilled Roma have been among the first to lose their

jobs, mainly in such labour-intensive industries as construction, mining, and steel-making.¹⁴

Albert Horvath confirmed the situation:

The most painful point was when the political system changed...before this change, during the communist system, everybody was obliged to work, and those who didn't work had it written in their identity cards... Since the change even the Roma lost their jobs, not just those doing low (unskilled manual) work, but even those who had diplomas and who were highly educated. When in a company someone had to be kicked out, then the Roma got kicked out.¹⁵

The employment situation is bad...people in the village who could employ Gypsies will not do so, but employ other nationalities.

- Interview with Roma family near Budapest.¹⁶

The actual number of unemployed Roma in Hungary is not known. Roma organization estimates run from 50-80% and in some regions even to 100%.

Today 50 or 60% of the total Roma population are unemployed [contrasted with a former 85-87% employment rate]... There are major regional differences. In northern and eastern Hungary, the unemployment rate among Roma reaches 80 or 90%. Of course the non-Roma society is also suffering from unemployment as these are industrial regions of metal and construction industries.¹⁷

Two hundred people [in this village] are of working age and have the ability to work, but only ten or twenty are working. The rest are living from occasional work - house construction for one or two days a week - and from social assistance...

- Dula Toldi, Roma village leader, near Budapest¹⁸

János Báthory said:

What is true is that unemployed Gypsies are a higher proportion in the population than the rest. Some estimations say - mostly by Gypsy leaders - that 70% of Gypsies are unemployed in Hungary. It is not true arithmetically.

Officially there are 600,000 unemployed in Hungary. One third of the unemployed in Hungary are belonging to educated people, who have high school degrees or more, or some diplomas... The second third of the unemployed are skilled workers. Only one-third of the unemployed belong to the manual workers. If it is true that the overwhelming majority of the Gypsy adults are manual workers, it could not be true that 70% of the Gypsies which would be 300,000 would be unemployed.

Báthory's estimate, based on Hungary's overall unemployment rate being 10.6% is that about 30% of Gypsy males of working age are unemployed.¹⁹ Even if we take this figure as correct, it is a measure of the declining fortunes of Hungary's Roma, when we understand that some twenty years ago, according to Agnes Daróczy, over 83% of the Roma were employed.

Their poor economic situation is given as the reason why Roma are increasingly undertaking illegal or semi-legal activities. 'To make ends meet,' said Agnes Daróczy. 'We will have to face massive criminality,' she continued, 'because as long as the prejudice escalates there is no other way for people to earn money.'²⁰

János Báthory provided some examples:

Sometimes the Budapest authorities used to say that the Free Democrats [formerly in power] are very friendly to the Gypsies and the minorities in general. They tried to follow very liberal principles, but when they faced the problems, they had to get rid of the illegal market business.

First of all, for example, they could not tolerate that all of the subways were full of illegal dealers, smuggled cigarettes, books, porno, false video cassettes, and so on. We had a situation in parts of Budapest when it was dangerous to get through the underpasses. So the liberal Free Democrat Budapest City government that tried to tolerate this way of living had to stop it.

The Market Economy will solve this problem. The communist government tried to prohibit any small enterprise whether it was legal or illegal. Now a Gypsy dealer has the possibility to sell anything - to open a shop. Of course the city authorities urgently need the tax, but the trouble is that the Gypsy entrepreneurs don't want to pay any tax...²¹

3. Education

Despite Hungary's compulsory requirement that all children attend school until 16 years of age, Roma Parliament figures indicate that up to half of all Roma children do not finish primary school.²² János Báthory estimates that about 10,000 children in Hungary are not registered in school and he supposes that the majority of them are Roma.²³

Only some 1.5% of Roma adolescents go to a secondary school - usually a vocational school. Their drop-out rate is higher than the national average. In discussing this, Béla Osztojkán, said that 'the family just cannot afford not to have the child as an earner'. 'Under the communist regime', he went on, 'the chances were better for Roma young people to make it to secondary school. There were more secondary schools.'²⁴

Asked if there are any specifically designed programmes for Roma education, Antónia Hága, said 'no'. Hungarian teachers are not trained for working specifically with Roma children:

There are no programmes that train teachers to work with Roma. There is no preparation in Roma culture in teacher training. In general the traditions of the Hungarian minorities are not part of teacher training programmes in Hungary.

Hungarian teachers neither learn Romany nor know anything about the particular linguistic and social problems that Roma children - particularly those who come from the Roma-speaking minority - must cope with in Hungarian schools.²⁵

János Báthory explained that in a typical Hungarian village, there will be a small school, possibly having two teachers, where Hungarian, Roma and other ethnic minority children will learn together. 'In this sort of situation,' he said, 'there is little opportunity for these teachers to change their teaching style':

You can't force them to use three different teaching methods. We should be very happy if they were well-trained Hungarian teachers without any specification but to teach to count and read and write. But the Hungarian schooling system tries to initiate change and to motivate the schools.²⁶

Antónia Hága pointed out that because of poverty, inadequate diet and overcrowded living conditions - up to twelve people may live in one room - Roma children are educationally disadvantaged from the outset.

Unprepared, a young teacher will not understand that Roma children lack the opportunities to develop the attentiveness and persistence of other children. While a normal

class session requires a child's attention for forty-five minutes, a Roma child's attention span is about fifteen minutes.²⁷ It is not surprising, therefore, that Roma children are regarded as predominantly educationally subnormal and mentally handicapped.

János Báthory explained:

There are special schools in Hungary for mentally handicapped children. It is true the majority of those children are Roma. Unfortunately there are many brain-damaged children among the Roma, first of all because of inherited genetic diseases among them. It goes back to the cause that in small communities intermarriage was between close relatives.

But, there are social causes. For example Roma smoke in early childhood. Even the girls. It is quite common among Roma mothers that during pregnancy they smoke and drink. Also, the social circumstances, the living circumstances are very poor for very small children.

I am quite sure that in some cases, those children are as normal as other children...but the tests before the school are very strict and are culturally determined. They are based on a middle-class value system. And from that viewpoint the children are weaker than the others. Maybe there are other viewpoints...and if we would have a flexible schooling system it would be much better for those children.²⁸

János Báthory indicated that the Hungarian government is interested in changing its educational policies: '...now there is a reform in schooling, mostly from the viewpoint of new thinking on minorities. We seek the possibility of making special schools.' He added:

It is one thing to enrol Gypsy children in elementary school and another thing for them to finish the school. About 60% of the Gypsy children finish elementary school. If you ask a Gypsy leader, he will complain that 40% of Gypsy children could not finish elementary school, but from the viewpoint of the government, this 40% is a very great success since thirty years ago only 5% of the Gypsy children could finish school successfully. Now 60% of the Gypsy children can finish elementary school.

Poor performance in primary school, and therefore lack of preparation for secondary schooling, are also cited as reasons for 'dropping-out.'²⁹ And certainly the failing economic situation that can offer only unemployment at the end of secondary school, provides no encouragement for formal learning. János Báthory said:

Twenty percent of the Gypsy children who finish elementary school can learn at a higher level. This is very low. But this number would be very agreeable in itself. The trouble is about half of those Gypsy children who begin secondary school give up their study...

They give up their studies because of discouragement, and for cultural reasons as well. In the case of girls, the Roma tradition of early marriages has its effect. Marriages at fourteen or fifteen years of age are usual. Roma girls usually leave elementary school because of pregnancy. 'And,' said Báthory, 'there is another cause':

Gypsy families have no strategy from generation to generation how to get higher positions into society. Gypsy children are not motivated by their parents. It is a generalization and there are lots of exceptions. But Gypsy parents say to their children 'why do you want to learn in school? If you go to high school you can earn as little money as your teacher earns. Do you want to be a poor devil like your high school teacher? It is not a good business...go to business, to the black market...go to illegal or semi-legal work and you will get better off much sooner.' Sometimes Gypsy children have to fight against their parents to stay in school.³⁰

Despite the lack of an educational tradition among most Roma groups, Agnes Daróczy said that she receives many letters from young Roma who have been forced to leave secondary school in order to support their families. She insisted that the Roma cannot deal with their situation without a full and comprehensive education: 'The only way for the Roma people to get out of this situation is for them to educate themselves, to go to places to study... The Roma intellectuals must not forget to help in this.'³¹

But which intellectuals? So few Roma have gone on to higher education that those that have done so are known by name. János Báthory said that there are less than a hundred known Roma University graduates in all of Hungary. The Hungarian Office for Nationalities and Ethnic Minorities is concerned, as are the Roma Parliament and AMALIPE about this situation. And so is Hungary's Free Democratic Party, which is supporting the Gandhi Foundation's proposal for a *Gandhi High-School for Talented Gypsy Youngsters*.³²

4. Ethnic Conflicts

In comparison with other Eastern and Central European states, I was told that Hungary is an 'island of peace' for the Roma. Appearance or reality? Béla Osztojkan's comment:

You won't be astonished to hear that the relationship between the Rom minority and the Hungarian majority is far from being problem-free... In Hungary there has been a tradition of being intolerant towards those who are different from the majority of the population. As a result the Roma population has, for centuries, been subject to all kinds of serious prejudice.

In Hungary there has been a tradition of racial discrimination and Hungarians are very much aware of Roma being a race different from the main body of the population. Various epithets have been used like 'work shirkers', when they speak about Roma people, who cannot be integrated, who resist even the very best intentions to adjust them to society. But this is just a device to find scapegoats.

Antónia Hága said, 'In Hungary you can see the phenomena of apartheid. For example, in the Bretsan in the east of the country, at the pub, a sign could be seen, "only for Whites"... this is a most dangerous situation...'³³

In their report prepared for the International Helsinki Federation, in 1990, Agnes Daróczy and János Bársony wrote:

Apart from pauperisation and the insecure existence, the Gypsy communities are inflicted the most by an overall fear, the sense of danger. Fear of the possibility that they could be excluded from the new consensus based upon the 'national revival' or that this consensus would be turned just against them: the 'strangers'.³⁴

While there has been little physical violence against the Roma over the past forty years - authoritarianism did not tolerate deviant behaviour either on the part of the Roma or on the part of others towards them - covert antagonism was there. Although all Hungarian citizens were equal before the law, the law did not necessarily treat them equally: Police and Law Courts often meted out punishment that was much harsher than received by Hungarians and members of other ethnic minorities.³⁵ The law enforcement agencies treat the Roma as harshly today as they did previously:

In the beginning of the 1980's they [the Police] began with relatively new measures against the Roma. There were secret written internal regulations in the beginning of the 1980's. While the Roma society had begun step by step to become integrated

into the majority of the society, the Police took action against them, registering them and non-Gypsy people who were with them. In case a Roma would be driving, they would be stopped and thoroughly investigated, just because they were Roma. The Roma would be subject to body searches...³⁶

A situation, I was informed, that continues with increasing frequency.

Over the past two years, the long-standing tensions between the Hungarian and Roma have become more pronounced. For the first time since the rise and fall of communism there has been physical violence. There have been 'skinhead' attacks with little, if any, police protection. It is reported that:

On the evening of September 12 1990, in the town of Eger in northern Hungary, a group of 150-200 skinheads attacked the Romani community living in the Csebokszari housing project. Armed with sticks, chains and knives they brutally beat and injured everyone they found in the houses: elderly people, pregnant women and children without exception.

Three weeks later an assault took place in the neighbouring town of Miskolc, when approximately 20-30 skinheads left a concert for the purpose of searching out Roma people for a fight.³⁸

On 7 September 1992, in Kétegyháza (south-east Hungary), two houses were burned and a third one was destroyed by villagers. There had been some thefts in the village. Although they had not been investigated, the police and the villagers believed they were carried out by the Roma. From the point of view of the villagers, if the police will not save them from the Roma, then they must take the law in their own hands:

Twenty or thirty people were in a lorry, and arrived at the house of a Gypsy family and started to destroy it. The Police arrived, but did not do anything, but let them complete the destruction and left. After the police left, the attackers felt encouraged to burn two other houses.

There was a radio journalist there. She tried to spray water on the flames, but was beaten by the people and threatened, and our colleagues arriving in the village were also threatened. When some of the people were later arrested this generated a strike in the village, and the villagers demanded that

the people who were arrested should be freed, they were released pending trial. Some Roma were also arrested, and they were released.

A week later, on 12 September two Roma were shot and killed in another village:

At six o'clock in the afternoon, a truck arrived at our house. Twenty to forty people were in and they were shouting at us, 'now we shall kill you,' and the result was that I and my family tried to escape through a courtyard.

We ran into the house of an old Hungarian lady. We were pursued, and the people asked the Hungarian old lady whether we were inside, and she said 'no,' but unfortunately they saw us through the window...they broke into the house and they also beat the old lady. I was beaten on my head, and they said 'you bloody Gypsies we will punish you...' They burned my house and my father's house, and they destroyed my brother's house. My brother is a teacher working in another village. And when he heard of the incident he came to help. My brother was beaten.

I was knocked unconscious. Fifteen minutes later I regained consciousness, and I was lying there. I was taken to the hospital. They told my mother to sit down and to wait although there were no other patients waiting. My arm was broken, and I have thirty-two stitches in my head. And I asked the doctor to let me stay in the hospital because I did not feel well, and the doctor said it is not a hostel for me to stay in.

- Translation of a video-taped interview³⁷

We went there to pick pears for the children, and we picked pears from the ground... We were coming out and had already walked for half an hour. We saw the guard sitting down by the side of the road. So we stopped right next to him and he had his gun in his hand, and he turned it towards Farkas and said 'put down all the pears' and so we poured out the pears on the ground.

Farkas and his wife were carrying the other bags on their shoulders. So we poured out the pears, and then the guard shot Farkas, and we were afraid, and started running...

...I was holding Katryn Mario's hand, and we ran together, but she fell on the ground and I couldn't hold her hand any more. And the guard came up to her, and she said to him not to shoot, but he shot her, and I started to run, and he shot after me too, but he didn't hit me...

We stood opposite him, we were standing face to face...we didn't even try to attack him, Farkas had the bag of pears on his shoulder so he couldn't do anything. The guard didn't say anything about what he would do. He was waiting for us with his gun ready.

This is land of the Village cooperative, and this man was the guard. They have no right to shoot people, and the gun he was using was a shotgun..

- Translation of a video-taped interview³⁹

Antónia Hága said: 'increased violence can be experienced in the country, and this is true...it will get worse':

The government is reluctant to acknowledge these events. The attacks by skinheads are taken as something that can occur anywhere in Europe. They forget that the percentage per person of skinhead attacks is lower in France, for example, than in Hungary. In all democratic countries there are new fascist and rightist elements, but all governments emphasize that they don't support them and try to suppress these phenomena and in this way they make it easier for the whole population to do the same. The governments support the general population's attitude towards these things. But it is different in Hungary.⁴⁰

Agnes Daróczy spoke about how Hungarian Roma would like to become fully assimilated within Hungarian society if they would be given the opportunity. But the attitude of Hungarians towards the Roma, and the increasing Roma unemployment and poverty is, she said, 'a scheduled social time-bomb.'

The general tensions being generated by the social crises are becoming more and more serious, and the tolerance of general society is getting lower. We fear that the easiest way of expressing the major part of their frustrations will be to use the Roma as scapegoats.⁴¹

'It is not a consolation for us that we are not as bad as Romania,' said János Báthory,

Unfortunately, those events are more and more frequent, and if you take their coordinates, the cases are growing. In the last three years, when this office was set up we knew about five 'skinhead' cases or other violent cases, and the police investigated all of these cases, and to be quite honest, the police are reluctant to investigate these questions as ethnic questions. They sometimes consider it is a street fight between youngsters, not more.

But, now there are two cases before the Courts, in which the title is 'Crime Against an Ethnic Group'. This is a great success for us that the Police treat such cases not as a simple scandal but as a crime against a minority, since in Hungarian courts these are two different types of cases. Simple cases have a maximum penalty depending

upon the injury and which is not more than 6 months, but in case of crimes against a minority or racial group, the penalty is from two to five years.

Asked if he can predict an increase in racial tension over the next few years, János Báthory said 'Yes'.

We are afraid to go to Budapest. I just don't care to go. The TV said that the skin-heads are beating people up again - foreigners and students... Someone [a Roma from the village] who had been in hospital was coming home on the bus and was beaten up... We don't go out of the village...we really do not go anywhere. People are mostly not going out from the village...

- Roma woman⁴²

5. Health and Medicine

There are no health statistics on the Hungarian Roma. Roma organizations refuse to allow studies to be undertaken that indicate Roma ethnic identity. They are, of course, concerned about the information being used to the disadvantage of the Roma, but the consequence is that their refusal is in itself disadvantageous as it does not enable the government to determine the health situation and medical requirements. The overall picture provided by different respondents is the same, but the details are not always clear.

Compared with the Romanian Roma, family sizes among the Hungarian Roma are smaller, averaging between three and four rather than eight to ten or more children.⁴³ Despite the smaller family size, infant mortality, however, is still high. According to a report prepared by Mr Gabor Demsky, Mayor of Budapest:

Statistical data show that premature birth and infant mortality with Gypsies is more than twice as high than the average. Babies with low birth weight are more often subject to physical and mental disorders, and early discovery of these problems is hindered by the fact that Gypsies have only limited access to modern medical care...⁴⁴

Infant mortality figures were not available. Antónia Hága said: 'When in other parts of the society infant mortality is measurable in terms of tens of thousands [of live births], among the Roma population it is measured against thousands [of live births]'.⁴⁵

It is argued that because Roma girls mature earlier than others, they marry and have children earlier than the general population. This argument may be doubtful as school-age maternity, however, is not restricted to the Roma. It is well-recognized in nations as far apart as India and the United States.

The fact that Roma girls have a high rate of premature births, and that neo-natal weight is lower than the average (2,300-2,400 grams) for the Roma compared to 3,250 grams for non-Roma, suggests not so much a propensity for early fecundity, but a physiological immaturity not yet able to tolerate early births which, accompanied by poor health conditions, makes high levels of infant mortality almost inevitable.

Mothers are young and they live a really self-destructive life. They smoke, drink and living conditions are not good enough. At the same time the nursing network that could help mothers is not good enough so they cannot prepare these young mothers to take care of themselves and their babies.⁴⁶

At the other end of the scale is the markedly shorter life-span of Roma adults in comparison to the overall Hungarian population. Antónia Hága said that in Subuch county

life expectancy is as low as thirty-two years of age.⁴⁷ Béla Osztójkán mentioned forty-four years, Agnes Daróczy spoke of fifty-five to sixty as Roma averages.

To see an elderly Rom person is almost a miracle. They become adults very early, and they age very early. Only thirty years ago you could see seventy or eighty year old Gypsy people, but now they usually die when they are about fifty or sixty years old.⁴⁸

Generally poor living conditions, including damp housing, and the fact of heavy smoking from childhood, and drinking soon after, take their toll. Asthma, cardiac, circulatory and rheumatic illnesses and tuberculosis are common.

Because of all their handicaps before birth and during infancy and childhood, the physical endowments of the Gypsy population are usually unfavourable: they are characterised by lower body weight and are more liable to diseases. In spite of their poor physical condition, however, Gypsy men and women are compelled to take jobs which are especially exhausting and physically demanding: most unskilled workers in industry and seasonal workers in agriculture are Gypsies and it is also them who work in most jobs which constitute a health hazard.⁴⁹

I had to retire because of illness. I was working as a cleaner in the shipyards. My husband was working on ship insulation, and is also retired because of illness. I have arterial sclerosis and a heart problem, and my husband has high blood pressure. I get medical assistance, but my husband does not get any officially, but my doctor writes the prescriptions for him in my name...

- Roma woman⁵⁰

6. Housing

The house has one room and one kitchen. Now there are seven people living here. As we had six children we got the house from the Village, and only have to pay rent.

- Roma woman⁵¹

The typical housing conditions for large Gypsy families are either shantytowns outside villages or crowded slums in the cities.⁵²

According to Agnes Daróczy and her colleagues:

In 1983 60,000 people were living in slums. While 80% of the Roma society was living in rural areas and only 20% in urban areas, 17% of the rural Gypsy population were living in very small villages without schools, electricity or running water...⁵³

During this period, when the Roma men were the labourers on building sites in Hungary's cities, local housing was not provided, and large numbers of them had to become daily and weekly commuters, spending long hours travelling to and from their homes. Other Roma had accommodation in factory hostels, but now with factory closures the hostels are closing down as well, leaving their former Roma workers unemployed and homeless.⁵⁴

7. Human Rights

Racial and religious discrimination is illegal in Hungary. All Hungarian citizens are equal before the law. Since 1990, however, the Hungarian Parliament has been trying to establish a special *Minorities Law* to assure the differential development of Hungary's ethnic minorities.

According to Béla Osztójkán's account, following several unsuccessful attempts to prepare a draft bill acceptable to Parliament, the government accepted the Roma Parliament's 1990 initiative to form a 'Minority Round Table'. The Round Table, comprising constitutional experts, government and minorities representatives, undertook the task of preparing a draft law, which it produced in 1991.⁵⁵

Subsequently, said Béla Osztójkán, the draft law was presented by the government to the Council of Europe and the European Parliament as an indication of Hungary's approach to its minorities. It was expected that the government would then present the draft as a Bill for passage through the Hungarian Parliament.

On 6 February 1992, without consulting the Minorities Round Table, the government presented an entirely new draft to Parliament, regarded as far less favourable for the minorities than drafts prepared prior even to the Minorities Round Table discussions. This government-sponsored draft does not have the support of the minorities organizations. Their assumption is that the government had no intention of presenting the earlier draft to Parliament, but only wished to make a 'show-piece' of it to impress European legislators with Hungary's good intentions.⁵⁶ Béla Osztójkán said:

We have certain 'tip-offs' from people we know in certain ministries. The *Ministry of the Interior* is opposed to the Minority Law Draft because the officials think that it is unjustified to create an alternative local government system, which would serve the interest of the national minorities.

The *Ministry of Culture* is opposed to the Draft because people there say there is no need to give cultural autonomy to the minorities as this would upset Hungary's national unity. It would be detrimental to enable people to foster their culture and their language, as this would go against the interest of the Hungarian nation being a unified whole.

The *Ministry of Finance* says Hungary is too poor to afford between seven and eight billion Forints for the creation of certain institutions which the minority law would envisage.⁵⁷

'Further,' he said:

The Hungarian government does not want to spend money in assuring equality for its minorities, and especially the Roma population, so it is playing for time, and tries to postpone the actual enactment as far from now as possible, but in the meantime it wants to make a show of it being democratic. That is why it is circulating the draft among international organizations, and it wants to make an impression that Hungary, which has had a good record on its minority policy is now busy elaborating this Minority Law.⁵⁸

Antónia Hága confirmed that a *Draft Bill* is before Parliament, but she, too, said:

Only a much more limited version is... The later version is not so good for the minorities, and the right of self-government is not granted by the new draft... The government's intentions are understandable. The neighbouring - the 'mother' - countries [of Hungary's ethnic minorities] must be concerned about the fate of their minorities in Hungary. That is why this draft must be very impressive for them. But at the same time it must be as cheap as possible to implement. One condition that is vital is cultural autonomy, as these minorities must preserve their mother tongues. It is tragic that, for example, now only the Grandmothers can speak their German language. It is the same for Romanians...⁵⁹

And, as we have seen, for the Roma, too, most of whom, long ago, forgot their Romany.

In the new draft, Antónia Hága said, the costs of cultural autonomy are not even mentioned, yet it is only by having cultural autonomy that the minorities could apply to the government for the financial support necessary for publishing in their respective languages.⁶⁰ The Hungarian Constitutional Court set a deadline of 31 December 1992 for passage of this Bill but, by the end of January, 1993, it had not been passed for 'lack of time'.⁶¹

While minorities rights - human rights - are a legislative matter, their implementation is a very practical concern for those directly affected by them, and in this case, the Roma. 'We mentioned the village of Kétegyháza, where there was physical violence against two Rom families,' said an AMALIPE lawyer:

In our reading, that was an example of a pogrom. The Minister of the Interior says it was an ordinary criminal incident. In several cases Rom associations sought legal recourse but in none of the cases could they get it.

Let me also mention that we hope that our nation can obtain its civil rights, that this will even come true in our life time, that our civil rights would be accepted. I cannot speak about our present condition without speaking about our fears...

With the fall of socialism the hard nationalistic ideas have emerged, and behind these ideas is the tendency of trying to find a scapegoat...because the Roma people never organized themselves for a war, or for the use of force...and always had possibilities of living in peace with each other. We see the danger that we will disappear one by one, group by group, family by family, because there is no responsibilities for government helping us to face our problems...⁶²

8. International Assistance

Among questions posed to respondents was, 'in what way do you believe the "international community" can be of assistance to the Roma situation?' Antónia Hága replied that:

Delegates from all Roma countries should be sent to the international community...they must present their problem there. This is critical for Roma in Europe as their physical existence is in danger. The UN should have a distinct section concerning European Roma, whose task would be to exercise the appropriate pressure on the governments...⁶³

The international community is regarded as the transnational forum at which the problems of the Roma - a transnational people - must be presented. There is little confidence that the Hungarian government is either willing - or even able - to develop and implement comprehensive and positive policies for its Roma citizens. At the same time, there is a real sense of the danger of a neo-fascist revival that, as in Germany after the First World War, will emerge out of the financial discontent of the people. But, because the Hungarian government itself is regarded as being implicated in Hungary's emerging neo-fascism, it is believed that there is need for action 'at a higher level' - the level of the international community.

There was an incident on Friday [23 October, 1992] in Budapest. It was the anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. The President of the Republic was not allowed to give his speech because there were at least 1,000 skinheads - not only skinheads, but people with Nazi uniforms, who were whistling and shouting, and now there is clear evidence that they were supported by the Internal Minister, that they were supported by the government.

There were some Border Guards there, and the Border Guards come under the Interior Ministry. There were Border Guards with the skinheads and they were shouting together with the skinheads. And there were some MPs of the ruling party, and they were among the skinheads...and it is clear that it was supported and organized by members of the ruling party.⁶⁴

Speaking of the event, Antónia Hága said: 'Yesterday at the meeting of the Parliament, it was obvious that the government was reluctant and unwilling to distinguish itself from these rightist phenomena'.⁶⁵

'Foreign politicians should watch with attention what is going on', said Béla Osztoján. 'We are well aware,' he said, 'that Western Europe is afraid of poverty, and of large-scale immigration from Eastern and Central Europe that would undermine its standard of living...and that the Roma among other people should stay where they are':

To prevent such immigration, it is important that the United Nations, that the European Parliament, and other European fora, that Westerners should not accept at face value the statements of government officials. There are so many lies uttered by seriously looking politicians, so you should always see for yourself if such statements are true.

The first priority is political attentiveness. The second is assistance in terms of upgrading, or in many cases creating, the infrastructure for the operation of the grassroots organizations, the spontaneously organized Romany organizations.

If you can help find Western organizations that can grant assistance for the infrastructure of Romany organizations that would be of immense importance... Provided the assistance is directly granted to the beneficiaries, then that new or up-graded infrastructure would enable the Romany organizations to make Romany people aware that there is hope, that they should not despair, that they should not give up their homes, that they should hope things will improve, that things will change for the better, that their children will have schooling, that they will have heated homes, and so on, so that they will not leave their homeland.⁶⁶

Béla Osztoján pointed to the EEC's PHARE programme as the kind that is of no help to the Roma. PHARE has granted considerable sums to Hungarian institutions and organizations.⁶⁷ It has also invited applications from the Roma Parliament. Béla Osztoján said that the requirement that participants find 40% of the project funds means that PHARE's assistance is beyond the reach of the Roma organizations as they do not have access to that kind of money.⁶⁸

9. Law and Jurisprudence

The Roma's relationship with law enforcement agencies is traditionally a poor one. Although Roma are rapidly placed under suspicion, or apprehended, at the intimation of any misdemeanours, they do not receive police or legal assistance when they are the victims of unlawful acts.

It is assumed, that whether semi-legal, or outright criminal acts are carried out in Hungary, the highest proportion will be due to the Roma. But, János Báthory pointed out that criminality is characteristic of urban Roma, 'since it is not a question in an everyday poor Roma village where no one has a chance to have a legal or an illegal way of life.'⁶⁹

AMALIPE lawyers explained that from the early 1980s the police began undertaking a total registration of the Roma population as a means of controlling 'Roma criminality':

[In the 1980's] there were specific departments concentrating on Gypsy criminality, now they are starting to rejuvenate their methods, which began and they promised to stop. They have carried out attacks against Gypsies in Sobuj County, in south-west Hungary, and in the least two months they started again to control Gypsy people in the streets and in cars. They have started again with repressive police methods...⁷⁰

Despite the size of the Roma population, and its socio-economic stratification, within and among its many communities, the police, I was told, make no distinctions between wealthier or poorer, more educated or less educated Roma (between 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' Roma, it was said). All Roma are tarred with the same brush of criminal suspicion.⁷¹

10. Migration

Anti-Roma antagonism in Hungary has not reached the levels to be found in Romania, for example. In general, therefore, Hungarian Roma seem to have little or no interest in migrating to the West, but they may well feel forced to flee there if the physical violence, and overall prejudice against them should increase. 'Their interest', said Agnes Daróczy, 'is in improving their situation so that they are not forced to leave.'⁷²

I don't think that Roma people can help themselves very much because they will get no support from the government. Sooner or later the Hungarians will want the Roma to leave the country. There will be an explosion of some kind. The Roma people now accept the situation, but sooner or later they will do something...they will not be as peaceful as they are now.

Because the economic situation is getting worse, the Roma people have no hope, and eventually they will not be able to work at all, as no one is employing them. I personally would move to India, but most would want to go to Germany. But two families who went to Germany came back because of the attacks there.

- Dula Toldi, Roma village leader⁷³

'Yes we are thinking where we could go,' Albert Horvath commented. 'Could we immigrate somewhere, as Roma were always oppressed and could only live on the edge of the villages? But we find there is no place that we could go to.'

We do think that within the near future our lives could be in danger. I have already written to the Prime Minister - an open letter that was published in the Press - because now the Roma are afraid of famine, because of unemployment they do not have enough to eat, and even the request for aid from the Hungarian government has not been listened to.⁷⁴

Instead of there being a potential 'escape route' to the West, the Roma Parliament would like to see 'a general solution, for financial aid for improving our lives, for education, for creating jobs, and a targeted programme concentrating on Gypsy problems.'⁷⁵ Béla Osztójkán said:

We are aware of - and we think we understand the reasons for - the worries of Western Europe and the United Nations of the potential danger of a westward Roma migration. We too are sincerely worried by the recent phenomena of wide-scale migration.

It is not just a question of economic difficulties that is likely to be caused if there is a large-scale influx inflicted on Western Europe. And it is not just a question of grass-roots resistance in Western Europe to an incoming migration from Eastern and Cen-

tral Europe. There is the very serious problem of when aliens come in large numbers to a country, there comes xenophobia, and various forms of racism, and also neo-Nazism is there to re-appear which is a very worrying phenomenon.

It's not just the question that people under difficult economic conditions seek for better working conditions, but the question should be interpreted the following way: people who have long been discriminated against and persecuted in terms of human rights, in terms of access to jobs, people who have been forced to stay unskilled, and thus robbed of the chance to obtain skills, and people who are nowadays, even after the changes there (in Romania) are kept away from jobs under the pretext of restructuring the economy, so these people are in despair and decide to leave their countries.⁷⁶

Although Hungarian Roma have not been trying to leave Hungary, Romanian and Yugoslavian Roma have been trying to enter. They have not had much of a welcome from Hungarian border guards:

The practice of whether people...from Romania, Serbia, the former Yugoslavia and other countries...are admitted at the borders is entirely arbitrary. Neither the Hungarian state, nor the general view of Hungarian society accepts that conditions in places such as Romania are terrible.

Most of the people have agreed that 'the boat is full' so Hungary is not able to accept any more refugees. It is up to the border guards at the check-points whether they let people in to Hungary. They have the right to decide...

Of course we have the practice that Gypsies are considered as people who would like to come to Hungary for bad purposes. They look at them as economic refugees or as criminals, and therefore do not let these people into the country, even in the case their lives are in danger, just because of the colour of their skin.

At the largest refugee camp in which people from Croatia are living, it is in Madytod, in south-west Hungary, there was a similar incident there. The camp leader forced some Gypsy refugees to leave the country and to return to Croatia, just because they were Gypsies.⁷⁷

While the possibility of such events cannot be denied, ascertaining the fact of them is another matter:

MB: Is there clear evidence that there were Roma asylum seekers who applied for asylum, and were refused because they were Roma?

AMALIPE: We do not have clear evidence...

MB: From the standpoint of International Law, is it your understanding that the Hungarian government is in violation of its responsibilities to accept applicants for political asylum?

AMALIPE: Up to now we have not been in a position to obtain clear evidence. Human rights activists living in Romania have the opportunity to obtain such evidence. It is a violation of the Law itself that people are refused to enter Hungary, but we do not see it because the people are not allowed to enter. We are getting our information from human rights activists in Romania. In the Yugoslavian case there was a specific example that we managed to discover...⁷⁸

The AMALIPE lawyers said that there was information that upon their being refused entry by Hungarian border guards, in August 1992, Roma asylum seekers were shot and killed by Romanian guards upon their return.

11. National Assistance

No specifically targeted national (governmental) programmes designed to assist the Roma were indicated in the course of the discussions. The Roma Parliament's position is that it expects the government to at least fulfil what they see as its mandate and legal commitments:

...to create the required conditions for a man to live a life worthy of human beings. We expect the government to live up to its election promises; that certain institutions should be put in place, certain rights should be granted. We are literate enough to know that a government doesn't do a favour when it does something good for its subjects. It's the government's duty to live up to its mandate.⁷⁹

What kind of assistance can the Hungarian government offer its Roma people? The Office for Nationalities and Ethnic Minorities has certain aspirations:

First of all to strengthen the legal system and to apply those regulations, and laws and rights which are valid in Hungary since decades. We accepted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but the police and the juridical system are reluctant to apply these rights.

First of all there is no methodology for investigating injuries against minority groups. They do not know how to investigate it. They have no specialists in the Police. They had no cases until now. That is why they do not know how to prove, for example, if a person was kicked out of a workplace because he is a bad worker, because he comes late for work, or because he was a Gypsy. In America there is a very sophisticated method to decide...but not in Hungary.⁸⁰

The problem is not that there are not any anti-discrimination laws in Hungary, but that there are no counselling procedures to advise the Roma how to deal with their infraction, and there is no legal aid system to support either the investigation of a case or its resolution through the Courts. János Báthory said:

But we have more than 150 Gypsy organizations which, in their documents and constitutions, profess they will practise this work to defend the Gypsies, to represent their interests. And they enjoy considerable state support, but they don't do this.⁸¹

When asked what the State should do in this regard, János Báthory replied:

First of all, to strengthen the legal system and take into practice the principles... To force the Police to form their special department to investigate these cases, and to bring cases to Court, which would establish a demonstration trial to show to other courts how to handle these problems.

Secondly to organize a nation-wide problem-solving ethnic conflict prevention and conflict resolution practice; to make local conciliatory commissions which will be founded by Gypsies and non-Gypsies at the local level.

We are ready to train them, and to finance a nation-wide organization, but no one can force the people to undertake voluntary work, since this is voluntary work; mediation work; problem solving; conflict prevention. We are ready to pay the bill to keep up central places, but we are in the beginning of this process, and are just now finding local places to begin this work.

And the third line is for the future, and very important: it is to renew the school system, to introduce a pluralistic view, to apply multi-ethnic methods in schooling, to teach, for example, about the culture of minorities, not only for minorities but for the majority students of course...⁸²

There is, then, a contentious point. There is little possibility of the Roma situation in Hungary, or anywhere else in Central and Eastern Europe, being resolved without an infrastructure, and the necessary governmental will and funding, to undertake 'situational' research and effective programme design, development and implementation across a broad range of areas. For example, Antónia Hága had said:

The greatest problem is that really big Gypsy organizations ask for general and deep [sic] government programmes for the Gypsies. Since 1971 there hasn't been any research and estimation of the Gypsy population.

They do not know the size of the Gypsy population. There might be between 600,000 and 800,000 thousand. They do not know how many are unemployed, but can only guess that 80 percent of the unemployed are Gypsies...

It is impossible to create a general programme for the Gypsy minority programme in Hungary, before they have a general research for the whole population.

They do not know the average age of the Gypsies in Hungary.

They know it quite well that the problems of the different generations must be different...

To undertake the needed initiatives in education, employment, health, medicine, housing, minority rights and so forth, requires the elaboration, coordination and integration of information and ideas. Those with professional competence must be found and brought together, those without the needed abilities must be trained. Governmental and non-governmental workers, Roma and non-Roma, existing organizations and local community groups - the 'grass roots' - must be brought together.

The implementation of such activities will inevitably require or, by default, create, a central institution to rationalize competing and even conflicting demands. The government has stated that there are too many disparate organizations with which to deal (hence the Roma Parliament was created). But such an institute, if successful, would inevitably attract attention, would become a focus of Roma interests, not only in Hungary, but elsewhere because Roma problems are not just Hungarian but transnational. This, I understand, worries the government. János Báthory said:

I should be quite honest. Gypsy leaders want to make Hungary a Gypsy world political and cultural centre. We disagree with this idea. We are not intended to become a centre of European Gypsy policy. Our troubles are quite enough for us to solve. We do not want to found any international organizations. If the Gypsies want to organize in Hungary a central Gypsy institution, it is up to them, but the government will not embrace them in this direction. We do not want to become the destination of Gypsy immigration from eastern Europe.⁸³

12. Politics

There was insufficient opportunity to become apprised of the political situation of the Hungarian Roma. They are clearly not politically strong, but they do have the support and help of the Free Democratic Party.

The Roma Parliament is a representative but not a legislative body - 'an association of associations' - representing about 200,000 Roma belonging to forty-three Roma associations across Hungary.

The Roma Parliament came into being as a response to a large number spontaneous grass roots organizations springing up among other minorities and among the Roma population. There were complaints on behalf of the government: 'we don't know

who to turn to, who to negotiate with, who is the authentic voice of the Roma population.' It is the umbrella organization of 43 Roma organizations.⁸⁴

Its task, as I understand it from Béla Osztojkán, is to seek to resolve the internal matters brought to it by its members, and to act as a 'go-between' between these organizations and the Hungarian Parliament and government. But although the Roma Parliament sees itself as a potential partner with the government - perhaps one should even say an 'implementing partner' - to try to help the government work out the policies and practices needed for the protection, assistance to and development of the Roma, the government, in Béla Osztojkán's view, does not see things quite that way:

Unfortunately the Hungarian government under the present regime has not regarded the minorities as a partner and it has not regarded the minorities that are outside of Parliament as partners. In fact, even the trade unions are not regarded as partners.⁸⁵

Lacking the opportunities, as it sees the situation, of collaboration with the government, the Roma Parliament looks ahead:

...It has a long-term strategy to preserve itself for the time when a future Hungarian government decides to regard it as a partner for negotiations in substance, and in the meantime it is active in trying to heighten the political awareness of its members. It strives to organize and rally the support of as many Roma individuals as possible. It has been active in setting up local sections in as many localities as possible and to coordinate their work.

Under the currently unfavourable conditions the Roma Parliament has to be content by doing very little else than organizing its members, and maintaining and enhancing the political awareness of its membership and training at least one spokesman in each locality who can articulate the problems of the people concerned. But to succeed in doing that would need an adequate infrastructure.⁸⁶

13. Self-Organization

One of the current features of Hungarian Roma life is fear: the fear is that they shall continue to be prevented from full participation in Hungarian society; the fear that they will be subject to increased violence; the fear of expulsion and that they will even ultimately disappear. The disappearance of some 500,000 or more people is difficult to imagine, but to-day's relative calm could presage a tempest tomorrow. The murderousness of Balkan 'ethnic cleansing' and the genocide of the past should not be taken too lightly.

The Roma sense the need to protect themselves. For some this means assimilating into Hungarian society, so that they can be less visible and enjoy the benefits and privileges, as they see them, of everyone else. For others, it means maintaining their cultural identity but with the respect and the full rights that are due to any ethnic minority in Hungary: to be 'separate but equal'. Others, again, will try to find a path between these two. Few will want to emigrate, and should they want to, to where?

'Until people regard Roma as a general group, they will not have any identity, individuality, dignity and honour,' said Albert Horvath. This general identity, however, is ethnic rather than cultural, as the Hungarian Roma (Romungro) regard themselves as culturally much closer to the Hungarians than to the Wallachian and Beash Roma.

We Hungarian Roma want our children to go to the same schools with Hungarians (like with the Jews) without any discrimination, but the groups that represent the *Hungary Roma (the Wallachians)* want the parliament to grant them a total self-gov-

ernment, with different schools, as a minority. I think this is like a utopia. They want to get the financial support from the government, but they cannot make it on their own as they are not ready.⁸⁷

Whichever route individual Roma choose to take, the necessity for collective Roma self-reliance and self-organization is understood.

Antónia Hága said:

Self-determination and identity is a very difficult problem for the Roma, because being a Roma contains so many pejorative elements...because when they arrived in Hungary it was an absolute Monarchy and they were the servants of the society: knife sharpeners, locksmiths, circus people... If I declare myself a Gypsy, I declare myself as a part of the bases level of society...⁸⁸

In past centuries, Roma communities were broken up and the Roma became widely dispersed across Hungary. The disappearance of their traditional crafts under communism has left a cultural hiatus. Previously fathers passed on their skills to their sons and, of course, more than skills were transmitted this way, but the vital sense of cultural continuity was passed on as well as well. Today, this link with the past has been badly damaged; the Roma have lost much of their inner cohesiveness, yet have found little place in the dominant society.

Béla Osztójkán noted that the Hungarian budget allocates between eighty and ninety million Forints annually for assisting the various Roma organizations, but that in distributing the funds, 'the government pursues a policy of "splitism"'. 'Certain organizations which are considered as "loyal" to the government get preference, whereas others get cold-shouldered,' he said.⁸⁹

We have told the government that there is a very urgent need for it to evolve a crisis-management programme for it to address in a complex manner the problems of the Roma population. In addition we recommended that a programme of rehabilitation is needed.

By rehabilitation we mean the radical improvement of the conditions of the Roma people. But so far there has not been any response to that. Then the Roma Parliament thought that maybe it could draw up such a scheme for government consideration. Or maybe a member of Parliament could introduce such a draft into parliament.

But the problem is that to draw up such a comprehensive plan you need a lot of field research which is very costly. At the moment we just cannot afford commissioning experts to carry out such research.

Unable to find either the political support or financial sponsorship for such activities, the Roma Parliament has been making contacts outside of Hungary. As a result it found it has a common cause with Roma elsewhere in Central, Eastern and Western Europe, which led to the formation of *EuroRom*, a European-wide Roma organization.

The first statutory meeting of *EuroRom* was held in Budapest in the summer of 1992. Béla Osztójkán maintains that there are fifteen million Roma in all of Europe (see chart in Chapter One for different figures), and that *EuroRom* should be their unitary representative. A small executive committee has been established, and the provincial chapter of one of Hungary's political parties, the Federation of Young Democrats, has offered help in organizing the next *EuroRom* congress.⁹⁰

There is, then, an interest, and a will on the part of Roma organizations to find solutions to the problems that Roma people have in Hungary. Yet, the organizations are not without their critics who see them as being too far removed from the real interests of the people they are supposed to serve, and in particular, that they are more devoted to the preservation of Roma culture (music, dance, etc.) than in undertaking the needed social and political self-organization.

One Roma respondent commented that they are more interested in their professional politics, and in competing with each other for finances, than they are in 'working for the people.' She said:

These Roma officials are not responsible to the people; the people cannot recall the officers... The Roma people could work out their own little organizations themselves...the government always supports the Roma organizations, but the Roma organizations are not the Roma people. They sell themselves as having the Roma people behind them, but it is not true.

In 1992 the government shared out 100 million Forints among 106 Roma organizations. But, I was told, this meant that eleven large national organizations received the most, and the balance went to the remaining 95 organizations which are scattered throughout the countryside:

And they could carry out the tasks of protecting the rights of the Roma people in the countryside, but basically the large national organizations got most of the money. The little organizations only got ten to fifteen thousand Forints each for the year.⁹¹

One such organization is in a village outside Budapest. The local Roma leader, Dula Toldi told its short story:

There are 400 Roma living in this village. Eighty of them belong to our Association, which is mostly cultural. 'We were awarded money from the Department of Ethnic Minorities, but it was given to the village mayor and we never received any...'⁹²

14. Welfare

Unemployment figures only take into account those who are registered for unemployment benefits. As eligibility depends upon one having become unemployed, many Roma not employed prior to, or at the time of, unemployment benefits were introduced, are not eligible.⁹³

Those who are not eligible for unemployment benefits can apply for social welfare payments from their municipality. Municipal authorities, however, are reported as arbitrary in deciding who shall or shall not receive payments.⁹⁴

'Unemployed people only get their money for one year,' Dula Toldi said. 'In the case of unemployed Roma, their social security payments are coming to the end. This winter will be the critical point, because people will not be able to heat their homes or feed their children in the winter.'

Dula Toldi was a mason, but is now unemployed. He does not receive any unemployment benefits. He works at what odd jobs he can find, and his wife is a kindergarten teacher but their collective income is well below the Forints 7,000 per month regarded as basic.

Of the Roma in this particular village, only eight to ten people, Dula Toldi said, received any form of social security - about Forints 3,000 per month. Asked why so few people receive such payments, he said that to do so they must go to another village and

wait for two or three days. Although it was unclear why, considering that they are unemployed, they do not have time to go there. Moreover, if they can work one day a week, he said, they earn more than they can get from social security.⁹⁵

NOTES

1. From a telefaxed extract of pp.131-132 of *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, volume number and date unknown, and received from the Hungarian Office for Nationalities and Ethnic Minorities through the auspices of UNHCR, Budapest.
2. Albert Horvath (26.10.1992).
3. János Báthory (27.10.1992).
4. Béla Osztojkan (24.10.1992).
5. See Bathory, János, *Gypsies: The Largest Minority Group in Hungary*, Budapest, Hungarian Office for Nationalities and Ethnic Minorities, 1992, pp. 2-3.
6. AMALIPE (28.10. 1992).
7. Béla Osztojkan (24.10.1992).
8. Béla Osztojkan (24.10.1992).
9. Béla Osztojkan (24.10.1992)
10. Báthory, J., *op.cit.* p.8.
11. Antónia Hága (27.10.1992).
11. Dula Toldi (28.10.1992).
13. Agnes Daróczy (27.10.1992).
14. János Báthory (27.10.1992).
15. Albert Horvath (24.10.1992).
13. Roma Family (28.10.1992).
17. Agnes Daróczy (27.10.1992).
15. Dula Toldi (28.10.1992).
19. János Báthory (27.10.1992).
20. AMALIPE (28.10.1992).
21. János Báthory (27.10.1992).
22. Béla Osztojkan (24.10.1992).
23. János Báthory (24.10.1992).
24. Béla Osztojkan (24.10.1992).
25. Antónia Hága ((27.10.1992).
26. János Báthory (27.10.1992).
27. Antónia Hága (27.10.1992).
28. János Báthory (27.10.1992).
29. Béla Osztojkan (24.10.1992).

30. János Báthory (27.10.1992).
31. AMALIPE (28.10.1992).
32. See *The Gandhi Foundation and the Gandhi High-School for Talented Gypsy Youngsters*, Pécs, Hungary, The Gandhi Foundation, 1992:
- Large Hungarian Gypsy organizations as well as respected individuals consider the present educational situation of Gypsy children to be unsatisfactory...
- They believe in multicultural education, because ethnic Hungarian and ethnic Gypsy people live together in every-day life. The schools have to prepare everybody to practise tolerance toward each culture...
- Well-known Gypsy intellectuals are even less satisfied with the present school curriculum. Neither the Gypsy language, nor Gypsy literature, nor Gypsy history are taught in Hungarian schools...
- Hungarian educators and Gypsy intellectuals resent not being able to do anything about the fact that Gypsy youngsters completely vanish from the school system around the age of 13...
- Both Gypsy intellectuals and government experts are convinced that Hungary needs Gypsy lawyers, physicians, professors, engineers, social workers and agronomists. For this reason they have established the Gandhi Foundation...
- The Gandhi high-school in the town of Kaposvár in Somogy county will open its doors in 1993. This will be the first high-school that seeks out talented Gypsy youngsters that will be educated together with their Hungarian class-mates...
33. Antónia Hága (27.10.1992).
34. Daróczy, Agnes and Bársony, János, *A Report on the Case of the Gipsies in Hungary* for the International Helsinki Federation, Budapest, AMALIPE, 1990, p.3.
35. Béla Osztójkán (24.10.1992).
36. AMALIPE (28.10.1992).
37. Video-tape shown at AMALIPE (28.10.1992).
38. See: *Reported Cases of Hostility, Discrimination and Violence against Roma-Gypsy People in Central and Eastern European Countries*, Bucharest, Helsinki Committee of the International Romani Union, 1991, p.2.
39. Video-tape shown at AMALIPE (28.10.1992).
40. Antónia Hága (27.10.1992).
41. AMALIPE (28.10.1992).
42. Roma villager (28.10.1992).
43. Báthory, János, *Gypsies: The Largest Minority Group in Hungary*, op.cit , p. 6.
44. Demsky, Gabor, *Medical and Social Situation of the Gypsy Population in Hungary*, Budapest, (no.publ.), 1992, pp.2 ff.
45. AMALIPE (28.10.1992).
46. Antónia Hága (28.10.1992).
47. Antónia Hága (27.10.1992).
48. AMALIPE (28.10.1992).
49. Demsky, Gabor, op. cit. p.3.
50. Roma Family (28.10.1992).
50. Roma Family (28.10.1992).

52. Demsky, Gabor, *op. cit.* p.2.
53. AMALIPE (28.10.1992).
54. AMALIPE (28.10.1992).
54. Béla Osztojkán (24.10.1992).
56. Béla Osztojkán (24.10.1992).
57. Béla Osztojkán (24.10.1992).
58. Béla Osztojkán (24.10.1992).
59. Antónia Hága (27.10.1992).
60. Antónia Hága (27.10.1992).
61. Telephone enquiry to the Hungarian Permanent Mission to the United Nations, Geneva, (25.01.1993).
62. AMALIPE (28.10.1992).
63. Antónia Hága (27.10.1992).
64. AMALIPE (28.10.1992).
65. Antónia Hága (27.10.1992).
66. Béla Osztojkán (24.10.1992).
67. The PHARE Secretariat, Brussels, were not in a position to indicate the amount.
68. Béla Osztojkán was slightly in error, but the situation is no easier, as the PHARE programme provides a maximum of 70% of project funding, and applicants must also find partner organizations from within the EEC. See: Commission of the European Communities, *PHARE Democracy Programme*, Brussels CEC, 1992, 4p.
69. János Báthory (27.10.1992).
70. AMALIPE (28.10.1992).
71. AMALIPE (28.10.1992).
72. AMALIPE (28.10.1992)
73. Interviews with Roma families (28.10.1992).
74. Albert Horvath (26.10.1992).
75. Béla Osztojkán (24.10.1992).
76. Béla Osztojkán (24.10.1992).
77. AMALIPE (28.10.1992).
78. AMALIPE (28.10.1992).
79. Béla Osztojkán (24.10.1992).
80. János Báthory (27.10.1992).
81. János Báthory (27.10.1992).
82. János Báthory (27.10.1992).
83. János Báthory (27.10.1992).
84. Béla Osztojkán (24.10.1992).

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85. Béla Osztójkán (24.10.1992).
86. Béla Osztójkán (24.10.1992).
87. Albert Horvath (26.10.1992).
88. Antónia Hága (27.10.1992).
89. Béla Osztójkán (24.10.1992).
90. Béla Osztójkán (24.10.1992).
91. AMALIPE member (27.10.1992).
92. Dula Toldi (28.10.1992).
93. Béla Osztójkán (24.10.1992).
94. Béla Osztójkán (24.10.1992).
95. Dula Toldi (28.10.1992).

FOUR

NOTES FROM THE CZECH AND SLOVAK REPUBLICS¹

1. Historical and Cultural Background

Between a third and a fifth of Europe's Roma population live in the Czech and Slovak Republics.² Although the combined 1991 census indicated only a population of 114,000 Roma for the two republics, it is assumed that the figure of 400,000-450,000 is closer to the truth. Approximately two-thirds live in Slovakia.^{3,4} As is usual, the Roma tend not to indicate their ethnic identity.⁵ Tomáš Haisman and Jitka Gjuricová of the Czech government warn of exaggerated claims:

You will encounter very different numbers for Roma in Czechoslovakia. The Roma representatives will talk about one million people, but we are almost sure the number of people is around four to five hundred thousand people.⁶

Arne Mann, of the Slovakian Ethnographic Institute, reports of districts in Slovakia where the Roma represent fifteen to eighteen percent of the population. 'Villages of high Roma concentration', writes Mann, 'suffer from a high rate of unemployment, social misery, but also increased criminality'.⁷

Given their present rate of population growth it is estimated that by the year 2,000 there will be close to 500,000 Roma in the two republics, with ten percent of the Slovakian population being of Roma origin.⁸

Milena Hübschmannová, an ethnologist and Indianologist at Prague's Charles University, talked about the different Roma groups:

Slovak Roms are isolated, they have been settled for the past three or four centuries. You don't find Slovak Roms except in Slovakia, and in part of Poland, and in parts of the Ukraine. The Vlachi Roms, whom you find here [in Czechia] you find in Romania, in Hungary, in Sweden, in other countries, because they have been nomadic, and their kinship groups have settled only recently. Then there are the Kalderash. The Kalderash is a very strong group, and the Kalderash live nearly in the whole world.⁹

At a meeting at the Roma Association, I was told there are:

- *Slovak* Roma, the longest settled in the region who comprise the largest some ninety per cent of the Roma population in the Slovak Republic, and are largely settled in rural areas;
- *Hungarian* Roma;
- *Vlachi* (or *Vlaski*, or *Olachi*) Roma who arrived largely in the 19th century and now live generally in the Czech Republic where they inhabit the larger towns and cities, and in western and southern Slovakia;
- *Czech* or *Moravian* Roma, those historically settled in the Czech Lands, 6,000 of whom were exterminated under the Nazi regime, leaving some 600 survivors.

- *Sinti*, a small group of German-speaking Roma in the west of the Czech Lands.¹⁰

The history of the Roma in the Czech and Slovak Republics is similar to their settlement in the neighbouring region. They began appearing in Slovakia in the mid-14th century and gradually established themselves particularly in the eastern part of the region. By the early part of the 15th century they had made their way into the Czech Lands where they were not easily accepted. Between the 15th and 18th centuries – well before our own Nazi era – various attempts were made to liquidate them.¹¹

At first Roma musicians and blacksmiths found a place on the feudal estates and in the towns. By the late 18th century, however, their particular way of life compelled the Empress Maria-Theresa, who included the Czech Lands within her Austro-Hungarian domains, to try to assimilate them into Czech life. Her programme included prohibitions against the traditional Roma trade of blacksmithing; speaking Romany; and contracting mutual marriages [between *dzati* or between families]. 'Nevertheless', writes Arne Mann, 'they [the Roma] were considered as a real existing element of the country's population', rather than as a people to be suppressed or deported. The Emperor Joseph II established rules for their education and Christianization.¹²

The early anti-Roma feelings have never been far below the surface in either the Czech or Slovak Republics. Arne Mann reports of a pogrom in the Slovakian village of Povedim in 1928 in which six Roma were killed, and in 1929 when 'long-settled' Roma were driven out of villages near Kosice, eastern Slovakia.¹³ Present-day attitudes are equally hostile.

As noted in Chapter One of this report, deemed by the Nazis to be of an 'inferior race', the Roma were included with the Jews in the 'Final Solution'. Some eight thousand Roma from the Czech provinces of Moravia and Bohemia were exterminated, while in Slovakia they were placed in work-camps. 'Relatively speaking', I was told at the Roma Union, 'the Roma in Slovakia were better off than the Czech ones'.^{14,15}

Arne Mann writes:

In Slovakia (an independent state during World War II), Roma were subject to the same restrictions as the Jews. They could not travel on public means of transport, they could enter towns and villages solely within stipulated hours, and special labour camps were organized for men. After the occupation of Slovakia by the German army (August 1944) numerous Roma were executed, accused of collaborating with the resistance movement.¹⁶

Many of the ideas instituted by Maria-Theresa apparently resurfaced during the communist period, as the attempt was made to enforce assimilation through the eradication of Roma culture:

It was prohibited to set up Rom folklore ensembles, special interest and youth circles, and sports clubs. No printing in Romany should be allowed to appear; no Rom tales could be related on the radio and television.¹⁷

As many states have tried with their poor and immigrant groups (e.g. the United Kingdom in its resettling of its East London population or later in its initial treatment of Vietnamese refugees), a possibly well-intentioned, but wrongly founded dispersion policy was instituted:

The Roma were often moved against their will from their primitive homes to newly-built prefabricated high rises given to them by the state. Not having any positive ties

to these dwellings, and unable to live in them, in numerous cases they devastated and demolished them.

According to the theory of 'dispersion', many families were resettled in other localities regardless of the disruption of natural kinship relation. In order that they should adapt themselves to the way of life of the majority of the population, a Roma family had always to be moved into a prefab house among 'whites'...¹⁸

These, for future social planners, should be understood to have been inevitable failures, as they have proved to be with groups whose social adaptation has been far less problematic than that of the Roma's. They represent a lack of understanding of the persistence of 'cultural style' and its importance for personal identity and mutual support, until such a time as the individual has taken the initiative to move out from his or her historical group in order to integrate into the majority society.

The discussion at the Roma Union indicated three ways in which the communist regime tried to solve the 'the Roma problem':

1. 1950-1958 Forced settlement and forced employment;
2. Forced assimilation;
3. Integration of Roma as a cultural and ethnic group.

'None of these provided for any solutions. The problem has now become such a big issue', I was told, 'that the government is becoming concerned'.¹⁹

2. Economy

The 'persistence of cultural style' arose in the discussion with Milena Hübschmannová. Embracing the totality of group life, cultural style has to be considered in all of its implications. One of these is economic.

Milena Hübschmannová mentioned how the Roma's north Indian heritage still largely determines much of their thought and activity. She cited as an example the Indian *djadmani* system that governs the relationships between castes, binding one to another with special obligations in the exchange of goods, services and rewards.

The *djadmani* system became foundation of the Roma's relationships to the *Gadjo* (non-Roma) society.²⁰ It was expressed through the goods and services that the Roma provided for the *Gadjo*, and as the basis of the Roma economy helped to maintain its cultural continuity. Arne Mann has written about the traditional occupations of the 'old-settlers' (those Roma who have been settled since the 16th or 18th centuries):

The basic form of their livelihood used to be casual agricultural work with farmers. Their most significant trade was that of forging... They made nails, horseshoes, chains, hoes, also axes, etc. Further crafts... included broom-making, charcoal burning, basket-weaving, the manufacture of adobe [mud] bricks. Women wove special fabrics on small looms. They peddled their products from house to house, but mostly exchanged them for foodstuffs or articles of clothing. A significant means of livelihood for the old Roma settlers used to be playing music...²¹

The more recent migrants - the *Olash* [*Vlachi*, or *Wallachian*] Roma who arrived during the 19th century from Romania, were horse-traders, blacksmiths, and kettle-makers, as well as being the main group of travelling or nomadic Roma.²²

Appropriate as these occupations were in a feudal, and pre-technological society, the Roma *djadmani* by which they were maintained, may well have lost its usefulness in

contemporary European life. Even by the end of the 19th century many of the goods and services the Roma could offer Czech and Slovak societies had become redundant. Since collectivization and the centralization of production and distribution under communism, the demise of the Roma's traditional occupations - other than that of the musicians - has probably become almost total.

Factories produce buckets, baskets and brooms and fabrics. Coal, gas, oil and electricity and declining forests have put an end to all but the most minimal charcoal burning. There are comparatively few horses to be shod, and other than in the most rural enclaves, the majority of people have ready access to markets and shops so that the Roma version of the 'door-to-door salesman' is hardly needed. It brings to mind a recent Irish song:

The old ways are changing you cannot deny,
The day of the traveller is over;
There's nowhere to go and nowhere to bide,
Say farewell to the life of the rover.

Good-bye to the tent and the old caravan,
To the tinker, the Gypsy, the travelling man,
And good-bye to the thirty-foot trailer.

Farewell to the cant and the Romany tongue
Farewell to the Romany talking;
The buying and selling, the old fortune telling,
The knock on the door and the hawking.²³

'Previous traditional professions are not living', Milena Hübschmannová confirmed. Then as if finding a thread of hope she said, 'but basket weaving still exists, and could still be revived. In Slovakia they still live on it'.²⁴

We discussed whether Roma baskets produced in Slovakia could find a market in the West. Although probably not a financially useful possibility, I asked, with the idea of Roma ethnic 'solidarity' in mind, if Western European Roma might act as agents for Czech and Slovak Roma. Milena Hübschmannová's answer brought out another factor of Roma life: their psycho-social territoriality or *social distance* (see page 7, above), which seems to limit their collaboration.

Milena Hübschmannová said: 'The Roms have a very specific social character. They are a caste: the *dzati*, but there is a social distance between them. Roms were always working for *Gadjo*, they are not used to working for each other'.

- If there was a rich blacksmith, he would never employ Rom apprentices., because it is not in the caste system...
- Rom musicians were never used to play for Roms. They are used to earning money from *Gadjos*.
- There are many rich Roms, many more rich Roms than we can imagine. There are very rich Roms in Presov, but they do not employ Roms, because they say, 'if I employ Roms no one will come to buy in my shop'. It is the same in hotels.²⁵

'The Roma', said Milena Hübschmannová in another context, 'have the mentality of beggars... individual begging was transformed into collective begging...'²⁶ We may take this as a pejorative statement, or one that offers another perspective on life.

Despite the historical and present fact of beggars on our streets, we regard begging as disdainful behaviour of those unwilling, or unable, to find employment. But how the

distinction of acceptability is to be made among the impoverished pleading for money to buy bread for their family, the student asking for a grant in order to study, the pastor soliciting contributions to support his parish, or the voluntary organization seeking donations to pay its salaries, is a moot question.

Roma begging is consistent with their cultural heritage, derived as it is from the Indian sub-continent.²⁷ To many Roma it is a legitimate way of earning a living, and one that is learned early in life.²⁸

If the industrial society began the work of rendering Roma skills unnecessary, communism largely completed the job with its prohibitions against them. Not only were the Roma forced to exchange their skills against fixed employment under state control, but since then the liberating winds of the 'free market' that have followed upon the 'Velvet Revolution' have blown them out of their work-places. They are unemployed and under present circumstances appear, for the most part, to be unemployable.

With neither goods nor services, nor a regular wage, to exchange for the necessities of life there is little that the vast majority of Czech and Slovak Roma can acquire except increasing poverty. Their economic situation in the Czech and Slovak Republics is as bad as it is in Romania and Hungary. Possibly it is worse, and more so in Slovakia than in the Czech Lands.

'What is new for us under the conditions of free trade' said one of the Roma Union respondents, 'is that the Roma people have no possessions, no buildings, nothing, and that the Roma people are becoming more criminal and more violent...':

We see this problem dramatically. If nothing happens now, we will have to face such big problems in the future we might not be able to handle them. We see that the Roma have no jobs, the living conditions get worse, and with this they might have more problems with their health, more people might die, and this will cause social breakdowns.²⁹

'It is very rare that someone [a Roma] is employed', Tomáš Haisman and Jitka Gjuricová, from the Czech Federal Ministry told me. '...There is absolute unemployment of people between 15 and 18 in Slovakia... We didn't meet any employed young Roma men and women in Slovakia'.

The Roma have no employment morality and are unskilled... They lose their jobs because they are incompetent as well as being Roma... According to our understanding the estimate is that somewhere between seventy and eighty percent of the Roma are unemployed (three to four percent of the total population in the Czech Lands and twelve percent in Slovakia).³⁰

'There are no constitutional guarantees or protection against negative discrimination', Tomáš Haisman and Jitka Gjuricová said: 'the mechanism is missing in the Czech juridical system. It is a question of the whole population facing unemployment.'³¹

3. Education

In their paper, *The Romanies in Czechoslovakia*, Jitka Gjuricová and Tomáš Haisman write that Roma children account for thirty-eight percent of all children under the age of fifteen years, in the Czech and Slovak Republics combined.

In comparison to non-Roma children:

- Their school failure rate is fourteen times higher;

- Their school behaviour (comportment) is five times poorer;
- Their 'drop-out' rate is thirty times higher;
- Their transfer rate to 'special schools' is twenty-eight times higher;
- Only 2.5 percent enter secondary school;
- They constitute fifty percent of all children in children's homes. ³²

The 'drop-out' rate of the 2.5 percent of Roma children who go to secondary school is so high that Jitka Gjuricová said: 'In Slovakia, in August [1992], we did not meet any Roma between 15 and 18 who... attended school.'³³ The decline in school attendance has become so marked since the collapse of communism that a 'new wave of illiteracy' is expected in the near future.

Asked about illiteracy among the Roma, they replied:

According to data there is no illiteracy, because there was compulsory school attendance, and parents were imprisoned if children did not go to school. But the quality of Roma education is very low, and typically there is semi-literacy, and complete illiteracy in eastern Slovakia, and among Roma people, and particularly in areas where Romany was the only language.

You can meet children attending a Czech school at the fifth grade who are not able to speak Czech or Slovak. In comparison between the Slovak and Czech Republics illiteracy is less in the Czech Republic, but in the whole territory education is very poor.³⁴

The problem of illiteracy came up for discussion at a meeting at the Ministry of Education in Bratislava. It is estimated that the overall illiteracy among the Czech and Slovak population is between twelve and fifteen percent, with the highest percentage being among the Roma. These figures are based on an adult population that went to school under the communist system of legally enforced school attendance. 'Now', I was told, 'with children coming from the schools - even from the special schools where there is a frequent repetition of classes - a child will leave the school in the fourth year, and will be illiterate'.³⁵

Ján Hero of the Ministry of Education, who called the meeting, spoke of the rigidity of the communist educational system, with its conformist demands that failed to take into account the needs of children with different ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds.

But now, he said:

There is an evident need to change the educational system which... must consider the presence of Roma children, with their personality and characteristics... This is the most decisive moment. It is very difficult now to approach the problem of the education of adult Roma, of adult literacy and how to cope with it, as the primary problem is to prevent Roma children from becoming illiterate.

But solving the problem of the education of Roma children touches on the problem of the Roma parents. With this new philosophy of the educational system it is very important to prepare teachers so that they will be able to face Roma children with their personality characteristics and social background.

Hyacinta Draganovská, concerned with the possibilities of educational innovation, said, 'We are following the idea that the Roma child has to experience a sense of success and self-realization in order to find his or her place in society - in the international society of Europe'.

At a prior meeting at the Roma Union in Prague, the high number of Roma children who are sent to special schools because of actual, or assumed, mental retardation was

discussed. The decision to place a child in a special school is generally made by a school psychologist in kindergarten, which is well before children have had the opportunity to develop their abilities or prove their capacities.³⁶

I had no opportunity to discover by what criteria Roma children are judged to be mentally retarded, and to what extent genetic and/or environmental factors are involved. It has been a common tendency in many countries to confuse organic - and thus generally irremediable - deficiencies with linguistic and social ones. This tendency also exists in the Czech and Slovak republics, where, I was told, a school psychologist has admitted that a high percentage of the Roma children he sends to special schools are, in fact, sufficiently intelligent to go to a normal primary school and that:

The percentage of truly mentally retarded children (except in really isolated communities) is no different than that of the normal population. In isolated areas, it does appear that in-breeding is a cause of mental deficiency... But, there is a huge difference between the *Vlaski* [Vlach] and other Roma, because the *Vlaski* can marry first cousins...³⁷

Although various studies about 'in-breeding' among the Slovakian Roma have been undertaken, their conclusions, it was said, are inaccurate as they do not sufficiently take into account the differences among the various Roma groups.³⁸ One of the reasons that was proposed for the high incidence of mental deficiency is that:

... whenever they [the Roma] were in touch with Gadjó societies, the individuals [they contacted] were on such a low social level, and they married such people, so it might be that the Gadjó society brought the mental deficiency to the Roma.³⁹

Although this was said by a Roma Union official, it was an admission that sounded strangely similar to Dr Ritter's justification for Roma genocide under the Nazis (see page 3, above).

The topic came up again in Bratislava:

In the past, children with [learning and behaviour] problems in primary school were sent for psychological investigations. They were considered as cases of mental retardation. But, this was false. Maybe one tenth of them were retarded, but in fact they were socially, not mentally retarded. The result was that in some special schools, sixty to eighty percent of the children were Roma children. The situation is still the same to-day.⁴⁰

Hyacinta Draganovská said:

A socially deprived six year old Roma child is unable, even with special care, to meet the demands of the first class of primary school. This is the circle.

And it is not only 'special schools' that have a large population of Roma children. There are also orphanages, where children are placed who have been abandoned by their parents, or sent by some of the schools, that have a Roma population of between sixty and ninety percent.⁴¹

The need and the willingness to change the form and content of Roma education was obvious at the Ministry of Education meeting. It is not only illiteracy, or educational retardation, that is of concern, but also the transition to the 'market economy' that is leaving so many Roma as its casualties. For the first time, teachers of Roma children are encountering unemployed parents whose situation is seen to be directly related to their lack of qualifications and 'wrong work attitudes' - a basic educational problem.⁴²

But there are immense difficulties. There are insufficient pre-school programmes. Those that exist are badly under-funded and less children than previously are attending them. As a consequence Roma children are linguistically and socially unprepared for primary school in which, it is estimated, 'a minimum of twenty percent are "under-achievers" within their first year'. It gets worse in successive years.

Poor health, family attitudes and difficulties are a source of increased absenteeism in primary school, and 'there is a decline in values in higher classes' which I take to mean a further erosion of such Roma interest that there might have been in what the school system has to offer.⁴³

Recognizing the legitimacy of cultural diversity I was told that:

The Ministry of Education accepts Article 23 of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms* [of the former Czech and Slovak Federal Republic], that each ethnic minority has the right to be educated in its own language.⁴⁴ There is the right for children to learn in their own language. An educational system can provide for this if the parents wish it...⁴⁵

As a result, attention is being devoted to helping children learn through learning Romany as a written, rather than just as an oral language:

Three years ago there were some expert committees that recommended that the mother (Romany) tongue be used in the first school years. The problem was that there was no complete documentation, nor methods for Romany language teaching. This is the scope of our work these days.

There is a need for the Roma children to learn their own language. There is a clash of interests in the Ministry of Education between the interests of the majority and those of the minority...⁴⁶

In Slovakia they speak of a 'Year 0' (kindergarten) as a preparatory year for entering primary school. But:

There are no curricula, no text books, nothing at all. We are trying to develop materials by ourselves. We are facing a lot of problems with copying machines, which in our condition we would need fourteen of them (for each class and teacher). In this 'zero' class, we are working in the idea of bilingual children, and are trying to prepare children for the entrance to the first year to understand the basics of the standard language.

The 'standard language' is the standard Romany which has been under development for some time. Milena Hübschmannová has prepared a Czech-Romany dictionary, and Anton Sedlák of the Pedagogical Institute at Presov has prepared a basic Slovak-Roma dictionary to help teachers. This dictionary covers the Romany dialects spoken around Kosice, in eastern Slovakia.⁴⁷

Milena Hübschmannová had also discussed the need for Roma to learn their own language. Asked if it is possible to create and develop a unified Romany, considering the diversity of its dialects, she replied:

The dialects are different, but there is a standardized orthography. We can use it in the first grade in the school. In our country [still Czechoslovakia] there are at least seventy percent Slovak Roms, but children do not know Slovak, and Romany would be a great help at school.

We have elaborated a Slovak orthography for Romany and it has been used for the past 20 years. There is no problem of introducing it into the schools. It is already introduced in the books that have been published...

But if you want to introduce it to the Vlachi then you will have to elaborate a different language... but why not? It is not a problem. Besides, the language of the Vlachi Roms, is spoken in Hungary and Romania. The regions of the Vlachi Rom dzati [castes] cross the borders of Europe.

Although Milena Hübschmannová had prepared a textbook for Roma children, the Czech Ministry of Education has not used it, nor done anything for the encouragement of education either of the Roma or about the Roma. She had spoken of the need for textbooks and for teachers to be informed about Roma life.⁴⁸

In Slovakia, I learned that a number of books of Roma fairy tales have been published in Romany - stories that Roma children know, but have never seen in printed form. And this is all part of an attempt to give Roma culture an opportunity to develop. And, as in the Czech Lands, there is a very limited number of teachers who speak Romany, and among the Roma there are few sufficiently educated people who are prepared to teach it. Programmes are being developed to prepare teachers to teach in Romany.

There are few schools or educational programmes specifically designed for Roma, but they do, at least, exist:

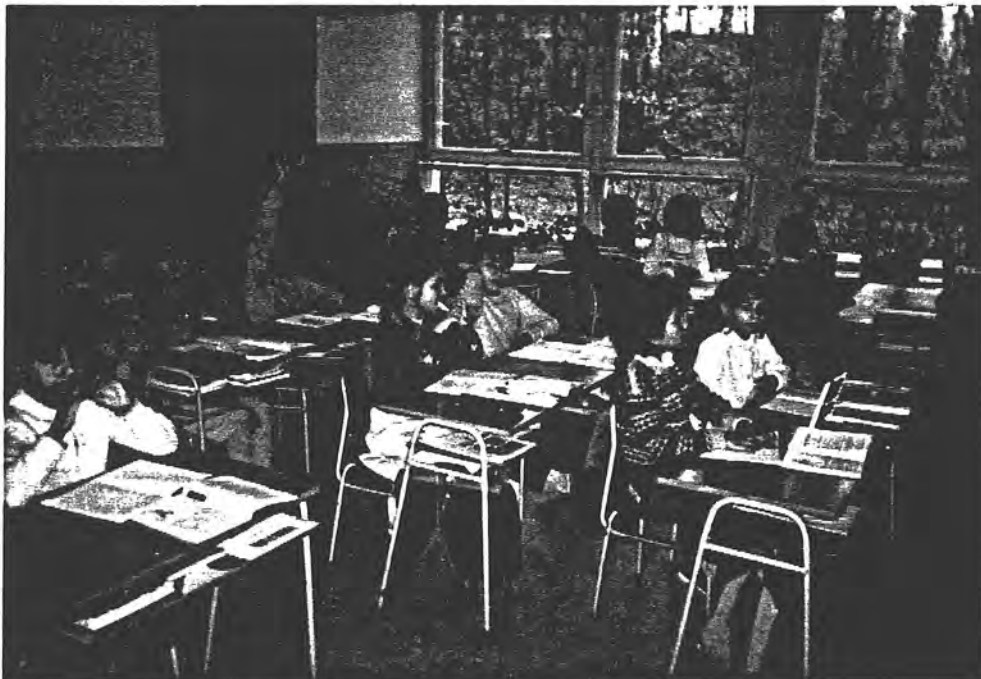
- There is the Department of Romany Culture at the Pedagogical Institute in Nitra concerned with the preparation of teachers to work with Roma children; to develop primary school curricula; and programmes for adult education, particularly directed to the problem of solving the relationships between the Roma minorities with their non-Roma majorities in European society.⁴⁹
- There is the Secondary School of Arts in Presov, where they are creating a Department of Roma Culture. This programme has been developed with the Roma Theatre *Romacan*, in which the school students have their practical lessons in the use of Romany, and graduates can find their employment. In this school it was the first time that the Roma language has been introduced in the syllabus in Slovakia.
- Another school, this time at the primary level, is also near Presov, in a Roma settlement. I visited and was impressed by the teachers' warmth and care for the children. The building, relatively modern, warm, dry and friendly, is used both as a school during the day, and a community centre after school hours.

But it was here that I was again told of the sub-normality to be found widely spread among Roma children: a frank, if unwanted, admission of genetic degeneration due to inter-marriage. This, it should be noted, is not a specifically Roma problem, but one found among numerous groups of people in many parts of the world - it has been studied in the United States, for example, in isolated and thus self-enclosed communities.

Not many kilometres away was a traditional village school right out of the 19th century, with hardly any furniture, cold and damp and giving every good reason for any child with a minimum of courage to avoid attending. Here there was no evidence of any special funding or programmes.



Handicapped Roma Children in a Special School near Kosice



Normal Roma Children in an Experimental School near Kosice

4. Ethnic Conflicts

The week of my arrival in Prague coincided with a report in the English-language *Prague Post*:

The Prague Post

October 27–November 2, 1992

No Gypsies Allowed: A Fact of Czech Life

By Amy Auster and Petula Dvorák

Alena Grozníková, a journalist, can't stop for a drink after work at the Rokoko Klub on Wenceslas Square. Ladislav Boky, a Czech National Council deputy may never taste a burrito at Ubiquity on Na Příkope. Ivan Veselý, head of one of Czechoslovakia's political movements is banned from dancing at the Slovansky dum discotheque. These members of Czechoslovakia's intelligentsia are Romanies, or Gypsies, an ethnic group blacklisted by many Prague businesses.

"We have statistics that a large percent of violent crimes are committed by Romanies. They do indeed behave loudly, are aggressive and drink large amounts of alcoholic beverages," said Vladimír Nechanický, the chief federal prosecutor, offering a reason for the widespread discrimination.⁵⁰

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Ethnic conflicts between Roma and non-Roma have not been as pronounced as they have been in Romania and Hungary but this situation may well be on the verge of changing. Certainly there has been a pattern of 'skinhead' - Roma violence. Rachel Tritt lists twenty-five incidents between March 1990 and October 1991: seventeen of the incidents were attacks by skinheads on Roma, eight involved either mutual violence, or Roma attacks upon skinheads.

'In the years of communism we saw a good way of taking care of the Roma', it was said at the Roma Union. The Roma were all settled, education was a compulsory requirement, and all of those capable of doing so had to work.

In this period they did not allow the Roma to develop ethnically, but from a social standpoint the situation was much better... This was the only one advantage of communism. It was after the revolution of 1989 that we see the emergence of racism. This was suppressed under communism.⁵¹

The general idea about the Roma population 'is negative', I was told in Bratislava. In Prague Tomáš Haisman and Jitka Gjuricová had said: 'The possibility of social conflicts is a danger not only for Roma people, but for all of us... It is increasing with the situation of the Roma people':

Prejudice against the Roma is very extensive, but little attempt has been made by the government to do anything about it. There must be a campaign. There was goodwill on the part of the government but there were no results.⁵²

'If nothing is done about health, education and employment', said Jitka Gjuricová,

...there will be an increase in Roma criminality, and the number of extremely poor Roma people will increase, and a new form of segregation will arise. Here is a possibility of the radicalization of the Roma against the rest of the population... with increasing social [skinhead] conflicts.⁵³

There are two kinds of racism in the Czech and Slovak Republics. One kind is against the Roma; the other comes from them. This second kind, spoken of as 'defensive racism' has, I was told, 'become very aggressive over the past two years'.

At the time of my visit to the Czech or Slovak republics, I was not provided with a list of violent acts against the Roma as, for example, I had received in Romania and Hungary, although there could be no doubt of the tensions lying just beneath the surface, mainly expressed through anti-Roma discrimination.

Dr Yaroslav Drapák, one of the participants in the meeting at the Ministry of Education spoke of his dismissal from teaching because of being a Rom. He said that when he tried to obtain legal recourse, the Courts sought to avoid the case altogether, although now, some three years later, his case is being heard.

Rachel Tritt's Helsinki Watch Report, *Struggling for Ethnic Identity*, is a useful reference to anti-Roma events both prior to and since the 'Velvet Revolution'. In every significant area of life: in education, employment, health and housing, for example, there is discrimination against the Roma. There are the schools in which there are no, or few non-Roma pupils and students, because Czech and Slovak parents do not wish their children to go to them. In other schools, segregated seating is used:

In several localities visited by Helsinki Watch, Romany parents complained about segregation in the classroom. Slavomira Musukova, a young Romany woman from Cierny Balog, told Helsinki Watch that the parents of gadgo kids don't want their children to sit with us. So Romany children sit together in the back and the teacher doesn't pay any attention to them.⁵⁴

Milena Hübschmannová had pointed out the need for Czech and Slovak children to at least learn about Roma in positive ways, as one of their countries' ethnic groups:

Children in schools, at the very beginning and from the first class, should see pictures of Rom. You don't see a single picture of Rom in their textbooks - a small thing - in school books now being used. If children see that one-third, or ten per cent of the pictures are Rom, nicely dressed Rom, this would be something positive...⁵⁵

Conditions, however, since the dissolution of the Czech and Slovak Federation have deteriorated considerably. The Roma Union in Slovakia is reported as protesting to the Slovak government for its failure to assure Roma human rights, while *The Prague Post* of February 10-16, 1993, reports on Roma protest to the Czech government and the threat to undertake a hunger strike and acts of civil disobedience in the face of the government's inability to protect them from racist attacks.⁵⁶

...The announcement came on the heels of a violent skinhead demonstration in Pardubice, about 100 kilometres (60 miles) east of Prague, where 300 people marched through the streets carrying racist banners and baseball bats shouting, "Gypsies to the gas," and "Czech Lands for the Czechs". Police arrested 40 skinheads and several Romanies were hospitalized.⁵⁷

5. Health and Medicine

At the Romany Association of Children and Youth, in Prague, I was told that although there are overall health problems among the Roma, conditions are much worse in Slovakia than in the Czech Lands.

In Slovakia where they live in settlements there are really bad living conditions. The environment in Slovakia is very bad. There is no hygiene. They are very poor... Medical care is very bad. They cannot get it because they are too far from the vil-

lages. Or they have no electricity or water in the houses. They have no telephones or cars so it is hard to get the doctor.

There is a high rate of infant mortality. It is very high in Slovakia. There is a high level of alcoholism. The Roma do not suffer the same diseases as 'civilized' people because they are stronger. But cardiac diseases, cancers and brain attacks...

They die about ten years earlier than we do. In some areas infant mortality is like in a third world country. But there are no statistics.

In the anthropological studies of the 1920's there was very little alcoholism among the Roma at that time, but now it is very high...⁵⁸

Tomás Haisman and Jitka Gjuricová also confirmed this: 'Infant mortality among Roma is higher than the rest of the population, and it is higher in Slovakia'. There are no statistics.

Another problem is not the mortality of new born in the hospitals, but the high rate of death of very young children under three years.

Another characteristic of the Roma is that there are much more simple causes of childhood deaths due to the low hygienic conditions. This is not the question of bad health care or medical services but the lack of responsibility of Roma adults.

Their principal illnesses are the same as the rest of the population, but a higher frequency of dysentery, hepatitis, and tuberculosis, and respiratory diseases.⁵⁹

Despite the professed lack of statistics, Arne Mann provides some:

Families have numerous children - from five to ten or more... Alongside the high birth-rate among the Roms, another demographic sign is also the high mortality rate of Rom infants amounting in the most backward Rom communities at present to 47-50 pro mille [per thousand], a figure comparable to that in some of the more backward countries of Asia or South America (the cause of death is most often undernourishment, premature births, diseases of the respiratory tract).⁶⁰

Finally, one should not leave this section without reference to Rachel Tritt's findings about the voluntary and involuntary sterilization of women, particularly during the communist period, and the segregation of Roma from non-Roma in hospitals. Her full documentation on this - far more extensive than can be included here - is to be found in *Searching for Ethnic Identity*, to which reference has previously been made.

6. Housing

Tomás Haisman and Jitka Gjuricová had said:

In eastern Slovakia, in the traditional settlements, they live in the same conditions as they did one or two hundred years ago. There has been, for many centuries, a great gap in social position, way of life and culture of the Roma people, and the major society, and it will not be overcome in several years.

The attempt to describe housing conditions offers only very restricted language: 'shacks', 'hovels', 'shanty towns', 'slums', 'squatter camps'. The main roads through the villages and towns are asphalted. The side roads that go to the 'white' areas are asphalted. The side roads that go to the Roma settlements (except where 'housing estates' were built for them) are pitted, holed, wide earthen tracks, that turn into a sea of mud when the rains come or the snow melts.

There are no toilets, public or private; there is scrub, bush, forest and waste-land. There is no running water except for the nearest stream or river, already polluted and becoming more so after it passes through the camp or settlement. There may or may not be any electricity. There are no telephones.

We know of such conditions in the 'Third World': in Asia, Africa, South America even. There are similar conditions among Amerindians in parts of the United States and Canada, and even among the 'Poor Whites' of Appalachia. Although this is a typical environment of the socially and economically marginalized we somehow do not expect to find it in Europe.

The houses are wooden shacks. The photographs that follow show the outside. These homes are sufficiently typical for us to use Arne Mann's description:

The dwellings often consist of a single room (approximately 3m. x 4m.) furnished with a bed, a stove, a cupboard - often there is no room for any table or chairs. If the settlement is provided with electricity, practically every dwelling has a TV set. The sanitary conditions are extremely poor, for there is no running water, nor sewerage system; latrines are unknown here... As often even two families dwell in a single-roomed house, occasionally 15-20 persons sleep here on the bed and on mattresses laid down on the floor.⁶¹

Rachel Tritt writes:

Between 300 and 400 isolated ghettos remain in the same state they've been in for 200 years, lacking drinkable water, sewage systems, electricity, toilets and paved roads... There are significantly more persons than average per square meter in each room, sometimes as many as twenty persons sleeping in a one- or two-room shanty or apartment. These settlements are separate from the general population, sometimes located on the outskirts of towns or up on a hill away from the village.⁶²

In the Czech Republic the majority of Roma live in towns and cities; in Slovakia, they inhabit rural areas. Klára Orgovánová, an advisor to the Slovakian Government's Minorities office said: 'In cities, often Roma live in the centre. Now, with the privatisation of the urban centres the owners are telling the Roma they have to leave as their houses are being reclaimed. There is nothing that can be done about this, it is the economic situation'.⁶³

Klára Orgovánová has been involved in the design of comprehensive projects for village development that take into account the educational, employment, health, housing and transportation needs of the Roma. One in particular was to have the Roma involved in rebuilding their own homes. But, as Klára Orgovánová pointed out, 'the elections came and no money was made available for implementing the projects'.⁶⁴

In their paper: 'Housing Project for the Romanies in the Town of Stropkov' prepared for the Council of Europe's Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe conference on *Gypsies in the Locality*, Elena Szolgayová of the Bratislava organization RATIO, and Milan Polák, Mayor of Stropkov, comment as follows:

As far as the problem of housing is concerned, two most frequent types of unsuitable dwellings are deteriorated old houses in historical town centres, and illegal or unplanned squatter settlements. In Slovakia there are approximately 260 such settlements. Providing accommodation in standard flats have met with many difficulties, due to the unsuitability of this type of housing for the life style of the Gypsies.⁶⁵

In discussing a pilot project for the Slovakian town of Stropkov that has about 800 Roma out of the total population of 8,700, they say:



A Roma Settlement near Kosice



A Roma Settlement near Kosice

The target group of the project is a squatter settlement called *Za jarkom*, where 272 people live in conditions which are rather typical for this type of settlement throughout Slovakia... where 63 families have been living in wretched derelict houses without water, sewerage and gas for years.

Some attempts have already been made by the local authority, such as pavements, water piping and public lighting. Some of the old houses have been demolished and their inhabitants moved to new residential houses in another neighbourhood where they easily adapted to the new housing conditions and are beginning to be accepted by the community.

In a related project proposal, *Architectonic and Town Planning Solution Principles*, prepared by the Ministry of Construction of the Slovakian Republic, the authors say, 'the numbers of Romany people living in unbearable conditions in camps and/or devastated urban central zones and neighbourhood-type agglomerations represent a societal, social and economic problem of absolute dimensions...' They describe areas where re-housing programmes are planned:

- *Sirk*: Total population: 995. Of these 126 (12.6%) are Roma. These at present live in a Roma camp outside of the village in a degraded structure of desolate houses under critical conditions of hygiene and building safety.
- *Stropkov*: Total population 9,714. Of these 900 are Roma (9.26%). 277 Roma live in the 'Za jarkom' Roma camp, with a single common water tap and no sewage facilities. Waste is freely drained into the environment and into the Ondava River... [see also Szolgayová-Polák paper (above)].
- *Torsya*: Total population: 1,255. Of these 112 are Roma (8.9%). Twenty-two Romany families live in huts in two localities... occasionally, up to three families live in a single hut. The dwellings have no hygiene whatsoever, no sewage, they live in desolate conditions...⁶⁶

Although the proposals for re-housing Roma in dwellings that measure up to contemporary standards for construction, space, light and sanitation, and compatible with Roma needs, indicate the willingness that exists to improve Roma housing, the penultimate paragraph in their paper, *Housing Project for Romanies in the Town of Stropkov* (above) is as significant as it is unfortunate:

The most important problem to be solved now is that of finance. Originally this project has been a part of a governmental programme, and a financial subsidy should have been available for its implementation. Owing to the recent economic situation and the non-existence of an official state housing policy, there is no real possibility to get state financial support. That is why we are trying to find some non-standard sources of finance in co-operation with the Ministry of Employment, Social Care and Family...⁶⁷

7. Human Rights

During its short existence the government of the former Czech and Slovak Federal Republic established its *Federal Government Policies Towards the Roma People* comprising five main principles. Some of the relevant points are abstracted below:

Principle 1

The basic prerequisites for the removal of the social inequality of the Gypsies in the CSFR is the all-out observation of the right of free acknow-

ledgement of association to the Gypsy nationality. The Gypsy national minority is equal to other national minorities in the CSFR. The state has to respect this fact and create conditions for an all-out development of the Gypsy national minority.

By the Charter of Basic Rights and Freedoms the CSFR undertook to create the conditions for the all-out development of national minorities living in the territory of the CSFR. The advancement of the ethnic identity is the prerequisite of self-identification, emancipation and integration of the Gypsies, leading to the levelling of their social inequality.

Principle 2

The set of problems concerning the Gypsy population pertain to the sphere of activity of the relevant Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the CSFR.

Principle 3

For the sake of removing the social inequality of the Gypsies, development programmes are being elaborated responding to the economic environment and the social and cultural conditions, as well as on the practical needs of all the population of respective regions including the Gypsies...

... The removal of the social inequality of the Gypsies is the integral part of the development of each region.

Principle 4

A condition for removing the social inequality of the Gypsies in the CSFR is also the creation of the necessary room in the system of education in order to make it possible to respect in the educational process, the ethnic, cultural and social differences of all children, including the Gypsies.

Particularly in the course of educating the Gypsy children it is necessary to emphasize the responsibility for the quality of the upbringing component part of the education process, the aim of which is to prepare the members of the national minority for a full-fledged citizenship and a positive emancipation.

Conditions will be created gradually for the establishment of an alternative system of education whose concrete form will correspond with the formulated need of the Gypsy national minority.

At the same time it is necessary to create conditions for the existence of a multi-cultural system of education enriched by the presence of children from a different cultural, ethnic and social environment.

Principle 5

A necessary condition for the creation of a civic society is a tolerant co-existence of all its ethnic component parts and, therefore, measures of an educational character have to be undertaken in all parts of the society to create the prerequisites of positive inter-ethnic contacts. In case of the relationship towards the Gypsy national minority, the fulfillment of this condition appears to be necessary.

Humanisation of the society is a necessary condition for the change of the model of its conduct not only in relation to the Gypsy minority. Therefore it is necessary to focus on:

- the education of the society leading to the consciousness and respect in relation to the human rights of all of its members, including the Gypsies;

- the support of the objective and all-out knowledge about the Gypsies in such a way that this information would become an integral part of the flow of information;
- the support to the education programmes leading to the acceptance of the Gypsies as an integral part of the social spectrum;
- the creation of the conditions when the consciousness concerning the Gypsies, as well as themselves, would become an integral part of the life of the society.⁶⁸

For its part the Slovak Republic has established its own proposals:

**PRINCIPLES
of the Governmental Policy of the Slovak Republic Towards the
Romanies**

1. *In the Ethnic Area*

The Fundamental Principle:

To acknowledge the ethnic independence of the Romanies on the level of other ethnic minorities living in the territory of the Slovak Republic in the legislative-legal system starting with the constitution of the Republic; i.e. to acknowledge the Romanies to be a nationality in contemporary terminology and to guarantee their political and legal equality of rights, thus:

The Romany political parties should be taken as equal to other political parties: their political programmes should not be confused with the policy of the government towards the Romanies.

- 1.1. In terms of institutions, the ethnic aspects of the Romany issue should be included in the structure of the state administration, commissions and committees which are, or will be, dealing with other ethnic minorities...
- 1.2. To emphasize the right of the individual to profess ethnic membership and the duty of the state to prevent ethnic discrimination including the discrimination of the Romany minority in all adopted, and... to be adopted legal norms, including the constitution.
- 1.3. To consider and elaborate issues regulated in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms (Article 3)... from the aspect of the political and legal equality of the Romany ethnic minority: the right to education, press and information in their, i.e. the Romany, language, the right to use their language in official communication, the right to develop their own Romany culture, the right to associate into ethnic associations and the right to participate in the solution of issues concerning the Romanies.

2. *In the Social, Cultural and Educational Area*

The Fundamental Principle:

The problem of the Romanies needing special social or other cultural, school, education and health care should be solved within the social policy package centred to all citizens regardless of their ethnic origin. The Romanies, like all other citizens of the state should be, without any difference, guaranteed social justice, social protection of the weak. No special, separate, social care focused exclusively on the Romanies should be defined.

- 2.1. The social interventions programmes should be directed towards the endangered groups of the population (including the Romanies) into real regional conditions.

- 2.2. To establish or orientate the existing scientific research institutions towards the elaboration of basic principles for the programmes of the unemployed, retired, young families, socially unadapted, delinquents, alcoholics, etc.
- 2.3. In areas with strong Romany concentrations to expand the network of social field workers in the newly founded county, district and state administration offices to a level appropriate to the needs of the region of particular communities.
- 2.4. To provide for a continuous objective information flow on the situation of individual groups of the socially endangered...
- 2.5. To elaborate **cultural civilizing programmes** concerning not only the Romanies but all unsocialized and hardly adaptable groups of the population...

3. *In the Economic Security Area*

The Fundamental Principle:

The democratization of the society, the admission of our state to the communities with the ideology of democratic pluralism, open space for economic covering of the needs of ethnic minorities, also through the mediation of international organizations, foreign donations and charity. With respect to the history, current situation and prognosis of population development in Slovakia in the social sector, a division of special state funds for the Romanies would mean (and the population would understand and perceive it in this way) a certain preferential treatment of a particular group to the detriment of others; therefore no division of separate funds for the Romanies is recommended...

– From *Resolution 153 of the Government of the Slovak Republic of April, 1991*⁶⁹

As far as my information is concerned, neither of these respective sets of principles have achieved much in the way of implementation. In the case of the new Czech Republic, they have not yet been included within its national legislation.⁷⁰

Given the recent political transformations in both republics, it is liable to take some time before the juridical and practical procedures that these respective sets of 'Principles' require are put in place. In addition, they have major financial implications which may – and certainly in the case of Slovakia – delay implementation.

I am unable to judge the political will in this respect, although Tomáš Haisman said:

In my opinion there is a process of integration. What does it mean? At present we have a school system based only on the Czech population, and which does not take into account some 200,000 Gypsy children. Due to the situation and division in competence, there was a lack of the mechanism, and the direct influence of the Federal and now Republican government to deal concretely at the local level.

In the last two years, there was some success in the field of normal minority rights, especially in the development of culture. There are now newspapers and magazines, a TV programme and a Roma museum, and so on. There are no problems with political freedom... there are now more than five or six political parties and about twenty-seven Roma cultural institutions.

But, Tomáš Haisman said:

The government must provide protection for minorities. Declaratively and legislatively, the government must recognize the Roma as citizens having the same rights as

the rest of the population, and it must find the mechanism to present and enforce their rights. It must help political parties and NGOs.⁷¹

On the Slovak side matters may be more problematic. One contact pointed to the drastic reduction in staff in the Minorities office in Bratislava, ostensibly for financial, but also possibly for political reasons, making it very difficult for attention to be given to the Roma situation.

8. International Assistance

What can the international community offer the Czech and Slovak Republics in improving their respective Roma situations?

Tomás Haisman said, 'I think that it is necessary for it to be known that Czechoslovakia, Romania and Hungary have a great Roma population which is a great social problem, and there are many fields in which the international organizations could help governments in solving problems:

It is clear that UNICEF, UNESCO, all international organizations can help us solve such problems. For example, research programmes must be prepared: in education, in solving employment (we have had no experience with unemployment for many years); in social care and in the prevention of social conflicts. Everything is new in our situation. We are standing before new things without any experience in overcoming such a critical situation.

There is a great deal of interest in international organizations concerning human rights in Czechoslovakia. It is a first step. I completely agree with the Helsinki Watch Report, about the Roma people in Czechoslovakia. But this is only one step - the recognition of the problem. Western governments have two possibilities: criticize or help. The second is better.

I think that the Czech government and the Slovakia too, are completely open to any reasonable or logical help in this field. I think that many politicians in the Parliament are not only aware, but are also afraid of the problems concerning the Roma people. It is a question of government initiatives... but we are in a very bad position, especially in the financial aspect of the question. We try to find some solutions for the problems of the Roma people, but among the rest of the population, the conflict is increasing - that is the problem.

We know what we want, but we have to find the ways to do it. There are several ways. It can be different, community by community. But the role of the international organizations in this question is to make the Roma problem an official problem of all of Europe.

The United Nations must say to the governments that they (the UN) know about the problems, that the governments must solve the problems, the UN must force them to say how they intend to solve the problems. A foundation could be created from which various development programmes could be financed: for education, for building up new villages, for the employment of Roma people, and so on...

Asked if this would not be an interference in the traditional 'sovereignty of nations', Tomás Haisman said: 'The problem will not be interference (internal affairs) depending upon the way the help is offered. The Czech government will be open to accept help because of the geographical situation of the Czech Republic'.⁷²

Others, too, are interested in having help from the international community. Thus, Ján Hero, on behalf of his government's Department of Education presented a sound set of proposals entitled: *Education, Vocational Training and Employment*, at the October 1992 meeting of the Council of Europe's Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe, addressed for the Council's consideration. 'Based on the presentations, case studies and discussion', he says, 'we recommend that the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe':

- consider ways and means of maintaining and developing the identity of marginalised minority populations as an integral part of a multi-cultural community...;
- initiates the establishment of an education and research centre for the education and training of Roma, aimed at:
 - training techniques;
 - curricula for schools with a high number of Roma pupils;
 - formulation of projects and their application within the individual regions respecting the Roma lifestyle;
 - establish an information network for transferring information between the Centre and the regions of member countries to promote implementation of the best programmes;
 - prepare documentation listing the specific rights of Roma children and emphasising the role of the family and social services;
 - monitor reports on and assess the experiments taking place in schools in Kosice aimed at overcoming language barriers and developing knowledge of languages, [the result of which will enable a more effective approach to the teaching of Roma children, thereby] avoiding their being sent to special schools...⁷³

Tomás Haisman and Jitka Gjuricová spoke of the need for national programmes in education, employment and regional development, and also of the role the international community could play.

It is the problem of mechanism. There can be some financial and intellectual support from the international organization, to governmental state and regional developmental programmes in areas in which there is a high number of Roma people... It is a question of international agreements between the government and the United Nations, for example. It is a question of legislation and conditions in the agreements. I think that the idea of making a fair attempt to aid the Roma people in the community is acceptable on the highest level of the government.⁷⁴

9. Law and Jurisprudence

There is constitutional protection of minority rights, but no special protection for Roma as Roma. The Roma can go to Court to defend their rights, but there is no legal aid system.

The inability of the Roma to protect themselves from the prejudice that restricts their educational and employment opportunities; the poor state of their health and living conditions is given, both as a reason, and as a rationalization, for illegal - if not outright criminal - activities, mentioned on numerous occasions by Roma and non-Roma alike; a mixture of Jean Valjean's stealing a loaf of bread to feed his family (in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*) and certain historical proclivities.

Obviously, (and this is not limited to Roma), there are those among them who will use their situation as a justification for criminality, but the psycho-social foundations of delinquency and crime are well enough known that there need be no doubt that as long as the Roma are not treated equally with others in terms of fundamental human rights, with the legal guarantees such rights provide, they will remain not just on the margins of society but on the margins of its laws as well.

Tomás Haisman and Jitka Gjuricová said: 'The problem of Roma criminality is very great, and it is increasing. There is a rapid increase in youth criminality, and an increase in criminal brutality', confirming fears and predictions of Roma groups, and individuals working with the Roma, recounted in Prague, in Bratislava and in Kosice.^{75,76} The fears of increased criminality may be finding their substance in the information provided by a spokesman for the Czech Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, that Czech Roma are obtaining 'heavy weapons' from the Russian Mafia.⁷⁷

In addition, as noted under Section Four (above), the Roma are starting to vocally protest against their overall conditions of life and the violence that is directed towards them. This is probably the first time that the Roma have started to become so assertive. If one recalls that the State of Israel was founded on strength of the paramilitary activities of the Stern Gang and the Irgun (terrorists or freedom fighters?), that Irak's Kurds (terrorists or freedom fighters?) have taken to arms and received recognition, as have many other minority groups around the world, then perhaps this is what the Roma are also being forced to do, in face of the centuries of prejudice, harassment and neglect.

10. Migration

Jitka Gjuricová said: '... it seems like a joke, but it is the simplest solution. If the western European countries that are afraid of immigration will send D-Marks to the Roma people, like a salary or a welfare payment, they will stay where they are'.⁷⁸

In general neither Czech nor Slovak Roma want to migrate. In any event, most of them are not in a position to go anywhere. What they do want is in the least to be able to eat.

In eastern Slovakia the Roma are living in extremely poor living conditions. We do not expect them to move. We spent a week in Slovakia in August and visited the poorest localities, and it is our experience that they would prefer to stay where they are... the inhabitants of these localities are unable to move. They are too poor to move.⁷⁹

Yet, some may be forced to move, as many Roma settlements, it was explained, are on lands that are either to be returned to their former owners, or be sold. The Roma residents will have to find somewhere else to live.

Another factor that could instigate a migration would be an increase in racist attacks. If this occurs, it was suggested that as many as a half of Slovakia's Roma might feel forced to move. Although some of the Roma from eastern Slovakia may try to migrate to the Czech Lands, migration to other countries is not foreseen.⁸⁰ I was told that there is a *reverse migration* going on, however, as 'white' Czechs move away from regions inhabited by the 'black' Roma.⁸¹

'Some Czech Roma have gone to the West - to Germany' - I was informed, 'in order to find better conditions of life'. Another source suggested that some 800 families at-

tempted to enter the German Federal Republic. According to the UNHCR case-worker assigned to monitoring the German Federal government's eligibility procedures for asylum seekers from Central and Eastern Europe, there were 1,375 Czech asylum seekers in Germany between 1 January and 30 September 1992.⁸² The number of Roma among them has not been determined.

This respondent said: 'I would like to see the possibility of Roma moving freely from one place to another, where they would like to settle down, have government support, and to be able to travel wherever they want taking into consideration the laws of the countries in which they would travel'.⁸³

Objectively this is to ask no more than the right enjoyed by any European Community citizen, to travel and to find work in another member state. But, national boundaries, the fact that Central and Eastern European states are neither members of the EC, nor form an international community of their own, and the generalized hostility towards the Roma, all add up to the improbability of the proposal.

At the Roma Union, it was said:

...As they have no state, give them a special status, and give them nationality in the countries, but not as economic refugees just travelling for a job... I am speaking of a special way of treating the Roma, so that the Roma would not have to pay taxes, and would have special trading rights... This would help to improve their economic situation, and these Roma would only try to earn some money, and then return to Czechoslovakia, so there need be no fear that they will try to stay in the West.

Again, a common theme. Despite their citizenship, and for the most part, their attachment to the regions in which they live, the Roma in many ways regard themselves as a nation without territory or statehood. Because the Roma are spread around the world, as a people, they do not benefit from their own national laws. That is why, I was told it is important that the United Nations force the governments to implement the laws that would allow their rights to be respected.

In discussing the idea of an independent Roma state, it was said that the creation of a such a state would raise the self-confidence of the Roma people. 'They would not necessarily have to move to that state, but they would know there is such a state to which they could turn, or to which they could go if they have difficulties...'⁸⁴

Where to create such a state? During the course of my travel, I had heard of the idea of creating 'Romastan' in the region around Kaliningrad (Königsberg). But when, at various points, I asked if the Roma were in the position to organize and administer their own state, the answers were 'not yet'.

Finally, since the dissolution of the Czech and Slovak Federation on 1 January 1993, the Czech Republic has, contrary to its preferences, become an asylum nation for economic migrants and escapees from much of the same racial hostility that is appearing in its own land. Jana Plichtová, from the Department of Social Communication in the Slovak Academy of Sciences, writes in a January 1993 paper that:

In some of the towns and cities of northern Bohemia with the highest proportion of ethnic Roma, the local authorities did not hesitate to impose dramatic limitations on the freedom of movement and action of citizens by issuing local regulations allegedly intended to maintain public order and security.

The municipality of Jirkov was the first, under the pretext of local public opinion, to approve a regulation envisaging consultations with the local Roma designed to pre-

The municipality of Jirkov was the first, under the pretext of local public opinion, to approve a regulation envisaging consultations with the local Roma designed to prevent Roma migration from outside of the area. Under the regulation, all residents are obliged to report visits lasting over three days to the company which owns the housing estate [on which they live].

The company is not allowed to issue a residential permit should more persons be accommodated in a flat than what is permitted under existing standards endorsed by the Local Hygiene Officer. Failure to comply with the regulation may be penalized by a fine of 5,000 Czechoslovakian crowns, the fine being due from the tenant and the persons who did not register them.

This regulation also allows for an immediate dislodging of the visitor from the flat, even without a judicial order, should the visitor be deemed to present a risk of spreading infection...

On January 12, 1993 Mr R. Kanci, an ethnic Roma permanently resident in Ústí nad Labem, was visited by police officers with dogs who ordered him to pack up his things without delay. On the same day police officers forced Mr Kanci to leave Slovakia with his wife and two small children. The police rationalized their actions by arguing that Mr Kanci was not entitled to stay in the Czech republic as the duration of his previous stay had been less than two years.⁸⁶ This regulation not only became a model for other cities (Ústí nad Labem, Choumtov, Most) but also a source of inspiration for... the Prosecutor-General, who introduced an extraordinary Anti-Immigration Bill into the Czech Parliament.^{87,88}

The public reaction to the presence of Slovakian Roma in the Czech Lands can be sensed from the following press excerpts:

<p>From: The Prague Post Well, If You Ask Me ...</p>		<p><i>January 20 - 26, 1993</i></p>
<p>Janka D. 46, librarian: "I'm not a racist, but I don't like them. I try to avoid them. I think that there are enough here, so the new ones should return. They make quite a lot of problems; we have many problems even without them."</p>	<p>Maria Kůhnová, 75, retired teacher. "I don't ever remember so many Gypsies in Bohemia in my entire life. I have nothing against those Romanies who are normal, who send their children to school. [I am] only against those who are dirty, who are the source of crime. The Slovak Romanies should be sent home with the help of the police..."</p>	
<p>Romanies Are Driven Out</p> <p>Police began evicting Romanies from illegally held apartments in northern Bohemia last week under new local residency laws aimed at stemming the flow of Slovak-Romany migration.</p> <p>According to press reports, many of those forced out of apartments soon found themselves on trains headed for Slovakia whether or not they had recently migrated from there...</p> <p style="text-align: right;">-by Ross Larsen and Petula Dvorak⁸⁹</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Copyright © The Prague Post, 1993</p>		

From:

The European

17 December, 1992

Slovakian gipsies shown the door

POLICE in the north Bohemian town of Ústí nad Labem raided 120 flats in an attempt to enforce laws which forbid local residents from offering space in their state-owned apartments without permission from town authorities.

The regulation was passed after reports in local newspapers claimed that up to 2,000 gipsies from Slovakia had moved to the town before the republic becomes independent on 1 January...⁸⁵

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the Czech and Slovak Republics. Interviewed prior to the 1 January 1993 break-up of the former Czechoslovakian state, they said:

In one sense it can be said to be catastrophic, or perhaps just one step before a catastrophic situation is in eastern Slovakia, in the traditional area of the Roma settlements.

There was very good will from the part of all three governments over the past two years. This goodwill still exists, but the problem of the 'Gypsy Question' in Czechoslovakia is such a great problem it can be said that it can be handled by our government immediately.

The range of this problem is so great that it will be a problem even for a very rich country that is not in the type of transitive stage that Czechoslovakia is to solve it.

The State is not able... it does not have the ability to solve the problem' they said, 'and the Roma do not have the ability of help themselves'.

During the preparatory phase of the so-called *Federal Governmental Policies towards the Roma People*, there was a policy for regional development programmes as an instrument to prevent communal and regional social conflicts.

As regions of high concentrations of Roma are also regions of very poor Czechs, assistance given only to the Roma would become a cause of major social conflict. This has led to the consideration of regional development programmes, concentrated on the whole population in a given locality without reference to particular ethnic backgrounds.⁹⁰

There seems to be a very general agreement in the Czech Lands and in Slovakia, that education is high on the list of priorities, for the Roma, to be sure, but also for non-Roma in order to bring about 'new public attitudes towards the Roma people, and to change the negative stereotypes against them'.⁹¹

Tomás Haisman and Jitka Gjuricová said, 'There is a very small number of people who understand the problems - only a few individuals. There are almost none who are interested and are able to do something about the problem':

There are some romantic people. They will be important for the Gypsy people in the future, but they are making a lot of mistakes in underestimating the situation.... There is a danger in this situation. It is necessary to be realistic without prejudice and to be aware of all sides of the problem. Several times there were some attempts according to the romantic style of intervention that failed, and more importantly they added to the conflict between 'white' and 'blacks.'

And they spoke about the three groups of people who are involved:

The first group are people of low social status, who live with the Roma in their communities; the second group are the romantics who are usually trying to solve their personal problems; and the third group is a small number of professionals and they are not able to do this work for any length of time.

'And', they added, 'there is very strong emotional pressure from the Roma and the rest of the population' each with their own demands and reactions, which makes the work of the professionals even more difficult.

It was agreed that the Roma must learn how to bear responsibility for themselves, individually and collectively. I was told:

And the State must start to prepare programmes to eliminate prejudices, and unemployment. There need to be changes in the taxation system, and special job training programmes, and changes in education. It must show that it wants to do something, and Roma people must be involved as a partner with the government in the preparation of these programmes.

12. Politics

The Roma, like any other group in the Czech and Slovak Republics are free to organize politically. There are some six political parties that began soon after the 'Velvet Revolution' but have achieved little strength, and are now reported to be in considerable disarray. As in Romania, a Roma has declared himself the King of the Roma.

What kind of institution this will lead to is an open question, but having been told more than once that the Roma are not ready for democracy, then perhaps a traditional form of leadership, the *Shiro Rom*, as he is called, may offer a reasonable alternative between the collapsed authoritarianism of communism, and the potential chaos for a people who have not been prepared for the responsibilities of democracy.

13. Property Rights

Property rights are based on either prior ownership, years of residency, or the ability to purchase. That minority of Roma whose families own property prior to the communist take-over following the Second World War can reclaim it. Most, however, owned little. Many were too unsettled and changed their residence too often to qualify for property-rights. Most cannot afford to purchase.

14. Religion

Many Roma belong to the charismatic as well as the more orthodox Christian churches, but time was not available to obtain evidence of their receiving any Church support and assistance. On the contrary, Rachel Tritt spoke of the Roman Catholic Church's negative attitudes towards the Roma, both over the recent years, and previously, as exemplified, by the role played in their persecution by the former Catholic priest Jozef Tiso, prime minister (1938-1939), then president (1939-1944), of the Slovak State during the Nazi era.⁹²

15. Self-Organization

Milena Hübschmannová spoke about Roma self-government as a basis for their overall development. And, she said:

They should get water, they should get gas, they should build the houses themselves, and be masons and be paid for it. There was a plan for four settlements, that was reduced to one settlement because of financial reasons, and now even this has been cut out. There is the need for a constructive and positive model.⁹³

At the Roma Union in Prague we discussed the resurgence of Roma cultural activities since the collapse of communism. More than thirty Roma organizations have been formed in the Czech and Slovak Republics. I was told that these organizations have

made concrete proposals for handling the situations in the various regions. There have been three main topics of importance, 'social, cultural and educational':

The first response has been from the Slovak government who are a year ahead of the Czech government in implementing programmes. In the cultural area, money was given to establish a Roma theatre, the press (newspapers and magazines); in the social field, the Roma have a representative in the Ministry of Culture. Money was given to rebuild, or to make new towns from the Roma ghettos. New programmes for re-qualification, and for job-training.

In Slovakia the situation is different. In the Czech Lands the government tries to postpone solutions. In the Czech Republic the racial problem is more visible than in Slovakia. In Slovakia there are no skinheads...⁹⁴

'In the past', said, a Roma Union spokesman, 'the government tried to solve our problem without considering our ideas about it. We would like to have our own institutions and to participate in the discussions that concern us'. Used to functioning paternalistically, governments sometimes neglect the fact that the people they are supposed to help may have their own needs, hopes, desires, and values that should be taken into account. Do everything for a man and you take away his sense of self-worth.

If support from the European Community would be available, we would use our own infrastructure as we cannot trust the government anymore... we will use our own tools, but we will have to ask the government to give us the laws that we need... At this moment, there are no conditions for us to act freely... Using our own infrastructure, I could imagine that we have semi-professionals to handle the infrastructure problems... this is a technical problem.

We need our own Roma institution to solve the national problems of Roma people. This institution would gather the Roma professionals, for this idea we need support from the legislative and governmental spheres...⁹⁵

In their previously quoted paper for the Council of Europe conference in Liptovský Mikuláš, Elena Szolgayová and Milan Polák wrote:

The biggest mistake done in the past with the Gypsy population was the destruction of their responsibility for their own destiny. Systems of social care, financial subsidies, and insufficient education led to the situation we are facing today. Large amounts of money flowed there, but the problems have only been increasing. Like most poverty groups accustomed to a day-to-day existence, Gypsies tend to be present-time orientated, so they find it difficult to postpone immediate gratification for future concerns...⁹⁶

At the Prague offices of the Roma Association for Children and Youth, I was also told of the need for Roma institutions. In their case, they have been trying to form a centre for the Roma in the Prague region. Such a centre could include job-training, and small business development programmes, as well as folklore and publishing activities.

I was informed that this project was presented to the Czech authorities in 1991, but that a building that was requested was given to another organization by the government's privatization committee. It is unclear to what extent Roma needs are among the priorities in Prague, considering that they have little money to pay for a building, while at the same time privatization is becoming increasingly profitable.

'Everybody knows the situation of Roma children and youth in Czechoslovakia' Margita Reiznerová said. 'People are critical of the Roma, and while we want to participate in

the solving of this problem, which is also a responsibility of the government, the government has not made any proposals, and will not give us any support'.⁹⁷

There is a need for Roma organizations as focal points for the regeneration of the Roma in all aspects of their life: economic, educational, political, social and so on. But the same story reappears in each country. Too often the organizations are centres of self-interest. Too often, they are separated from the people whom they should be serving. And, too often the funds they have received have not gone to the work that needs to be done.

If it were not a potentially libellous matter - as I was not in a position to seek, nor find 'hard' evidence' - I would quote the comments about a particular Roma leader who has apparently diverted funds for the benefit of himself, his family and colleagues. When I raised this as a general question at the Roma Association for Children and Youth it was said:

I know the situation as it is among Roma leaders. There is a kind of drift to the misuse of money... just to use it for their own benefit... but what to do with that? The only thing that could prevent the misuse of funds would be to create a team with specialists - Roms and non-Roms - as an institution, or with a 'commissioner' who would supervise, and everything would be done on the base of accepted proposals.⁹⁸

I was also told that:

There are some organizations that had projects and when they received the money they really used it for those projects. There are people among us who work on these matters, without caring about their time or money, as their duty to the Roma nation. And there are some leaders who live like the other Roms and are trying to help the socially weaker families, and the help does not depend on whether they are paid or not. There are Romany organizations that have been working for a year without getting any Kroner, or support...⁹⁹

But, when I asked a knowledgeable Roma professional in Bratislava which Roma organizations can be trusted for their integrity, the reply was a very firm: 'not one!'

In discussing the problems of Roma self-organization with Klára Orgovánová, an advisor to the Government of Slovakia's Minorities Office, she said that following the 1989 Revolution:

...every Roma leader began to express his own concept. The government began to meet with Roma, asking for ideas, but the government knew very well that the Roma leaders, who only had primary education, would be unable to write down their ideas, or work them out in a good way.¹⁰⁰

It was in 1990 that the Slovak government began to work on its *Principles of the Governmental Policy of the Slovak Republic Towards the Romanies*. At that time, she said, the Ministries began to work on their relationship to the Roma: 'but there was no empirical research to support the ideas being given to the Ministries. One cannot really build on many of the ideas as they have no scientific basis'.

And this of course is a fundamental problem. Prior to the 1989 revolution, the communist government was well informed about most aspects of Slovakian life: 'Over the previous forty years they knew all about what the Roma were doing and kept statistics, and now, all at once, they have nothing...' Because they have no information the government takes no initiatives: 'the decision over the least two years is to let the Roma try to do what they can by themselves'. But the Roma can do little by themselves.

16. Welfare

The question of welfare came up for discussion in Kosice, although there was no time to obtain specific information. Unemployment, child benefits and other forms of welfare payments are available to the Roma as to other Czech and Slovak citizens. Receiving Krs 500 per child plus other benefits, some families receive as much as Krs 15,000 per month.

Used more to a trading than a money economy, I was told, they tend to immediately spend what they have. Most of it apparently goes into alcohol, cigarettes, gambling, and these days on video-cassettes. Yet children lack clothes, the family diet is poor and parents, I was informed, have no comprehension of financial management.

Given the state of Roma settlements, the conversion of such payments into salaries for community work: road building, house repairing, sanitation and other development work by the Roma in their own settlements, requires consideration. It will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

NOTES

1. This survey was undertaken prior to the formal division of the Federation of the Czech and Slovak Republics into two separate states.
2. Gjuricová, Jitka, and Haisman, Tomáš, *The Romanies in Czechoslovakia*, Prague, unpubl., n.d., p.1.
3. *Op. cit.* p.1.
4. See also this report, Chapter One, p. 7.
5. Roma Association (30.10.1992).
6. Tomáš Haisman and Jitka Gjuricová (2.11.1992).
7. Mann, Arne, *The Roma – an Ethnic Minority in Slovakia*, Bratislava, Ethnografik Institut SAV, n.d., pp.1. ff.
8. Gjuricová, Jitka, and Haisman, Tomáš, *op.cit.*, p. 3.
9. Milena Hübschmannová (28.20.1992); (2.11.1992).
10. Roma Association (30.10.1992).
11. Gjuricová, Jitka and Haisman, Tomáš, *op.cit.*, pp.4 ff.
12. Mann, Arne, *op. cit.*, pp.3 ff.
13. Mann, Arne, *ibid.*
14. Mann, Arne, *ibid.*
15. Roma Union (30.10.1992).
16. Mann, Arne, *op. cit.*, pp.3 ff.
17. *Op.cit.*, pp.4.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Roma Union (30.10.992).
20. Milena Hübschmannová (28.10.1992); (2.11.1992).
21. Mann, Arne, *op.cit.*, pp. 6-7.

22. *Ibid.*
23. The Dubliners, 'The Thirty-Foot Trailer', from: *Fifteen Years On*. There may be a certain amount of 'poetic license' in this song as it is questionable that there are, or were, any Roma in Ireland. See, for example: O'Brien, Michael, 'The Irish Case', a paper presented to the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, *Gypsies in the Locality*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 15 September, 1992, p.2: 'It must be made clear at the outset that the "travellers" or "tinkers" of Ireland are not and never have been Gypsies'.
24. Milena Hübschmannová (2.11.1992).
25. Milena Hübschmannová (2.11.1992).
26. Milena Hübschmannová (2.11.1992).
27. As anyone knows who has run the gauntlet of supplicating hands in Delhi or Karachi, who has heard the syncopated chanting of the blind beggars of Manali in front of the local bank, or has been pursued by hordes of children shouting for, 'one rupee, one pen', in Kashmiri hill towns, begging is a profession in the Indian sub-continent.
28. No sooner had I finished talking to a family of Roma asylum seekers in the asylum centre in Eisenhüttenstadt, Germany, than one of the children started to dart across the room with her hand out until stopped by her father.- M.B.
29. Roma Union (30.10.1992).
30. Tomáš Haisman & Jitka Gjuricová (2.11.1992).
31. Tomáš Haisman & Jitka Gjuricová (2.11.1992).
32. Gjuricová, Jitka, and Haisman, Tomáš, *op.cit.*
33. Tomáš Haisman & Jitka Gjuricová (2.11.1992).
34. Tomáš Haisman & Jitka Gjuricová (2.11.1992).
35. Ján Hero (3.11.1992).
36. Roma Union (30.10.1992).
37. Roma Union (30.10.1992).
38. Roma Union (30.10.1992).
39. Roma Union (30.10.1992).
40. Hyacinta Draganovská (3.11.1992).
41. Hyacinta Draganovská (3.11.1992).
42. Anton Sedlák (3.11.1992).
43. Anton Sedlák (3.11.1992).
44. NB. This Article has been incorporated as Article 34, Paragraph 2 in the Slovak Constitution:
 - (1) Citizens of national minorities or ethnic groups in the Slovak Republic shall be guaranteed their full development, particularly the rights to promote their cultural heritage with other citizens of the same national minority or ethnic group, receive and disseminate information in their mother tongues, form associations, and create and maintain educational and cultural institutions. Details thereof shall be fixed by law.
 - (2) In addition to the right to learn the official language, the citizens of national minorities or ethnic groups shall, under provisions fixed by law, also be guaranteed:
 - a) the right to be educated in a minority language,
 - b) the right to use a minority language in official communications,
 - c) the right to participate in decision-making in matters affecting the national minorities and ethnic groups.

45. Ján Hero (3.11.1992).
46. Ján Hero (3.11.1992).
47. Sedlák, Anton, *Náctrtjazkovejprípravy*, Presov, Metodické Centrum, 1992.
48. Milena Hübschmannová (2.11.1992).
49. *The Socialisation of Rom Through Teacher Preparation*, Nitra (Slovakia), Pedagogical Institute, n.d.
50. Auster, Amy, and Dvorák, Petulá, *The Prague Post*, Prague, October 27–November 2, 1992, p.3.
51. Roma Union (30.10.1992).
52. Tomáš Haisman & Jitka Gjuricová (2.11.1992).
53. Tomáš Haisman & Jitka Gjuricová (2.11.1992).
54. Tritt, Rachel, *Struggling for Ethnic Identity*, A Helsinki Watch Report, New York, Human Rights Watch, 1992, p.42.
55. Milena Hübschmannová (2.11.1992).
56. *CTK Daily News and Press Survey*, Bratislava, 8 February, 1993.
57. *The Prague Post*, February 10-16, 1993 p.5.
58. Roma Association for Children & Youth (2.11.1992).
59. Tomáš Haisman & Jitka Gjuricová (2.11.1992).
60. Mann, Arne, *op.cit.* pp. 7-8.
61. *Ibid.*
62. Tritt, Rachel, *op.cit.*, p.58.
63. Klára Orgovánová (6.11.1992).
64. Klára Orgovánová (6.11.1992).
65. Szolgayová, Elena and Polák, Milan, 'Housing Project for the Romanies in the Town of Stropkov' a paper presented to the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, *Conference on Gypsies in the Locality*, held at Liptovský Mikuláš, Slovakia. Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1992, p.4.
66. Ministry of Construction, *Architectonic And Town Planning Solution Principles*, Bratislava, Republic of Slovakia, 1992, pp. 12-13.
67. *Ibid.*
68. The translated copy of the document received through Tomáš Haisman, 2.11.1992, has no formal title nor publishing details.
69. See *Principles of the Governmental Policy of the Slovak Republic Towards the Romanies*, Bratislava, Republic of Slovakia, 1992, 6p. (in English translation). Provided through the courtesy of Rachel Tritt.
70. Confirmed by telephone by a spokesman for the Czech government (8.02.1992).
71. Tomáš Haisman (2.11.1992).
72. Tomáš Haisman (2.11.1992).
73. Hero, Ján, 'Education, Vocational Training and Employment,' presented to the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe conference on *Gypsies in the Locality*, Liptovský Mikuláš, 15-17 October, 1992. Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1992, 1p.
74. Tomáš Haisman & Jitka Gjuricová (2.11.1992).

75. Jitka Gjuricová (2.11.1992).
76. Hyacinta Draganovská (3.11.1992).
77. For reasons of protocol, the attribution of the Czech Government source cannot be made.
78. Jitka Gjuricová (2.11.1992).
79. Jitka Gjuricová (2.11.1992).
80. Tomáš Haisman & Jitka Gjuricová (2.11.1992).
81. Tomáš Haisman & Jitka Gjuricová (2.11.1992).
82. Büllsbach, Anna, *Federal Office's Eligibility Practice Regarding a/s from Poland, Hungary and CSFR*, Zirndorf, UNHCR, 19 November, 1992, Ref: CP 660/92 - Bü, pp. 11 ff.
83. Roma Union (30.10.1992).
84. Roma Union (30.10.1992).
85. see: *The European*, London, 17-20 December, 1992.
86. *Ibid.*
87. From a paper prepared by Jana Pichtová, Ph.D., Department of Social Communication, Slovak Academy of Sciences, January 1993, courtesy *Open Society Fund*, Bratislava. The anti-immigration bill:
...also instructs citizens to report to a registration office for permission to accommodate in their flats persons without a permanent residence permit... if an unregistered person is found by the police the fine imposed by law enforcement officers will be 5,000 Czechoslovak crowns for flat owners and 1,000 crowns for persons who fail to register. Police officers and other persons authorised by the local authorities are entitled to enter the flats at any time, with the exception of the period between midnight and 6 a.m. in order to check whether there are any unregistered persons [there]. The bill also makes it compulsory for citizens to request permission whenever they intend to lease their premises to tenants. Such a permission may be withheld from persons who do not boast of a clean record.
88. See, 'Prag: Rassismus-Vorwurf an Justiz', in *The Standard*, 8 January, 1992.
89. *The Prague Post*, 20-26 January, 1993.
90. Tomáš Haisman & Jitka Gjuricová (2.11.1992).
91. Tomáš Haisman & Jitka Gjuricová (2.11.1992).
92. Rachel Tritt (8.11.1992).
93. Milena Hübschmannová (2.11.1992).
94. Roma Union (30.10.1992).
95. Roma Union (30.10.1992).
96. Szolgayová, Elena and Polák, Milan, *op.cit.*, p.3.
97. Roma Association for Children and Youth (2.11.1992).
98. Roma Association for Children and Youth (2.11.1992).
99. Roma Association for Children and Youth (2.11.1992).
100. Klára Orgovánová (8.11.1992).

FIVE

NOTES FROM POLAND

1. Historical and Cultural Background

There is considerably less information in this chapter, than in the previous ones. Poland was been included in this survey as it had become the main transit centre for Romanian Roma on their way to the West. There was, unfortunately, little opportunity to undertake a range of meetings similar to those that had been held in the Romanian, Hungarian, Czech and Slovak Republics.

In brief, as in the rest of Central and Eastern Europe, Roma had reached Poland by the 15th century. Compared to its neighbouring states, Poland's Roma population was not very extensive. In an article entitled *Roma Territorial Behaviour and State Policy*, Andrzej Mirga, an ethnologist at the University of Kraków and a representative of the Polish Helsinki Watch Committee, quoting other sources, has written: 'In pre-war Poland there were about 50,000 "Gypsies". The war alone consumed about 35,000, mainly itinerant "Gypsies". Settled groups survived without significant loss'.¹

Population increases over the past forty-five years have brought the numbers of Polish Roma to approximately 30,000, a figure arrived at by the Police 'using special files in the Ministry of the Interior', as ethnicity does not feature as a category on Poland's census forms.² According to Andrzej Mirga, at the end of the Second World War some seventy-five percent of the Polish Roma were still nomadic. Communism's forced settlement policies, however, officially brought their travelling to an end by 1964. 'However', Andrzej Mirga said, 'even though they were settled they did not lose their nomadic behaviour. They changed horses for cars and did the same thing as they did before'.³

Asked how they managed in the face of a powerful and centralized bureaucracy, Andrzej Mirga said:

They had no problem. They did not know much about the law, but they used bribery. They paid the authorities, the police and so on. It was an informal way of managing. Besides that, it was a totalitarian system...⁴

It was, apparently, a system that in Poland, at least, could be manipulated as long as one had the right method and the right contacts.

Asked about the survival of Roma culture in Poland, Andrzej Mirga said that Polish Roma do not feel that their culture is under any threat. He depicts the Polish Roma as having a very strong and cohesive cultural tradition and wishing to maintain their identity.

One of the reasons for the strength of their cultural Roma identity is that Polish Roma have maintained their traditional power structures and the institution of the *Shira Rom* - the 'Head of the Roma' - literally a tribal chieftain who governs the life of all of Poland's Roma people. 'This is not just for appearances,' Andrzej Mirga pointed out.

The *Shira Rom* is judge and legislator. 'He is the ultimate authority among his people. He does nothing to increase his authority. The Roma recognize his function, his power, and they come to him to solve any problem'. This institution of the *Shira Rom*, Andrzej Mirga said, 'is a model that could be used among other Roma groups'.⁵

2. Economy

Unemployment, the source of so many problems across Central and Eastern Europe is not, apparently, a major problem for Polish Roma as for the most part they are self-employed. 'Gypsies do not look for jobs', Andrzej Mirga said, 'but only for opportunities to make "business"'. Some of the Polish Roma still follow their traditional activities as metal workers and cleaners of large metal pots, vats and cauldrons used in restaurants and institutional kitchens. Other Roma are traders, buying and selling whatever goods are available. It seems that there are few Polish Roma who are looking for work.⁶

Perhaps the clue to the distinctive nature of contemporary Polish Roma life and that of the Roma in other former Eastern bloc countries is found in Andrzej Mirga's article where he points out that forced collectivization came to an end in Poland after 1956, leaving largely intact many of the traditional Roma occupations.⁷

Andrzej Mirga said that during the crisis of the 1980s, when unemployment was increasing and Polish workers were in a very difficult situation, the Roma were largely unaffected. Not having previously been employed they were able to deal with the crisis by earning their money in their own way.

There is only one group of Roma that had taken up permanent employment. This comprises former blacksmiths who had been settled in the south of the country for over a century and a half. But after the 1960s there was less and less work for them to do, and they began taking jobs in state enterprises. It appears that they have now been able to establish small businesses of their own.

3. Education

The educational situation of the Roma in Poland is hardly different from the other Central and European states, except that I heard nothing about the 'special schools' that seemed to be so prevalent in the Czech and the Slovak Republics. But this may also be due to the relatively small and very scattered nature of the Polish Roma population.

Andrzej Mirga said that most Roma children attend primary schools, but that less than thirty percent complete them. As in the neighbouring countries, there are traditions involved, such as Polish Roma marry early, at thirteen or fourteen years of age. This means that the girls - soon to become pregnant - will anyway not continue their schooling, while the boys have to find work to support their families.

In addition, despite being settled, the Roma still move a lot, from one city to another. It is not just the nuclear family, but the extended family as well, with its children, that will pick up and change residence. This makes continuity of schooling very difficult.

And again one comes across the fact that there is no educational tradition among the Roma. Unlike a number of ethnic groups, they are not 'a people of the book'. They have no substantial literary culture, and thus literacy and formal learning is not considered of great value. As Andrzej Mirga put it, 'they still consider education [to be] for very special people, not for them... but for people with "a very good head" which, from

their point of view, they do not have.' The result? Out of a population of some 30,000 people, there are four who are known to be attending a university.

4. Ethnic Conflicts

There is anti-Roma prejudice in Poland, as elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe. It is, perhaps, less frequent only because the numbers of Roma are smaller and they are widely scattered with only a few concentrated settlements, to be found in the south of the country.

During the Second World War, Oswiecim (Auschwitz) was the scene of the Nazi concentration camp where Roma and Jews were annihilated. Forty years later, in 1981, local Poles set fire to Roma properties, forcing some two hundred of them to leave. With their documents marked by local officials as 'non-citizens' (despite that their families had been living in the area for many generations), the Roma were forced out by train and finally escaped by boat to Sweden.

Ten years later, on 26 June, 1991 there was a pogrom in Mlawa. 'This', said Andrzej Mirga, 'was the first point, the beginning maybe, the sign of the condition of the relationship between the Polish society and the Roma':

[Previously] ethnic conflicts were easy to solve, because Roma fled to the West, and then there was no longer any conflict in the community. But after the Mlawa pogrom, the Roma tried again to escape, but this time the Swedish government said 'no, we cannot grant you asylum, you have democracy in your country, so you will have to return'. So they had to return to Mlawa, and now they have to live among the people who made the pogrom.⁸

The Mlawa pogrom was followed by the arrest, trial and imprisonment of those who caused it. Since completing their sentences, said Andrzej Mirga, some of the people who were responsible for the pogrom have returned to Mlawa and have again been attacking the Roma: 'They throw stones at windows, and they fight with Gypsies on the street'.

But the Mlawa pogrom has apparently become contagious, its effect is spreading to other parts of Poland in anti-Roma actions. As Andrzej Mirga explained it, the Roma are seen to be in the wrong, they are regarded as criminals and Poles are being encouraged to attack them. There are wall posters in many places. Their message is: 'Death to the Gypsies'; 'Hang the Gypsies'. 'Now', said Andrzej Mirga, 'Gypsies are afraid of Polish people. They are trying to organize themselves'.⁹

The 'skinheads', the source of so much racial hatred, are likened to a disease, spreading from country to country, for which there is no antidote. 'This situation of "skinheads" in Germany will be the same here', said Krystof Lewandowski, of the Polish Refugee Office. It is just a question of time. It will not be a political movement but a "fashion", and one that is very dangerous. It is like some contagious sickness, it is really serious'.¹⁰

POLES WAKE UP !

In Poland there are only 90 thousands of them, but they are a very disgusting and painful abscess on the body of our Nation. Gypsies – an ethnic group without any culture, moral and religious ideals, a nomad mob only robbing and stealing for a living. Although they make up a very small percentage of the Polish society (0.2%), police statistics show that 10.8% of all crimes are committed by Gypsies. They are the nucleus of violation, they foul our streets. Recently the group of native Gypsies was enlarged by a Romanian Gypsy-ragtag. As well as their Polish fellow countrymen they rob, steal and beg. Dirty, full of lice, they occupy the streets and railway stations of bigger cities.

As usual, our “humanitarian and progressive” government makes no efforts to solve this problem. In Romania the situation is the same, but there the population took the action in their own hands. In our country only the action in Mława (demolishing some Gypsy dens) occurred, causing a great disturbance among the Jewish-Liberal circles.

It is high time to solve this sensitive problem. Since the government is not willing to deal with the Gypsy matter the Nation itself has to take the initiative in its own hands. The mob should feel that it is not at home and has to obey the will of the host. Let them pack their dirty tatters and leave Poland for ever! Poland belongs to Poles!

POLISH NATIONAL FRONT !

Translation courtesy of UNHCR, Vienna, from a wall poster obtained in Kraków, Poland

5. Health & Medicine

Roma families in Poland are similar in size to those in Hungary, that is of three or four children, which, with better living conditions has meant less illnesses than are found among other Roma in Central and Eastern Europe.

There was no opportunity to obtain any health statistics, but Andrzej Mirga said that there are many older people among the Roma, suggesting a life-span closer to that of the Polish population itself.

The Polish Roma do not seem to have any health problems that are any different from those of the Polish population in general. Not being regularly employed, however, the Roma do not benefit from the government's health insurance schemes and must pay their own medical and hospital bills.

6. Housing

Andrzej Mirga said that the living conditions of Polish Roma 'are not so bad'. He reports that most of the Roma have good flats and live well, even though there are some poor communities living under bad conditions. 'But the average' he said, 'is better than in Romania'.¹¹

Single samples are poor evidence. But I found Andrzej Mirga's flat to be thoroughly neat and comfortable and perfectly in keeping with general Central and Eastern European 'middle class' norms. If the building itself is not in the best condition, that is because like so much housing, from the western borders of Central Europe to as far east as one wishes to go, it is publicly owned, and local governments are careless landlords.

I was not, however, prepared for the spacious, attractive and comfortable modern house of Andrzej Mirga's Rom colleague, Roman Kwiatkowski, vice-president of the Polish Roma Federation. His home is what one would expect of a typically 'middle manager' or successful owner of a small or medium-sized business anywhere in Western Europe. But interestingly, the floor plan, decor and seating arrangements, owe more to the East than the West; more to Asia than Europe, and more to the people of the Sind than of the Polish countryside.

Andrzej Mirga spoke about Roma houses, and that it was their design, executed with both flair and fantasy, that was the source of one of the pogroms.

They [the Roma] started to build this way, not at first in houses, but in cemeteries. They built monuments, and after this they began to build houses with this strange architecture. And this became the first step in the first conflict between the Roma community and the society which had stereotyped ideas that the Roma first committed crimes and then they made sufficient money, so that they could start to build and invest in property.

Some of them built beautiful strange houses and for surrounding people was something new, and they were angry with the Gypsies that they started to build such beautiful houses, and strange architecture, like Islamic architecture.¹²

But, Andrzej Mirga recounted, local Poles regarded themselves as poor. They saw a financial crisis coming, and they also saw that the Roma were starting to build their strange houses. Ancient hostilities, jealousy, rivalry, whatever the cause, Roma success was the spark to ignite another pogrom as in Oswiecim and Konin.

7. Human Rights

Prima facie, Poland is an adherent to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, and a party to the *International Convention of Civil and Political Rights*. Given the extended confrontation between the Solidarity and Poland's former communist regime, there can be little doubt that for the present, psychologically as well as politically, the affirmation of human rights is held to be important by the Polish government. I did not receive the impression that the Polish authorities tended to support, or neglect, anti-Roma incidents, or by intention or neglect permit the Roma to live under intolerable circumstances.

8. International Assistance

It was suggested that the international community could offer assistance to the Roma but there was insufficient opportunity to develop specific ideas.

9. Law & Jurisprudence

There was insufficient time to deal with this topic but the evidence suggests that the police and the judicial system will act to protect the Roma in the face of attack and prejudicial treatment. However, the comments of Hugh Poulton, below, must be considered.

10. Migration

In the *Refugees in Eastern Europe: Minority Rights and Mass Exodus*, Hugh Poulton writes:

In Poland the 15,000 or so Roma population appears to be leaving en masse, aggravated by indigenous racism against them. For example, in the immediate aftermath of the indiscriminate mob attacks on Roma in Mlawa on 26 June 1991, over 1000 fled to Sweden but were turned back by Swedish authorities.

There seems to be truth and falsity in this. Falsity: the population figures are wrong. Falsity, there was no mass departure of the size reported. Truth: following the Mlawa pogrom, there was an attempted exodus, but the numbers are unclear. Many families, said Andrzej Mirga, have left Poland, going to Germany, Sweden, Holland and even the United States. There were two major pogroms in 1981, one in Konin and the other in Oswiecim (Auschwitz). All of those people were expelled from the country. From Oswiecim people went to Sweden, and from Konin some went to Germany and others elsewhere.

Between 1983 and 1989 there was a tendency to leave the country. Since Solidarity came to power and the governments of asylum countries regarded Poland as a democratic state, there was no longer a chance for asylum, and many Roma families returned. It is believed that because governments have changed, and have even committed themselves to the highest of principles, that their citizens have also made the same commitment, and will refrain from abusing one another. Sadly, it is not the case.

Now, rather than being a refugee-generating nation, Poland has become a 'transit centre' through which Romanian and some Bulgarian Roma have been passing on their way to the West. The 'underground railway' runs through Poland to the Donau.¹³

Krystof Lewandowski, of the Polish Refugee Office explained the situation:

Poland is the country in which passports get lost, so that having no legal identity, the asylum seekers cannot be returned to their country of origin. The Romanian Roma refugees are people who see Poland as a transit country. They are coming here like tourists as we do not require visas from Romanians. They have passports [when they arrive]. The problem is what happens on the Polish-German border.¹⁴

To make it difficult for them to be returned to Romania, the Roma have been throwing away their passports in Poland. Thinking that they no longer have any legal identity, they have believed that they could not be returned to their country of origin. Sometimes, Krystof Lewandowski said, the asylum seekers are returned to Poland [by the German authorities] and sent to the Romanian embassy to obtain new documents.

The situation, of course, has changed since the signing of the 'German-Romanian Takeover Agreement' last November. Now, officially, Romanian asylum seekers, Roma or not, with or without their original documents whose requests for asylum have been denied, are being returned directly to Romania. According to recent press reports (see, for example, *The European*, 1-4 April, 1993), others are turned back at the German border.

Poland might, therefore, now lose its transit status, other than for those Roma who continue to try enter Germany illegally. But there are also an unknown number of Romanian Roma who have simply disappeared in Poland, choosing to stay there rather than be returned to Romania. For its part, the Polish government does not forcibly return Romanian asylum seekers who have been refused entry, or sent back to Poland, by the German authorities.

Krystof Lewandowski said that the Romanian (and other non-Polish) Roma do not report to Polish authorities, but repeatedly try to return to Germany. In October 1992, therefore, the German Minister of the Interior was in Warsaw trying to persuade the Polish government to institute visa requirements on all Romanians. Other Western governments have also been putting pressure on Poland to require visas, but no action had been taken by the Polish government at the time of my discussions. In discussing the increasing public reaction against the Roma Krystof Lewandowski offered the observation that 'countries such as Poland or Finland that are almost "ethnically pure" do not understand the Gypsy migration'.¹⁵

11. Property Rights

There seems to be little problem with Roma property rights, other than the opposition of local people to having Roma property owners in their midst.

12. Self-Organization

Roma self-organization is apparently more easily and effectively handled in Poland than elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, but again one must take the relatively small size of the Polish Roma population into account. The *Shira Rom* and the hierarchical control that derives from him helps to integrate Polish Roma activities and dissipate the inter-organizational rivalries and conflicts that appear in other countries.

After the Mlawa pogrom it was recognized that there were significant problems that needed to be worked out between the Roma and Polish society. The Roma community leaders agreed to the need for an organization that would act externally, not dealing with the internal matters of Roma life (the responsibility of the *Shira Rom*), but could work as

an 'interface' with Polish authorities to deal with Roma-Polish relations, and this, *Stowarzyszenie Romów w Polsce*, has now been created.¹⁶

As Andrzej Mirga put it, 'in other countries there are many Gypsy organizations, which have been fighting with each other and this has caused chaos. In Poland this cannot happen'. He explained that to create a new Roma association in Poland one first asks permission of the Roma community leaders. Only once common agreement has been reached, is the decision taken.

13. Welfare

As the visit to Poland was initially less about Poland's Roma population, than its role as a transit centre for Romanian Roma, it is fitting, I think to be able to recount the consequence of the assistance offered by Polish authorities to the Romanian Roma asylum seekers.

In the spring of 1991 sizeable numbers (actual figures are not known) of Romanian Roma arrived in Kraków and settled themselves around the railway station. Undoubtedly regarded as somewhat of a public nuisance, it was also believed that the railway station was not the most appropriate residence. The city authorities, therefore, provided the Romanian Roma with a house about two kilometres outside of the city, and the police rounded them up and took them to the hostel. The Roma were informed that they were free to go into the city during the day, but at night they must return to the hostel.

The Roma, said Andrzej Mirga, did not want to be in a hostel. They wanted to be in the middle of the city centre where they could beg, make some money, and then move on to other places. In the hostel they were controlled, did not speak Polish and had no translator to help them. They obliged the Kraków authorities for about two weeks and lived in the hostel, and then one night they disappeared.

Similar housing provisions were also made in the Silesian city of Bytom by local social workers. But their hostel was attacked by 'skinheads', and although the police then transferred them to another house they, too, ran away.

NOTES

1. Mirga, Andrzej, *Roma Territorial Behaviour and State Policy*, p. 261 (publishing details unknown).
2. Andrzej Mirga (10.11.1992).
3. Andrzej Mirga (10.11.1992).
4. Andrzej Mirga (10.11.1992).
5. Andrzej Mirga (10.11.1992).
6. Andrzej Mirga (10.11.1992).
7. Mirga, Andrzej, *op.cit.* p. 6.
8. Andrzej Mirga (10.11.1992).
9. Andrzej Mirga (10.11.1992).
10. Krystof Lewandowski (9.11.1992).
11. Andrzej Mirga (10.11.1992).

12. Andrzej Mirga (10.11.1992).
13. Poulton, Hugh, *Refugees in Eastern Europe: Minority Rights and Mass Exodus*, London, Minority Rights Group, 1992, p.7.

In addition, Poland is now a major transit point on the illegal Roma emigration route from Romania to Germany. Many Roma families from Romania live temporarily on rubbish dumps and in railway stations after being refused entry into Germany, awaiting a chance to cross illegally.
14. Krystof Lewandowski (9.11.1992).
15. Krystof Lewandowski (9.11.1992). Mr Lewandowski refers to the fact that as a nation Poland comprises essentially ethnic Poles (or Polish *Slavs*), and has had little post-WWII experience of other nationalities or ethnic groups.
16. Literally, the 'Polish Roma Federation'.

SIX

'ROMA, GO HOME!'

1. Impellers

By 1991, Romanians, among other Central and East Europeans, had begun travelling westward to share in the advertised benefits of the free market. Among them, accepting at face value the West's pronouncement about the right of the free movement of peoples, were the Roma.

Some were entrepreneurs, taking to the road again after long years of restrictions on their movements; others were the destitute, seeking some means of subsistence in the face of worsening economic conditions exacerbated by racial prejudice and their lack of employable skills; others were the violated, whose lives had been threatened, whose families had been attacked, and whose homes had been destroyed.

The Roma who left Romania out of fear for their safety are normally designated as *involuntary migrants* and those who left for entrepreneurial reasons normally being designated as *voluntary migrants*. Involuntary migrants, in principle, are accorded the right to apply for asylum in the country that they manage to enter, and are known as *asylum seekers*.

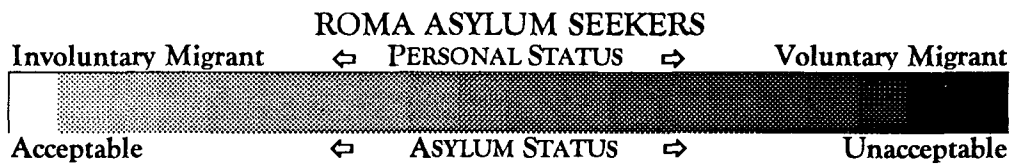
Voluntary migrants are not normally accorded the right to apply for asylum, but are required to fulfil the procedures and criteria for application as immigrants to the country they wish to enter. Should they enter without having completed the immigration process, they are regarded as *illegal migrants* and are subject to deportation.

Asylum seekers, those whose applications for asylum have been accepted for consideration, may be provided with food, clothing, shelter and basic financial assistance (according to the provisions available in the country to which they have applied). Consequently, involuntary and voluntary Roma migrants alike (among others) have been seeking to use asylum provisions; the first because they need them; the second because they hope to take advantage of them on the chance that their demands for asylum might be met, or because they can obtain more from the small financial allowances they receive while being cared for in asylum centres than they can earn in their own country.

This would seem to make a reasonably clear-cut distinction between involuntary and voluntary migrants, i.e. potential refugees, or potential immigrants quite straightforward. But in the case of those such as the Roma, the situation is far less simple. In their case these designations, rather than being mutually exclusive are, perhaps, better understood as the extreme points on a scale of asylum-seeking, between the absolutely needy (and justifiable), and the strictly entrepreneurial (and unjustifiable): the majority of Roma asylum seekers will be found to be spread out in between.

Although not having been physically attacked, the majority of the Roma using asylum provisions, lack the necessary food, clothing, shelter, health, education and right to gainful employment, that can be regarded as minimal conditions of life.¹ Where, in their

case, the line between *justifiable* and *unjustifiable* asylum-seeking is to be drawn, seems to be quite arbitrary; a matter of government policies and the attitudes and actions of the officials authorized to implement them.



Of course if, after *due process*, according to national and/or international criteria, their applications are regarded as justified, Roma asylum seekers may be granted refugee status with the right to reside in the country to which they have applied. Those that are not, will be voluntarily, or involuntarily repatriated, or they will make their own way back to their country of origin, or they may try to enter some other land of hope.

The Roma have become migrants because of local conditions; because of what has attracted them to the West; and because the tendency to migrate is, anyway, an innate characteristic of human and non-human life respectively. Migratory tendencies have evolved to protect species from those environmental conditions that are perceived, or are experienced, as a threat to their survival and development. It should be understood, in fact, that human refugees represent a significant aspect of the planetary ecological problem as it works itself out at the human level.²

Overlaying the evolutionary foundations of their migration, the Romanian Roma's decision to come to the West is perfectly comprehensible. Every previous European migration - from which, in fact, each European nation has derived its 'root' and even later populations - has taken place for the same reasons: inadequate and even deteriorating environmental conditions (physical, social and psychological) that threaten a group's survival, and the presence among them of sufficient determination, strength and ability to search for new possibilities.

The ancient Israelites migrated to their 'Promised Land'; modern ones have done the same. Angles, Celts, Croats, Franks, Goths, Huns, Picts, Saxons, Slavs, Uigars and every other group whose genes course through the blood of Western Europeans (for none are indigenous) have migrated from some Eastern land because of prevailing conditions. The difference between present and past migrations, is that the territoriality of contemporary nation-states, their present population sizes, economic difficulties, and concerns about the limits of their 'carrying capacity' to absorb further immigrants, is now creating major barriers to human migrations.

2. Attractors

While there are the *impellers* that have been sending the Roma, among others, on their westward journey, there are also the *attractors* that have been drawing them here. Migrants, involuntary or voluntary, do not just go anywhere if they can help it. If they have the opportunity, and have not been forced into an unknown wilderness, they will follow the trail of messages that leads them to where they believe they will be better off.

Western Europeans probably seldom listened to, or thought about, the ideologically important broadcasts that pronounced the daily benedictions of their sponsoring governments upon the democratic forces that had been struggling to emerge in Central and Eastern Europe once the authoritarian implications of communism had become clear.

Busy with their own affairs, few were able to comprehend the effects of the Western media barrage on Central and Eastern European minds. Yet, the US State Department's *Radio Free Europe* and *Radio Liberty* have spent decades in advertising the virtues of 'the American Way of Life' and in promoting the inalienable right of the 'free movement of peoples'. The *British Broadcasting Corporation's* 'World Service', and the Swiss, French, Dutch and other international radio services constantly transmit information about Western democratic traditions, cultures and economic possibilities.

From Bucharest, Prague, Warsaw and Bratislava, television broadcasts provide a daily barrage of full-screen publicity announcing the wealth of cars, cosmetics, clothes, cleaning products, electronic and electrical appliances and the vast range of luxury goods to be found in the West's most expensive shops for those who can find the money to buy them. And, in between the advertising clips are the re-runs of Hollywood films and television serials announcing the richness of well-fed happy Western families, with their large cars and spacious homes, that are nothing but a dream for the ordinary citizen of Eastern and Central Europe and other countries.

While such programmes are the means by which Western businesses hope to create a market of desire sufficient, perhaps, to motivate people to work harder so they will earn more and purchase the Western way of life, they tell little, if anything, about our unemployed, homeless and impoverished people. Nor do they offer any encouragement to their audiences to consider how they might improve the conditions of their own lives in their own countries.

In the meantime, when work is not available, and the introduction of the market economy is causing factory closures and losses of jobs, and the money is not there to buy the food whose prices have risen beyond purchasable possibility, what else to do, but to try get to the West, to the people who are teaching how beautiful life can be. From this standpoint, Western nations must accept their responsibilities for attracting those, such as the Roma.

The Roma may live with up to ten people in a cramped room in a shabby house or block of flats, but if there is electricity, they will have a television set. They may well prefer to remain in their present nations and build a better life, but if conditions continue to deteriorate where else can they try to go except westward? After all, the message inscribed on the plinth of America's Statue of Liberty in New York Harbour says:

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me;
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.³

3. The Land of Promise

Principle among the Western European nations to receive the full spectrum of involuntary and voluntary migrants, is the Federal Republic of Germany. Sensitive to the needs of those seeking to escape from totalitarian regimes and the ravages of wars, the founders of the new German republic had enshrined the right to political asylum in its Constitution, or *Basic Law*.

Article 16 (2) of the *Basic Law* states simply that 'persons persecuted on political grounds shall enjoy the right of asylum'. The simplicity of the provision has been

backed up by social security provisions and services that provide for a far better standard of living than that available in many refugee-generating countries.

While this has meant that legitimate asylum seekers have been, and are, properly provided for during the period in which their applications are being processed, thousands of others whose requests for asylum range from the questionable to the spurious have also been able to take advantage of the Federal Republic's hospitality.

The demand for such hospitality has increased dramatically over the years. Afghanis, Algerians, Bulgarians, Czechs, Ghanaians, Nigerians, Romanians, Slovaks, Turks, Vietnamese, Yugoslavs, Zairians and others make up the numbers of asylum seekers.⁴ Some are there because of persecution and warfare; others because they do not know how else to survive. A vast number - perhaps the majority - are using the provisions as the only way they know of to find a way to the West.

ASYLUM SEEKERS IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY (ANNUAL APPLICATIONS - NOT CUMULATIVE) ⁵						
1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
99,650	57,400	103,076	121,318	193,063	256,112	438,191

In 1992 the *Länder* (the federated German states) and their communities spent between DM 15,000-15,500 per asylum seeker to meet the costs of accommodation, meals, social services and administration. Using the lowest estimate, one arrives at a cost to the German people of over DM 6.5 billion in 1992 alone. As indicated in Chapter Two of this survey, over 41,500 of the asylum seekers were Romanian Roma. Their support alone cost Germany some DM 623 million in 1992.⁶

In view of the escalating cost of East-West German reunification, increasing unemployment, inflation, and the strains appearing in its previously assumed stable economy, it is understandable that the German government is trying to reduce the numbers applying to it for asylum as rapidly as possible, to those whom it regards as legitimate political exiles. Its neighbouring countries of Austria and Switzerland have also been doing the same.

As long as the Berlin Wall was up and the Iron Curtain was down, there was a warm Western welcome for the few heroic ones who managed to avoid their respective Stasi, Securitate, KGB, or other guardians of Stalinist lands, their dogs and barbed wire, and cross over.

But by the mid-1980s there was already apprehension in Western Europe because of a potentially mounting tide of 'foreigners'. Refugees and migrants from Central and South America, the Middle and Far East, Northern and Southern Africa had been arriving in increasing numbers, in some cases permanently changing the cultural map of cities and regions. One heard about 'compassion fatigue', that 'the boat is full' and of 'refugees in orbit'; those with nowhere to hang their hats or lay their heads.

Perestroika and *Glasnost* disclosed the deteriorating condition of the USSR. Prodded externally by Western pressures and internally by disenchanted populations who transformed themselves into *Velvet Revolutionaries* across its European satellites, the USSR collapsed, undergoing a fragile and fractious attempt at metamorphosis in the guise of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

From the western edge of the former COMECON nations to the eastern borders of the Russian Federation, thousands of formerly sacred statues of Marx, Lenin and their acolytes were overturned, political prisons were opened, the oligarchy were in full retreat and voices of hope, full of platitudinous phrases like 'the New World Order', our 'Planetary Home' and the 'Peace Dividend' were heard in many lands. The 'Cold War' was over and democracy could truly rule the airwaves. But no sooner had Western Europe breathed a sigh of relief than it breathed a sigh of fear. Its messages of being 'the way, the truth and the light' had become too effective.

In the spring of 1991 the Federal Republic of Germany initiated a programme to build three job-training centres - *Ausbildzentrum* - in Romania, so that some Romanians, at least, would be less inclined to look for training and work possibilities in the Federal Republic.⁷ The Swiss government, for its part, is supporting the *Information Project for Romania*, developed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Geneva, as an attempt to persuade reasonably well-educated and more 'middle class' young adult Romanians to try make something out of life in their own country rather than expecting to succeed in the West.⁸

In June 1991, the twelve member states of the European Community signed an accord in Dublin which would lead to the harmonization of asylum policies across the Community; would assure an asylum seeker of more standardized treatment, and at the same time prevent multiple applications for asylum in the same, or different countries being made.

Later in 1991, a rumour came out of Scandinavia that a potential mass migration of disaffected and disenchanting citizens of the CIS - some 23 million in all - wanted to come to the West as soon as exit restrictions would be removed in 1993, and already thousands of Romanians were making their way into Germany.

One suspects, however, that while German refugee and immigration authorities were discussing asylum and migration policies among themselves and with their opposite numbers in neighbouring countries, they had not anticipated the arrival of the Roma. No one expected the Roma.

No one expected the Roma because in Western Europe they are hardly a people to be considered worthy of attention, except to make sure that they do not turn a local car park into a camping site, or do not stop in the villages: *Nomades interdits* is the message on a road sign recently seen in France.

In most western countries the Roma are looked upon as a social nuisance, to be avoided if at all possible, except at fair-grounds where one can have one's future foretold by 'Gypsy Jim', or 'Madame Serena' with their variously priced crystal ball readings. As for the Roma from Eastern or Central Europe, until recently they have been an unknown, if not a forgotten people, whom the Nazi regime had sought to annihilate - an act, with its mass deportations, forced labour and executions that, for whatever reason, the Federal Republic has not wanted to acknowledge. Commenting on the present circumstances of the German Roma (Cinti), a recent *Press Release* from the Romani Union in Hamburg states:

The total Romani population of Germany is now estimated at some 100,000, though exact figures do not exist. It consists historically of two populations: the few survivors and descendants of the Romani (mostly Cinti) population that had lived in Germany before World War II and was almost totally exterminated by the Nazis; and the

homeless and stateless Romani refugees as well as Romani immigrants who arrived in Germany after the war. The first group, comprising about a third of the total Romani population in Germany has by now finally succeeded in regaining their citizen's rights. They have also been widely recognised as victims of Nazi genocide, *although their claims for reparations have never been accepted.*⁹

4. The Way Across

Despite history, Roma, mainly from Romania, have been making their way into Germany as a place to stay; to earn what they can to send back to those whom they have left behind; as a point of departure for travels further west; or simply as the nearest point of relief from the violence that has been meted out to them. To legalize their entry most perhaps (one does not know), have been taking advantage of asylum procedures. Others have avoided them altogether.

Although those applying for asylum could do so in 'third country' missions, consulates or embassies in neighbouring countries, they apparently do not. Alternatively they can apply at border crossing points, simply (as in the case of Germany) asking for asylum, but they avoid the border posts as well, if they can possibly do so.

Although border guards do not have the right to refuse entry, they apparently do so. In many cases they may be issued with 'safe country' lists, indicating those states regarded as political democracies and assumed, therefore, not to be a source of 'true' or *Convention* refugees.¹⁰ As the post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe are now considered to be democratic and *de jure*, at least, to adhere to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and related documents, asylum seekers from such states are liable to be refused entry without any further consideration. In the case of Germany, among other states, it has also been observed that border guards may simply refuse entry to those who ask for asylum, even if they come from a refugee-generating country.¹¹

In order not to be turned back at borders the Roma, among the thousands of other legitimate and illegitimate asylum seekers from Central and Eastern Europe and elsewhere, try to avoid the normal crossing points to enter the West. Because of its lengthy, and highly penetrable border with Poland and the Czech Republic, and its relatively generous asylum provisions, large numbers of asylum seekers have been entering the German Federal Republic illegally, by way of the Oder and Neisse rivers.

During the summer of 1992 Mr Burghardt, the director of the asylum centre at Eisenhüttenstadt in Brandenburg decided to look for one of the asylum routes into Germany based on information already received from his Roma guests. Driving to a point about 80 km east of Frankfurt-an-der-Oder inside the Polish border, he found Roma (and presumably other asylum seekers), arriving and boarding local trains and buses.

Following by road, he found the Roma descending at a point about 15 km east of the River Oder. These seekers of asylum then made their way through the forest, avoiding guards on the Polish side until they reached the river, and waded across to designated points on the German side where they were met by German drivers (or *Schleppers*) with buses and cars who took them to the nearest asylum centre.

Mr Burghardt's investigations disclosed that the Roma first pay Romanian and Polish guides and drivers to get them to the Oder, and then they must pay an additional DM

200-300 to the *Schleppers*. If the Roma have no money, as is often the case, they receive a visit at their asylum centre from their driver who claims his payment from their social security allowance.¹²

I had too little time to spend among the asylum seekers at Eisenhüttenstadt. I spoke to some ordinary Romanians, those, for example, who had made their way first to Yugoslavia, and from there had tried to go via Austria to Germany, but had been sent back and had found another route. But they were exiles from little other than the generally poor living conditions in their country. For them, Germany represented the place to at least earn some money, if not to make their fortune.

I also spoke to some Roma. They were the disadvantaged, the ones with nothing to return to and who need the West's assistance, and yet among asylum seekers, they are among the most unwanted.

Member of the Bremen State Parliament Schmidt of the radical German People's Union commented on the Romani Holocaust during a session of parliament in July 1990, saying "it's a pity that not more of them were murdered"....

Minister of Social Affairs of Nordrhein-Westphalia, the Social-Democrat Herman Heinemann, said, in a recent interview to the German weekly 'Der Spiegel' (37/1992): "Sentiments against refugees are triggered especially by one group which has been poisoning our social climate - the Roma from Romania and Yugoslavia".¹³

In Eisenhüttenstadt, I met the Ciurar family, Yon Mutu, and André Rostas and his daughters:

- During one of the many anti-government demonstrations that had followed the downfall of Ceausescu, Dancia Ciurar, a Roma, shouted 'down with Iliescu' and was subsequently beaten by the police. Whenever he was seen on the street by the police, and by one officer in particular, he was hit. On several occasions the police came to his house, dragged him out of bed and beat him.

At two-o'clock in the morning of May, 1992 in Alba Julia, a number of drunken police turned up with local villagers, who poured petrol on the Ciurar house and set it alight. Mr Ciurar and his family ran outside, but realizing his youngest child, ten-year old Trajan, was still in the house, he ran back in to where he was sleeping. Trajan was already burned by the flames by the time Mr Ciurar managed to bring him out.¹⁴

Trajan is now in hospital in Eisenhüttenstadt. According to the October 2 1992 issue of *The Guardian Europe*: "Trajan is scarred for life with third-degree burns that melted the flesh down to the bone from the base of his spine down the back of his legs..."¹⁵

- During the 1989 revolution, Yon Mutu's wife was shot and killed. Left alone with three children he returned to his native village. Finding it too difficult to cope he applied to Iliescu for help and was promised assistance, but with no result. When he went a fourth time he was thrown out of Iliescu's office.

When the elections were announced, Yon Mutu supported the new Roma Party. Despite the supposed secret ballot, two days after the elections he was suddenly fired from his job because of his political preferences. Complaining to the prefect of his district about his loss of employment, he was picked up by the police and beaten. His eldest daughter of 14 years tried to help him, and was thrown on the ground by the police and kicked and beaten as well.¹⁶



The Ciurar Family at Eisenhüttenstadt



André Rostas and Children at Eisenhüttenstadt

- André Rostas from Cluj Napoka was a farm worker. He was fired from his job and was replaced by a Romanian. Complaining to the local labour office, he was arrested by the police and imprisoned on May 28 1988. He was not freed from prison until 1990.

During his imprisonment, his wife was regularly beaten by the police. Ultimately the beatings were so severe that her liver was ruptured and she was hospitalized. To avoid further encounters with the police he and his family moved around the country until they decided to go to Germany. His wife is in hospital for the fourth time, now in Potsdam.¹⁷

5. Charges of Premeditation

Despite there being more than 430,000 asylum seekers in the Federal German Republic, it is the Roma, not the others, not even the Romanians, who have become a *cause célèbre*, and a focal point for press and human rights organization criticism of Germans and Germany.

This criticism is not so much based on Germany's desire to reduce the number of illegitimate asylum seekers on its territory, but on its attitude towards the Roma as an ethnic minority, and as this attitude affects the nature and implementation of its determination procedures.

From within Germany itself, the Hamburg-based Roma National Congress reports:

- *Hamburg Municipal Assembly*: 'Prevent further settlement of Roma families and abolish existing residence facilities available to this group'.
- *Secretary of State Dr Waffenschmidt*: 'The legal implications of the Geneva Convention are not applicable to Romani refugees'.
- *Federal Office for the Recognition of Foreign Refugees*: 'Prejudice against Roma is normal; violence against them is understandable'.¹⁸
- In December 1990 the government of Nordrhein-Westphalia withdrew a regulation allowing stateless Roma to settle in the province. Instead it made a deal with the autonomous government of Macedonia, offering to pay over 20 million D-Marks should Macedonia agree to 're-settle' the Roma in the Gypsy ghetto of Shutka, near Skopje...¹⁹

At a meeting at the Regionale Arbeitsstellen für Ausländerfragen, in Berlin, I was told:

Let us take Rostock which is a classical example. The Roma were taken to the asylum centre there. Because they are not liked they were not properly accommodated. It was accepted that they will stay outside on the grass, because the [authorities] do not want any more asylum seekers there. In fact they don't want any foreigners at all, and they used the situation that was emerging outside the asylum centre in order to escalate reaction. [The information] is now just coming out that the authorities very consciously took into consideration that there would be riots there so that the asylum centre would be moved away.

Instead of creating remedies, [such as] putting up mobile toilets, or putting the asylum seekers in proper accommodation and treating them in a humane way, the authorities used the situation to upset public feelings. The Roma were treated very badly, and their exchanges and mixing with the surrounding population will be made even worse, so that if anything happens the authorities can say, 'that's what foreigners are'.²⁰

As the accompanying excerpt from the London *Sunday Times* indicates, the local authorities were informed of the situation developing at the asylum centre in Rostock well before any violence broke out, but no action was taken. This report has since been confirmed directly by the German translator who assisted the *Sunday Times* correspondent.²¹

The riots, apparently well organized, were guided by marshals using walkie-talkies and mobile phones. As 'citizen band' (CB) transceivers were used to monitor the normally confidential police frequencies, collusion between the riot organizers and the police or other municipal authorities cannot be ruled out.

Although the rioting was apparently orchestrated by neo-fascists from Hamburg, it was local youth - teenagers - one-third of whom are reported to have been girls between 11 and 15 years of age, who participated, and it was the local adults who cheered on the crowd as the asylum centre was set on fire and the Roma fled for their lives.²²

A confidential report on the Rostock riot states:

At the time of the riot approximately 1,000 people were taking part. The rioters were supported by an even higher number of bystanders who applauded and cheered the criminal actors and gave individual offenders an opportunity to hide when pursued by police...

It was then determined that:

On Wednesday, August 19, a local newspaper received an anonymous phone call threatening that 'something will happen at Lichtenhagen on Sunday'.

The information was forwarded to the police and to the local Aliens Commissioner. The latter, well aware of the precarious situation, asked the police to take the threat seriously. However, no special precautions, such as ordering additional police units to the area, or to checkpoints at the main road to Rostock to prevent radicals from entering the town 'well equipped', were taken...

From:

THE SUNDAY TIMES

30 AUGUST 1992

Kohl dithers as fires of race hate flare

By Tony Allen-Mills

Rostock

...From their 10th floor balcony Ulrich and Rose-Marie Stock had a grandstand view of the violence that wrecked the adjacent refugee block. The couple have lived in their two-room apartment since the first blocks were thrown up in Lichtenhagen 13 years ago. Their view of the changes in the neighbourhood over the years offered an insight into the real reasons for last week's terror.

"People are calling us racists but that's quite wrong," said Stock, who until his retirement last year was personnel manager at a local television factory. "We've had foreigners living in this block for years. We lived side by side with Cubans, Angolans, Mozambicans and Vietnamese".

"People here had no quarrel with the blacks or the Asians. They were quiet, they had jobs, they stood in line at the supermarket just like every one else. The trouble started this week because we had genuine grievances about the new wave of fake asylum seekers - the Romanians and the gypsies. But the politicians just wouldn't listen.

....To the dismay of local residents the Lichtenhagen home quickly filled up with Romanians, some of them gypsies. They began to over-

home. "It became impos- sible," said Stock. "They were defecating in the grass. You had to clean your shoes before you came inside. Then they started stealing from the supermarkets. The women didn't wear underwear, they would go into the super- market, squat behind the veg- etable stall and relieve themselves on the floor. It got so bad that guards were patrolling the aisles with truncheons."

Why the Romanians were not offered proper accom- modation and sanitary facili- ties is not yet clear, but the presence of a large number of penniless foreigners living rough in a previously tidy estate was bound to provoke anger - particularly as many residents thought the Rom- anian's fear of persecution at home was bogus.

"We wrote to the city authorities, we wrote to the Mecklenberg state ministers in Schwerin", said Stock. "We complained to the police. We tried to get the newspapers in- volved. This went on for weeks. It was a scandal. No- body took any interest. No- body did anything. The problem just got worse."

It was the perfect situation for a simple neo-Nazi ploy - light the fuse, then retire to a

© The Sunday Times, London, 1992

Meanwhile the ZAST staff, warned of possible trouble did what they could to house those Roma who were still living outside the building, either by sending them to other camps or accommodating them in the basement of the asylum centre.

When the demonstrations turned from protests to riots on Saturday night, only approximately 30 regular policemen, completely unequipped and unprepared for fighting a riot, were on the scene. Under danger for their lives, many of them being seriously wounded, they, supported by private guardsmen of the reception centre, succeeded in preventing the mob from storming the building.



Little Hitlers: neo-Nazis giving their salute in Eberswalde

The report describes the continuing events, the attack on the asylum centre itself, the inability of several hundred police who finally arrived on the scene to control the riots, and the setting fire to the building, endangering the lives of those inside. The description is poignant enough, but the failure of responsibility indicates either the most absolute carelessness, or intentional neglect, as a number of critics have been suggesting. The authors say:

It must be clearly established [stated] that the authorities of the state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern have not taken sufficient preventive measures to correct a situation which was unacceptable for the refugees as well as for the local residents for almost two years:

riot, it is obvious that the threats received were not taken seriously enough. No sufficient preventive measures such as ordering additional police forces were taken in

Photograph Copyright ©Associated Press August 1992

time. Even after the riots had started, the police of other

states [Länder], and the Federal Police.... who could have provided additional units, were informed only reluctantly...²³

6. The Skinhead Syndrome

At the focal point of reaction we find the 'skinhead' phenomenon, something perhaps to be taken with more seriousness than as just an aberrant social phenomenon. It appears as a potential cause of flight among ethnic minorities in general and among the Roma in particular.

Emerging among Britain's undereducated, bored and often unemployed youth who, in an earlier age, would have been emptying their vitriol on opposing armies in battlefields away from home, the skinheads became a source of racial hatred in Britain's multi-cultural society.

With little to do and needing a 'cause', the English skinheads adopted a right-wing nationalistic and patriotic image to justify their existence. As nationalism is not far from authoritarianism, and the authoritarianism of individuals is more effective if bundled together in group formation (thus the *fascies*) a new fascism was born.

Equivalently bored, undereducated and underemployed youth on Europe's continent, (the British still insist they are off-shore islanders) have found a model for their perversities in Britain's skinheads. And so the disease has spread, and is appearing with increasing frequency and intensity in every European country.

As the 'shock-troops' of humanity's 'shadow side'; a coalescence of hatreds displayed in public and kept just (but not always) within the bounds of the law, the skinheads have been involved in attacks against Roma in Germany, but also in Romania, Hungary, the Czech and Slovak republics and Poland.

There is now a danger. It is not only the danger of the skinheads themselves, but the danger that they are being used as the excuse, as the *raison d'être*, as the 'scapegoats' even, to be blamed for all of the anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, anti-foreigner activity in country after the other from the Benelux to the CIS. Each good and stalwart citizen, seeing Turks, Roma, Tamils or Pakistanis getting beaten can say, 'but it's not us, we are not racists, it is the skinheads who cause all of the trouble'. It is not.

The skinheads but represent an aspect of the spirit of our time. They express the behaviours that 'respectable people' with covert prejudice will not, and that those in the public eye, the politicians, cannot. The skinheads are the symptoms; the illness is much deeper, is highly communicable, and may prove to be one of the most socially destructive forces to appear at this century's end.

Skinheads attacked the Rostock asylum centre. They have been implicated in attacking other asylum centres since then. Certainly Germany has witnessed public protests, police and legal action against the skinheads, but it is not only in Germany where they and their slogans of racial hatred are having to be opposed.

'Skinheadism' as it is being called, belongs to every country from the Atlantic to the Pacific - in both directions - and from the Baltic to the Mediterranean and beyond. Paradoxically, it is in those nations that suffered severely under the Nazi conquest, Poland and the Czech Republic, for example, where it is also to be found, and where 'Gypsies to the gas' is shouted in public.

7. 'Roma, Go Home'

The vast majority of the Roma in Germany are to be sent back to Romania. The Federal Republic is within its legal rights to return those asylum seekers to whom asylum has been denied, as well as such other migrants found to be illegally on its territory as long as those cases in which a justifiable cause of flight can be demonstrated have been given full consideration. This implies that applicants for asylum have had the assistance of a qualified interpreter and, as applicable, have been able to avail themselves of competent legal advice and judicial review, such that *due process* according to accepted international criteria has been followed.²⁴

Flight might be necessitated by external forces, such as persecution by the authorities (on racial, ethnic, religious, political or other grounds) leading to life-endangering situations, by other serious violations of basic human rights that directly hurt the individual, by civil war or violent conflict between ethnic groups, by natural disasters,

by acute poverty leading to starvation or by other factors that make the migration the only way to survive or avoid grave suffering. It is presumed that such flight is a search for safety, and that the provisions of basic protection by the receiving country is an urgent necessity since protection has not been provided elsewhere.²⁵

One can only trust that in their asylum-status determination procedures, the German authorities take into account that although Central and Eastern European governments have recently taken on the appearance of being democratic, the three years since the 'Velvet Revolution' have hardly given them the opportunity to evolve into fully fledged democratic states from which flight and, therefore, asylum-seeking, cannot be justified.

A 'democratic state' in this sense, implies one that not only has the constitutional and legislative provisions for the human and minority rights of its citizens, but has implemented the supportive administrative and judicial procedures that follow from them.

It must be emphasized, however, that rights exist for individuals and groups *only in so far as they are able to exercise them*. The Roma have little with which to exercise their rights, and the civil constraints upon them can be even more restrictive than those any totalitarian government might impose. As more than one Roma who was interviewed in the course of this survey remarked, life for them was better under communism than it is today.

As noted in Chapter Two, the German and Romanian Ministers of the Interior signed an agreement requiring each state is to take back its respective nationals found to be residing illegally in the other. Since November 1, 1992, those Romanians, the largest percentage of whom are Roma, who have not met the Federal Republic's eligibility requirements, and have not been able to avail themselves of, or succeed with, the appropriate appeals procedures, are subject to being returned to Romania.

Little seems to be known publicly about the return. A February 1993 telephone call from the Bonn correspondent of the *International Herald Tribune* indicated that Roma children are being picked up in schools, that individuals and families are being arrested without any forewarning (of course) in the middle of the night (so they cannot run away), and are transported to domestic, rather than to international airports.

I have been informed that Lufthansa airline pilots refused to participate in their return, and a confidential document indicates that the German Border Police administration, the *Grenzschutzdirektion*, has signed a contract with Jarom S.A., a Romanian company, to transport Romania's illegal migrants to Romania.

Of the more than 70,000 Roma who have been in the Federal Republic (it is not known how many had previously left for other countries) 3,410 had been returned between 1 November 1992 and 31 January 1993.²⁶ No information has been received about the conditions of their departure. No human rights or social service organizations seem to be observing their treatment. The German Roma organizations are too small to do very much, and the main humanitarian agencies appear not to wish to become involved in the Roma issue. This, I have been informed on more than one occasion, is because, subsidized by either the federal or state governments, they are not in a position to act independently.

Information about what is happening to the Roma upon their return to Romania, is very limited. There are complaints that any money they have with them is being confiscated by the Romanian authorities, and that a number charged with having left the country illegally have been sent to prison without trial. Confirmation is awaited. It is

not known what will happen to those who are without passports, those who have given up their residence, those who sold everything they had in order to risk the journey to the West, not realizing that they might be told to go home.

NOTES

1. Even if physical violence does not reach a life-endangering level, verbal abuse, physical harassment, and sporadic beatings by the police are reported.
2. This point appears to be little understood. In the most simple terms, it is the result of the danger to, if not destruction of, the local habitat and its resident populations, causing species (in this case human) to flee in search of a new ecological niche.
3. Lazarus, Emma, *A New Colossus*, inscription on the base of the Statue of Liberty, New York Harbour, New York.
4. Source: Federal Office for the Recognition of Foreign Refugees, Zirndorf, Federal Republic of Germany, for the period January-October, 1992.
5. *Op.cit.*
6. Source: Ministry of the Interior, Federal Republic of Germany, through UNHCR Zirndorf, FRG and Geneva.
7. Interview at Federal Ministry of Interior, Bonn, 20 November, 1992. Also see the *Report by the Interministerial Working Group on a 'Refugee Concept'*, Bonn, FRG, Federal Ministry of the Interior, Bonn, 1990.
8. The project includes a television film *Dreamlands, Information Project for Romania*, International Organization for Migration, Geneva, 1992.
9. 'Discrimination Measures Against Roma (Gypsies) in Germany', *Press Info*, Hamburg, Roma National Congress, January, 1993, p.1.
10. Discussion with Anton Verwey, UNHCR, Geneva.
11. See, Neroth, Pelle, 'Night Crossing to the Promised Land', in *The European*, London, The European Ltd., April 14, 1992. Writing of the migration route into Germany he says:

In practice German border guards often ignore that law [the constitutional right of anyone to apply for asylum], deporting anyone they catch... 'Most German border guards will pretend not to understand the word "asylum", even when it is spoken by Bosnians,' said an officer in the Federal border guard department in Frankfurt an der Oder...
12. See also Pelle Neroth's article, (Note 11, above), based on his crossing the River Oder with illegal migrants.
13. *Press Info*, Roma National Congress, *op.cit.* p.3.
14. Dancia Ciurar (26.11.1992).
15. Nolan, Darren, 'Gypsy Road to Nowhere', *The Guardian Europe*, London, Guardian Newspapers, October 2, 1992, p.23.
16. Yon Mutu (26.11.1992).
17. André Rostas (26.11.1992).
18. *Discrimination Measures Against Roma (Gypsies) in Germany*, *op.cit.*, cover sheet.
19. *Op.cit.* p.1.
20. Anetta Kahane (26.11.1992).
21. Andreas Fritzsche (26.11.1992).

22. Personal communication following a professional seminar, 'A Talk on Lichtenhagen' by G. Braun, Arnold Bergstraesser Institut, Freiburg-im-Bresgau, Federal Republic of Germany.
23. Although the source of this report cannot be disclosed, there is every reason to have confidence in its accuracy.
24. There is no assurance, of course, that every asylum seeker who is justified in doing so, is in a position to contact, and obtain legal advice and representation.
25. Widgren, Jonas, 'Movements of Refugees and Asylum Seekers: Recent Trends in a Comparative Perspective', prepared for the *International Conference on Migration*, Rome, 13-15 March, 1991, Paris, OECD, 1992, p.87.
26. Deutsches Bundestag, *Antwort der Bundesregierung*, Drucksache 12/4580, Bonn, Federal Republic of Germany, March 1993, p.1.

SEVEN

A HUMANITARIAN AFFAIR

1. False Assumptions

It was assumed when this survey was requested - and erroneously as it has turned out - that the 'Roma Problem' is largely a Romanian affair because of the more than 70,000 Romanian Roma then in the German Federal Republic.

It was not recognized at the time that circumstances similar to those of Romanian Roma exist for the Roma in Hungary, the Czech and Slovak Republics, to a lesser extent in Poland, but also in Bulgaria and ex-Yugoslavia which have not formed a part of this survey. Furthermore, nothing has been said about the Roma situation in Russia, the Ukraine and other CIS states.

Although there is much more information that could be assembled, I believe that the nature and extent of the Roma situation should by now be reasonably clear. In brief:

- A population of upwards of five million Roma live in Central and Eastern Europe. Except for an unknown minority (one to five percent ?) the vast majority are living in economically, educationally, medically, legally and socially deprived circumstances.
- Despite their more than 600 years in Europe, they are still a marginalized people subject to disdain and hostility in every nation they inhabit. Since the collapse of the Soviet bloc that hostility previously, although incompletely, suppressed, has reappeared.
- The present tensions rest on ancient antagonisms and contemporary xenophobia. The xenophobia, born out of a search for a renewed national, cultural and ethnic identity in the midst of economic, social and political confusion has become more of an excuse to blame, rather than to fear, those such as the Roma who, not matching up to the spitting image of national, ethnic or cultural purity, are seen as the source of all malign events.¹
- If the previously alluded to report from a Czech government spokesman, that Roma are obtaining arms from the Russian 'mafia' in order to defend themselves against racial abuse is correct, then an already tense situation is on the way to becoming volatile. Should the situation explode, the trans-border nature of Roma life suggests that no country with sizeable Roma populations will remain unaffected.²
- Even if it could be assumed that each Central and Eastern European government will try to respond to the problems of the Roma in their respective nations, they may do little to solve them, while at the same time neo-fascist and other right-wing elements of their respective populations will try to exacerbate them.
- Although constructive action on the part of these governments might be expected on the grounds that each, in principle, is now 'democratic' and has declared its support for international human rights conventions and protocols, there are major constraints on their willingness and ability to act. In the three short years since the

'Velvet Revolution' there has been scant opportunity for the people and their governments to face up to the complexity of the Roma situation in each country.

2. Migration Potential

The appearance of a sizeable number of Roma in the Federal Republic of Germany has given rise to a fear of an even larger migration of Roma to the West. Whether such a fear will be realized is difficult to predict. For the present the 'takeover agreement' (see Chapter Two) signed between Germany and Romania may have turned the tide because knowledge of the forced repatriation of those who have gone to Germany has spread. Informal reports suggest that many repatriated Roma (as well as non-Roma) plan to make their way back to the Federal Republic: Germany's eastern border is long, not easily closed and the West obviously has its attractions. Information received in the course of this survey, however, suggests that the majority of Roma would prefer to build their lives where they are.

The fear of an attempted mass migration might be realized if the Roma situation should degrade sufficiently to become a cause of flight. But to flee, the Roma must have somewhere to go, and no Central or Eastern European country wants its neighbour's Roma, and Western European nations are doing their best to secure their borders against all but the most genuine and desirable of *Convention* asylum seekers of any race, creed, colour or nationality.

It may, therefore, be useful to have in mind what a 'worst case' scenario could look like. Should the Roma situation, as a result of failing human rights, further poverty, and/or racist attacks, lead them to attempt to flee from any one country, we can anticipate that they will encounter increasing numbers of fully armed border patrols along the frontiers of Central and Eastern European, and adjacent Western European states, who will do their best to stop them. Should the Roma find themselves blocked in their flight, they may well believe that in order to survive they will have no alternative but to try to force their way across the borders or, despite the fact that they have no history of civil violence, to turn and fight those who have been attacking them.

3. The Search For Solutions

It is of course as easy, as it is wrong, to exaggerate the possibility of danger. But it is equally easy, and equally wrong, as the authorities at Rostock discovered, to underestimate it. It may be more prudent to try to avoid it altogether.

There are at least three ways of doing so:

- by acting as if there is no danger, or by minimizing the idea of its possibility;
- by doing nothing in the hope that it will go away;
- or by facing up to it by searching for possible solutions and taking the indicated actions.

Societies in general, and their civil servants in particular, tend towards the first two options. The general public prefers to change its habits as little as possible, while the majority of its officials tend to avoid taking actions that might incur possible criticism or leave them looking for new jobs should they have made a mistake. Obstacles of inertia and vested interest are continually employed against initiatives that might avert or overcome serious problems.

The obstacles appear under three guises: the *first* is the unwillingness to search for possible solutions; the *second* is the unwillingness to act on indicated, or alternative, possibilities; the *third* is the undertaking of 'safe', narrowly conceived, short-term approaches that give the appearance, but lack the substance, of solutions.

The first two keep things the way they are. The third may bring about immediate results but little of lasting value: bits of political manoeuvring here, a touch of finance there, or a dab of agricultural or social development aid somewhere else may be good for publicity, for keeping one's organization's donors happy by appearing to be 'doing something', but it is liable to be camouflage; a waste of resources that does not work. It is time for a more positive focus.

Although it will probably be determined that the vast majority of Romanian Roma now in the Federal Republic of Germany do not have a right to be there under the rules of the 1951 Convention, their presence has served to bring the condition of Central and Eastern European Roma to international attention. They face us as a human group that cannot be easily disregarded or discarded as just another underprivileged socio-economic class - a category some governments would prefer to apply in order to keep questions about 'minority rights' in abeyance.

The Roma comprise a multi-million transborder ethnic group which, despite its sub-cultural diversity, has sufficient cultural unity to be identifiable, and one that is sufficiently marginalized to satisfy the criteria for attention by intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental humanitarian relief and development agencies.

Were they gathered together as an independent nation, they would be eligible for much of the economic, educational, legal, medical and technical assistance that the United Nations system would normally provide to 'third world' states. That eligibility is not available, however, scattered as the Roma are behind the borders of sovereign nations. Yet attention from the international community is necessary if the long-term task of helping the Roma change their situation is to get underway and have any chance of success.

The sharp point of the matter, for Western Europeans in particular, is that the Roma do not inhabit some distant land to which one can offer a distant donation without having to become personally involved. There is always a certain romance about doing 'good works' for people who are far away, but this time the people are not far away. The Roma are right here inside the 'New Europe'; they are on our streets begging; they have their own customs, attitudes and values.

Despite attempts, Roma organizations can do little by themselves. Central and Eastern European governments, as already indicated, tend to lack the resources, will or power to help bring about the needed changes. In the course of this survey governmental and Roma representatives pointed to the need for assistance from the international community. 'Without a government or an international lobby to fight on their behalf, Roma find it difficult to escape their status as Europe's perpetual victims' is the comment by Karen Breslau in her *Newsweek* report, 'The Romani Enigma'.³

Fortunately some actions have been taken. Unfortunately, the circumstances of carrying out this survey and preparing this report have not allowed for a detailed study of current and anticipated programmes, but by all accounts they are still few and far between.⁴ In a few cases there have been local, regional, or national government initiatives. In Romania, UNICEF has been carrying out a family survey among the Roma, and the UN Centre for Human Rights has been putting in place a series of technical assistance

workshops and seminars.⁵ There are a few educational efforts in Slovakia (see Chapter Four) and Nicolae Gheorghe is doing what he can, without the funding he needs, in Romania (see Chapter Two).

Helsinki Watch groups and Amnesty International have been observing and reporting on the human and minority rights situation in Central and Eastern Europe.

The Council of Europe has previously focused attention on the condition and needs of the Roma and related groups of Western Europe. Since the enlargement of the Council to include members from Central and Eastern Europe, its concern with the Roma is also extending into this region. Notable among its activities is the *Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities* with its meetings on 'Gypsies in the Locality'. Its book, prepared under the direction of J.-P. Liégeois, entitled 'Gypsies and Travellers' (1986) is due to be re-published this year (1993), in an updated edition to include the Roma of Central and Eastern Europe.⁶

Where to begin? There are as many starting points as there are Roma groups and settlements. But yet one cannot just start anywhere. The Roma have their own needs, interests and concerns to take into account. One should not add to the litany of failed 'good works' by trying to impose solutions upon them. They must be consulted, not only through their organizations, but at the neighbourhood, village and settlement level.

Each aspect of their situation has to be taken into account, as do the sensibilities of the non-Roma populations among whom they live, some of whom are as deprived, or as nearly deprived, as are the Roma themselves. National, regional and local governments must each be consulted. The failure of many development projects is due to insufficient consideration being given to the overall situation in which they are embedded. And yet, the work must start and not be drawn out through years of polite but ineffective diplomacy.

While the Roma need immediate attention, it is doubtful that piecemeal attempts will do very much, if any, good at all. The extent of the 'damage' is too great for 'Band-Aid' treatment. The need is for a comprehensive, long-term cure, and this, if it can be accomplished, will require all of the assistance that the international community can bring to bear, while at the same time encouraging the various national, regional and local levels of government to play their part.

Although the tasks are multiple, it is neither advisable, nor possible, for any one organization to attempt to do everything. Each must find its own 'entry point' within the scope of its expertise. Yet integrated inter-agency activity, undertaken by a 'consortium of competence' may be more effective than individual, and thus partial, attempts. One needs to take into account the very elementary rule of *systematics* that, 'in any situation, everything affects, and is affected by everything else'.⁷

The importance of an integrated and multi-disciplinary approach was encompassed fifteen years ago in the 'Declaration of Alma Ata' of the *International Conference on Primary Health Care*, and supported since that time by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund.⁸ While it may seem to be far distant from UNHCR's overall concerns, and by no means is the only 'entry point' to working with the Roma situation, 'primary health care' offers a perfectly good example of what is involved, and it does have a very necessary place in the process of Roma rehabilitation.

Other than in Poland, Central and Eastern European Roma communities have high rates of infant mortality, low levels of life expectancy and widespread chronic illnesses.

Unless one finds a way of dealing with these, one cannot really deal effectively with the rest that needs attention as basic healthiness is a minimal requirement for human development. The following extracts from the 'Declaration', (particularly Section VII), are largely self-explanatory:

I

The Conference strongly reaffirms that health, which is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, is a fundamental human right and that the attainment of the highest possible level of health is a most important world-wide social goal whose realisation requires the action of many other social and economic sectors in addition to the health sector...

II

The existing gross inequality in the health status of the people particularly between developed and developing countries as well as within countries is politically, socially and economically unacceptable and is, therefore, of common concern to all countries.

III

... The promotion and protection of the health of the people is essential to sustained economic and social development and contributes to a better quality of life and to world peace.

IV

The people have the right and duty to participate individually and collectively in the planning and implementation of their health care.

V

Governments have a responsibility for the health of their people which can be fulfilled only by the provision of adequate health and social measures...

VI

Primary health care: is essential health care based on practical, scientifically sound and socially acceptable methods and technology made universally accessible to individuals and families in the community through their full participation.

VII

Primary health care:

1. reflects and evolves from the economic conditions and socio-cultural and political characteristics of the country and its communities and is based on the application of the relevant results of social, biomedical and health service research and public health experience;
2. addresses the main health problems in the community, providing promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative services accordingly;
3. includes at least: education concerning prevailing health problems and the methods of preventing and controlling them; promotion of food supply and proper nutrition; an adequate supply of safe water and basic sanitation; maternal and child health care, including family planning; immunization against the major infectious diseases; prevention and control of locally endemic diseases; appropriate treatment of common diseases and injuries; and provision of essential drugs;
4. involves, in addition to the health sector, all related sectors and aspects of national and community development, in particular agriculture, animal husbandry, food, industry, education, housing, public works, communications and other sectors; and demands the coordinated efforts of all those sectors;
5. requires and promotes maximum community and individual self-reliance and participation in the planning, organization, operation and control of primary health

care, making full use of local, national and other available resources; and to this end develops through appropriate education the ability of communities to participate...

The 'Declaration' also refers to the need for health workers: 'including physicians, nurses, midwives, auxiliaries and community workers as applicable, as well as traditional practitioners as needed, suitably trained socially and technically to work as a health team and to respond to the expressed health needs of the community'.⁹

Roma community health needs which may, at first sight, appear to simply be a matter for health care professionals can then be seen to involve a much wider range of issues. If we take some of the essential ones, although not necessarily in the order in which they are given in the 'Declaration', we are presented with a set of nodal points in a network of requirements and possibilities.

3.1 The Community

The first recognition is that primary health care is not some sort of antiseptic medical bureaucracy. It does not succeed by finding a spare room, painting it white, installing some furniture, shelves and medical supplies and staffing it with a nurse in a starched uniform. Primary health care must be introduced by respecting, and earning the respect of, the community for which it is designed. With regard to the Roma there are three essential points to take into account:

- As indicated, despite the Roma having a common ethnic heritage, they comprise many different groups, clans and families, with differing traditions. Health care knowledge alone is insufficient. It needs to be supported by some basic cultural anthropology and ethnology.
- Entry to Roma communities requires permission from the local Roma leader and acceptance by the community. The Roma have a tribal structure, with a village head-man or chief who is there to represent, protect and guide his people. Health care knowledge needs to be infused with sensitive human relations.
- Successful primary health care programmes cannot be imposed, and particularly upon a group of people as independent as the Roma, who have known years of attempts to 'improve' them by organizing their lives without taking them into consideration. For an ethnic minority as constantly maligned as the Roma, the importance of the 'psychology of caring' cannot be underestimated.

3.2 Education

Successful primary health care requires sustaining programmes of health education. While parents, and particularly mothers, need health information, so do their children who must be able to carry their lessons with them into their impending adulthood. This is particularly important if young Roma mothers are to reduce the level of their children's illnesses, the source of so much infant mortality and physical disability.

But health education is not just learning about illnesses, nutrition, sanitation, family planning and how to bandage wounds and broken bones. Health education implies learning how to live as developing human beings in whom innate potentialities can be transformed through experience into abilities that can be applied to the improvement of individual and communal life. As such, true health education is inseparable from education for physical, emotional and mental healthiness, starting with the individual and

radiating outwards in ever widening rings of concentric circles of comprehension, knowledge and competence.

This both implies, and provides for, the preparation of new curricula. New curricula, in turn, require new teaching materials and these call for new approaches to teaching, to learning, and to teacher training. Inevitably the task of improving their community health leads to questions about the nature of Roma education. The need for a new education, suitable to the Roma, was emphasized in the course of the interviews upon which this survey was based.

The obvious should be stated: that primary health care supported by effective 'education for health' should result in healthier children. Healthy children are better learners, better learners tend to become interested in further learning, and further learning is essential for the Roma if they are to find their way into the world of the coming century.

3.3 Housing

There can be no community healthiness without adequate housing, something that Roma lack almost everywhere in Central and Eastern Europe (except, perhaps, in Poland). Adequate housing means warm and dry conditions and sufficient sleeping space. These would mean less likelihood of damp-related illnesses such as asthma, bronchitis and tuberculosis, and because of better rest, less fatigue. Fatigue was indicated as a major source of learning problems among Roma children.¹⁰

Many past attempts to re-house the Roma have failed disastrously, largely because it has not been recognized that, like many other ethnic minorities, the Roma have their own cultural style which dictates the way they organize their lives, their living space, and the kind of accommodation that is most suitable for them.

3.4 Sanitation

Improving their housing, and thus their overall living conditions, cannot be considered apart from meeting the Roma's sanitary needs. Despite the fact that they have a tradition of 'ritual cleanliness' - possibly derived from a distant Hindu past - this does not necessarily translate in community healthiness. Nor, for that matter, are their sanitary needs sufficiently provided for by public authorities. Appropriate sanitation for the Roma raises the whole question of how to obtain and install adequate supplies of clean water for personal hygiene, food preparation and laundry, and how to deal with waste disposal in an environmentally protective way.

The prospect for many local authorities of having to lay down safe water and waste disposal systems implies costs which, under current economic circumstances, they may not know how to meet. Yet, as primary health care - as the 'Declaration of Alma Ata' indicates - is community-based (see § VII,1), and involves 'public works' (see § VII,4), there may be ways of easing the burden.

3.5 Economy

Community Service. In most areas of Central and Eastern Europe Roma are unemployed. Many of them receive unemployment benefit, but the money spent, either by the state, or by them, does not circulate through the community and help to improve it in any way. Most reports (not at all statistical, it should be added) indicate that tobacco, alcohol and gambling become the primary recipients.

Why not, as is even now being considered in the West, transform unemployment benefits into community service payments? Why not provide the Roma with the opportunity, and responsibility, to improve the quality of their own communities by paying them to undertake the necessary public works of ditch digging, pipe laying, road paving, and the range of installations necessary to provide healthier living conditions?

Of course controls over the misuse of such a system by governments to obtain 'cheap labour' will have to be introduced. And of course, the right for a person to continue to seek employment within the sphere of his own profession, as is acknowledged in the West, must be taken into account. But when there are no jobs, and when the greatest majority of unemployed Roma are unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers, and when in fact there is no normal employment for them, why not give them the opportunity to earn through service to their own communities?

Builders, Brick-makers and Carpenters, et al. The possibilities do not stop at traditional 'public works', which usually means un- and semi-skilled manual labour. The Roma also have craft traditions, and despite their often limited formal training, there is the intelligence, as well as the experience, to enable them to undertake the needed construction, or improvement, of their own accommodation.

A recently developed French hydraulic hand press, for example, is now being used in Slovakia to produce compact, weather resistant earth (adobe) bricks, without the need for kiln-firing.¹¹ Roma, too, can make such bricks, and provide the literal building-blocks for their community's housing, and which they can lay according to designs that fit their requirements. As noted in Chapter Two, Nicolae Gheorghe, in Romania is using bricks produced by a Rom and his non-Rom partner to rebuild the destroyed houses in Mihail Kogalniceanu, Romania.

Roma carpenters can play their part along with Roma metal workers. And if the skills are lacking? Then their respective governments can no doubt find unemployed tradesmen who can also be paid community service salaries to work with the Roma. And if not? If not, governments can take into account the role of agencies such as *United Nations Volunteers*, *Service Civil International*, or *Longo Mai*, among others, in drawing upon a wealth of world-wide talent that can be put at the disposal of development programmes.

Composting and Market Gardens. Many Roma live in rural areas where the lack of appropriate sanitary facilities means that domestic waste rots on the ground, or raw sewage leaches into streams and rivers. Soil and water pollution and its accompanying diseases are well known in Roma communities. Given the limited financial abilities of Central and Eastern European governments and their regional and local administrations, there may be little enthusiasm to invest in the sewage systems and treatment plants that appropriate sanitary conditions may require. Add prejudicial attitudes towards the Roma to this, and there is a good chance that sanitation will not become a priority matter.

Yet, rural waste disposal does not require water-based sewage systems. Domestic and human waste can be successfully transformed into compost. The compost can be used for soil improvement. With sufficient garden space (available under new land-distribution legislation?), composted waste can become the basis of domestic and market gardening, which can be individually or cooperatively organized. The domestic gardening brings us in a feedback loop to one of the principles of primary health care: sufficient

and nutritious food. The market gardening could provide a basis for trade with other communities and for the sale of produce in towns as a source of revenue.

Tool-Making and Recycling. Gardening requires tools, which are in short supply and may even be too costly for the Roma to purchase. Tools can be made from recycled and reforged metal scrap. Metal working is a traditional Roma craft and can be put to good use. Scrap metal collection now fits in with contemporary recycling interests. It does not require much of an imaginative leap to see Roma garden tool-makers and metal scrap collectors each finding markets for their services. Perhaps one could imagine some of the Roma obtaining local and regional franchises to collect waste materials for distribution to recycling centres, thereby adding to their income and to environmental improvement at the same time.

3.6 Health Care Professionals

Ultimately, Roma health care should be provided by the Roma themselves, working among their own people whose language they speak and whose customs they know. They may well need 'Gadjo' to introduce them to the contemporary methods that, by complementing their traditional approaches, could help to raise the standards of health of their communities, but Roma health care should become a Roma responsibility and in particular a task for Roma women.

For this to become possible, Roma primary school pupils will need to become successful secondary school students, and those secondary school students who are interested will need the support of their parents and the backing of their communities to remain in school, and the willingness of national, regional and local educational authorities to provide the needed programmes.

The results could be multiple. Roma health workers, first as paraprofessionals and then as fully-qualified professionals could have a marked effect on the health of their own communities, and also they might also find themselves in demand in other communities and other regions. But, along with a very small number of Roma social workers who are now being trained, they can also help to change the attitudes of their own communities towards education and the professionalization of women.

3.7 Obstacles or Possibilities?

This discussion of primary health care, which has led through homes, toilets, garden tools, metal recycling and the professionalization of Roma women, may seem to be far-fetched from the question of what can be done about Roma asylum seekers. It is not. A major part of the solution to asylum seeking will be found by transforming the conditions that cause it. The task of that transformation must be granted to the people themselves so that they can put in place, with whatever help may be necessary, the conditions which make life acceptable where they are. Primary health care is by no means a total answer although it is certainly a necessary one. It is offered here as an instance of a starting point that can elaborate into a range of complementary possibilities.

But here we meet the other side of the story. It is not just a matter of what 'we' would like to do for, or with, the Roma, but what the Roma, their governments and their co-citizens are also prepared to do.

- In what ways and to what extent are the Roma prepared, and willing to reorientate and reorganize their lives?

- In what ways and to what extent are their governments ready to respond and help?
- In what ways and to what extent are their non-Roma neighbours willing to see the quality of Roma life improve?

These are questions for which there are no immediate answers, but which require urgent consideration, wide-spread consultation and coordinated research. Whatever the outcome, we cannot help the Central and East European Roma situation simply by saying to those in the West: 'Roma, Go Home!' when home is a one- or two-room shack or shattered apartment, with ten or more people living in it, and outside is mud and pollution.

4. The State of the Roma

Despite having cultural and political associations in each country, Central and Eastern European Roma lack sufficient numbers of competent people to prepare and implement the needed strategies for the positive transformation of their own condition. How can they, under the present conditions?

An excerpt from an article entitled 'Tsigani - A World from Another Century' in the 22 March 1993 issue of the Romanian newspaper *Curierul National* informs us that:

- 58% of men and 89% of women have no professional training;
- 80% have no academic or professional qualifications;
- 80% are unskilled labourers;
- 50% are unemployed;
- 23% have regular salaries;
- 17% 'live from hand to mouth';
- 5% receive pensions;
- 27% of the children are illiterate;
- 40% of children aged 8 years have not begun school.¹²

The problem is not just that so many are poor, undereducated and unemployed - all of which is bad enough - but that they are living in a Europe in which Western attitudes and values, those which belong to 'high technological' societies are the driving forces behind an undoubtedly irresistible impetus for economic and social change that is now being felt throughout the Central and Eastern states.

This technological age, in which traditional manufacturing activities are rapidly giving way to technology-based services as a principal source of employment, is demanding higher levels of personal and professional development and training than the industrial age ever demanded from its workforce. And the industrial age, itself, demanded far higher levels of competence than were necessary during the prior agrarian age.

Today, when a first university degree is no longer sufficient for professional employment, and postgraduate qualifications are increasingly required (although they are no assurance of obtaining a job), the Roma as a group stand out as among the least educated of all Europeans.

With little more than primary schooling behind them (and by all accounts not usually successfully completed), Roma attitudes, values and modes of thought are largely bound up in that stage of consciousness or awareness described by the Swiss educational psychologist and logician, Jean Piaget, as that of 'concrete operations'.¹³

The stage of 'concrete operations' belongs to middle childhood. It is the period for the development of fully coordinated physical behaviour and for 'learning-by-doing'. It is also the stage in which the self-centredness (or egocentricity) of infancy transforms into group identity and submission to higher authority, whether of a parent, a dominant sibling or a gang or club leader. It is a stage of tribal loyalties which precedes the following stage in which reflectivity and the consequent individuation (and difficult egoism) emerges.

This next stage - for maturational reasons hardly possible before puberty - is one in which reflective or abstract thinking becomes possible. Called by Piaget the stage of 'formal thought' it forms the basis of adult behaviour in contemporary Western societies (and is but a stage in a hierarchy of yet further developmental possibilities).

In the same way that learning any craft, any skill requires care and attention to its details until it is mastered, so the elaboration, organization and development of reflective and abstract thought requires care and attention, and this for the full length of adolescence at least. Western societies have tacitly recognized this by increasing their educational demands and provisions.

During the Agrarian Age, other than for the clergy, doctors and lawyers, little formal education of any kind was required. Except for an élite, little was available. Traditional skills, passed along through extended families from generation to generation, later organized into the apprenticeship training of craft guilds, and supplemented by whatever intrinsic wit an individual had, was generally sufficient to insure employment as long as work was available.

But the mercantilism of the Age of Discovery, and the later manufacturing and commerce opened up by the Industrial Age demanded more competence than an admixture of tradition and intelligence could offer. Primary schooling, at least, began to take on its importance (although it hardly became publicly available before the latter part of the last century). In the years following the end of the Second World War, as the Industrial Age moved towards its height, secondary education became increasingly necessary.

Although universities have been in the background of Western life for centuries, it is only over the past decades that they have become the source and support of the technological society and the focal point of personal and professional development. Now, in the 1990s, university education (or its technical equivalent) is essential for the advancements in the humanities, sciences and technology that are becoming as possible as they are necessary. Higher education is becoming the minimum that is needed for any (except perhaps the most exceptionally endowed) individuals and groups who wish to live along the 'growing edge' of contemporary life, if not even to help create the future.

But the Roma have almost no place in this. Except for the handful of those who have made their way into higher education, the rest have been left behind. They have been left behind by circumstances not of their own choosing, and they have left themselves behind. For the most part they are 'locked in' to the stage of 'concrete operational thought'. Adequate as this may be for labouring - and most craft - skills, it is insufficient, if not 'dysfunctional', for the technological (or 'post-industrial') society towards which even Central and Eastern Europe is having to move. According to *The Economist*:

The notion that manufacturing is the foundation for all other economic activity is an old illusion, and one that does not improve with age... Thanks to new technology, fewer service industry jobs are clerical or manual, and more require cerebral skills.

The fastest growing part of all rich economies is neither manufacturing nor traditional services, but the "knowledge sector".¹⁴

There are Roma who realize this, but there are others who deny the importance of formal education, seeing it as culturally destructive: 'Tradition-bound Roma parents often shun public education because they fear excessive contact with the outside world', writes Karen Breslau.¹⁵ Yet the survival of a people, even if they are able to live in relative isolation as the *Kogi* or the *Inuit*, has involved adaptation to enviroing conditions, even when these conditions are at the periphery of their lives.

For the Roma, these enviroing conditions are close up, just down the road, or but some kilometres away. Unless those of them that wish to can find, and be granted, their own territory - the proposed 'Romastan' that I heard about in my travels - where they can live according to their own concepts, their attachment to their past may well become self-destructive. To survive and find acceptance in the modern world, the Roma must not only have the fullest possible educational opportunities, they must also be willing to take full advantage of them.

Thus, while the Roma have every reason to blame others for much of their situation, they must also accept responsibility for much of their present condition. If that responsibility in the past has been diminished by a history of living under authoritarian regimes, from monarchist through fascist and communist periods, it cannot be avoided now during what Europeans generally hope is to be a period of social as well as political democracy. If the Roma want to benefit from new conditions, then they must also help to create them.

5. The Role of UNHCR

If one takes a restrictive reading of UNHCR's mandate to protect and assist refugees and asylum seekers under the *1951 Convention* and the *1967 Protocol*, it should be obvious that with regard to the Roma it has little further role to play other than to assure itself that it has investigated their situation, has determined (through this survey, for example) that probably none are political exiles, that a minority are victims of civil prejudice, and the majority are economic migrants. From this standpoint, UNHCR's involvement in the Roma question can be seen as marginal.

But concepts, such as those contained in the *1951 Convention*, valid at the time of their formation, have a tendency to collapse under changing circumstances. Although we are no longer facing a Soviet Union and its Eastern Bloc allies that persecute individuals for their political or religious beliefs, as was the case when the *1951 Convention* was written, we are being confronted by the *non-governmental* persecution of an ethnic and cultural minority.

That persecution ranges in its milder forms from the refusal to permit Roma entry to cafés, restaurants and shops; to the separation of Roma children from non-Roma in schools, and Roma patients from non-Roma in hospitals; to the lack of equality of opportunity in employment, and to levels of violence that have resulted in the destruction of property, physical maiming and deaths.

Although it may be assumed by Western governments that as the respective Central and Eastern European nations are adherents to the appropriate international human rights conventions and protocols their Roma populations are not subject to, or in danger of, persecution, the *de facto* situation is somewhat different.

The whole question of the Roma's right to asylum (as well as the right to asylum of individuals and groups of other ethnic, cultural, or religious identities in other states), must be raised again because even if the fact of, or the potentiality for, persecution cannot be directly attributed to governmental action, it may, in the majority of cases be attributable to governmental inaction.

As noted in Chapter Five, Andrzej Mirga pointed out that although Polish Roma fled to Sweden following the pogrom in Mlawa, the Swedish government refused them admission because Poland was by then regarded as a democratic state.¹⁶

In this regard, we may also refer to the previously quoted finding of the Stuttgart Administrative Court in the Federal Republic of Germany that overturned a decision of the German Interior Ministry to return a Roma family to Romania:

...that ROMA are especially exposed to harassment on the part of ethnic Romanians throughout the country. They are not sufficiently protected by the Romanian authorities against discriminatory measures and attacks, and are therefore forced to live on the fringes of society, unable to provide themselves with their basic needs.¹⁷

Although some of its member governments may not be in full accord with its position, the Council of Europe has made its recommendations in this respect. *Recommendation 1203 (1993) Relative to the Gypsies in Europe*, of the Parliamentary Assembly (44th ordinary session -part 4) states that:

11. The Assembly therefore recommends that the Committee of Ministers initiate, where appropriate by proposals to governments or the relevant local and regional authorities of member states, the following measures:

xv. member states should alter national legislation and regulations that discriminate directly or indirectly against gypsies;

xiv. it should be acknowledged that the fact of being the victim of a pogrom or having a reasonable fear of becoming a victim of a pogrom, against which the authorities refuse, or prove unable to offer effective protection can, in individual cases, constitute a well-founded fear of persecution for being a member of a particular social group, as indicated in the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees...¹⁸

Although the 1951 Convention does not take non-governmental persecution into account, subsequent jurisprudence has certainly done so. In discussing what has become known as the 'Rajudeen principle', James Hathaway in *The Law of Refugee Status*, refers to the test of the adequacy of state protection as defined in the judgement by J. Stone, in a decision of the Canadian Immigration Appeal Board (P.76-9507, 17 December 1976), as follows:

... an individual cannot be considered a 'Convention refugee' only because he has suffered in his homeland from the outrageous behaviour of his fellow citizens. To my mind, in order to satisfy the definition the persecution complained of must have been committed or been condoned by the state itself and consist either of conduct directed by the state toward the individual or in knowingly tolerating the behaviour of private citizens, or refusing, or being unable, to protect the individual from such behaviour.

In applying this principle, the Canadian Immigration Appeal Board (M83-1304 18 December, 1984 and M84-1390 31 December, 1984) defined four situations in which the state can be said to have failed to provide necessary protection:

1. Persecution committed by the state concerned;

2. Persecution condoned by the state concerned;
3. Persecution tolerated by the state concerned;
4. Persecution not condoned or not tolerated by the state concerned but nevertheless present because the state either refuses or is unable to offer adequate protection.¹⁹

Each of these items have been demonstrated in the case of the Roma, as indicated under the sections covering either *Ethnic Conflicts* or *Human Rights* in the foregoing chapters. The Roma situation is but one example. Others from former Yugoslavia and from some of the states comprising the former Soviet Union suggest that the protection offered by the 1951 Convention may need to be extended to cover cases of non-governmental persecution.

In addition to the question of persecution through physical violence, we are also witnessing the danger to human life caused by economic collapse and environmental destruction, leading to intolerable levels of poverty. In this regard the search for asylum by non-Convention refugees, including the often disdained 'economic migrant' is not just a matter of human perversity to be punished by the refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of their migration, but requires a more comprehending attitude coupled with comprehensive programmes directed to removing the causes.

Given a less restrictive interpretation of its mandate in the post 'Cold-War' era we can envision UNHCR directly addressing the 'root' causes of refugee movements. In the case of the Roma, concerted action could be taken in collaboration with the respective agencies of the United Nations and other intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental agencies to help put in place the needed infrastructure, programmes and practices to diffuse potential migratory movements before they emerge full-blown onto the international scene with all of the tensions, confusion, suffering and expense that any exodus implies.

A comprehending and comprehensive approach to the Roma situation requires action in at least three areas:

1. International Protection;
2. Observation and Reporting, and
3. A Round Table Strategy Meeting.

5.1 International Protection

While it is beyond the scope of this report and the competence of its author to comment on legal matters, there are legal points to be raised.

Even if governments should be able to offer evidence that they are not responsible for the attacks upon their Roma minorities (arguing for example that attacks by their police are unauthorized), there can be no doubt of civil attacks against the Roma. And although protection by governments of their minority populations from such attacks may not yet be enshrined in the letter of international law, it would at least seem that its spirit is moving in that direction. As the *Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on UNHCR and Minorities* states: 'Development in this past year demonstrate that the need for strengthened protection at the international level is now more urgent than ever'.²⁰

As there is no assured protection, under the 1951 Convention, of individuals or groups who, such as the Roma, are attacked by civilians, the acceptance by UNHCR of assisting with their protection also takes on an urgency, a point that finds support in the remarks of the UN Secretary-General in his recent report: *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping*. Dr Boutros Boutros-Ghali states:

One requirement for solutions to these problems lies in commitment to human rights with a special sensitivity to those of minorities, whether ethnic, religious, social or linguistic. The League of Nations provided a machinery for the international protection of minorities. The General Assembly soon will have before it a declaration on the rights of minorities. That instrument, together with the increasingly effective machinery of the United Nations dealing with human rights, should enhance the situation of minorities as well as the stability of States.²¹

The comments in the *Ad Hoc Working Group Report* that: 'Existing conflicts add to the threat of further outbreaks of violence and even civil war will, in all probability, continue to force the international community to focus on the search for political and practical solutions', are directly applicable to the Roma situation, one, to use the rest of the above quotation, that '...should in turn help to build political momentum for the establishment of just and objective minority rights standards and their effective implementation as ways to prevent or at least alleviate such tensions'.²² Until the necessary international legal instruments have been established, and the means for their application have been instituted it is recommended:

RECOMMENDATION 1: that UNHCR consider the forms of 'in-country' protection it can instigate for, or offer to, those Roma who are subject to persecution, despite the contrary avowals of their governments, and in the face of their government's failure to protect them. It is recognized that similar protection should be available to other ethnic and cultural minorities.

5.2 *Border Protection*

Based on the available information it would seem that Roma (among other asylum seekers) lack appropriate, if any, legal advice and/or protection once they arrive at the border of a prospective asylum country.²³ It is not at all certain that upon their arrival asylum seekers are informed of their statutory rights under the *1951 Convention* and the asylum laws of the countries to which they wish to apply, yet the monitoring of entry procedures, assisting with the completion of application forms, and assuring that asylum seekers are treated appropriately under international obligations, would appear to be essential.

Although UNHCR lacks the financial (and thus staff) resources to assign protection officers to border points to undertake such responsibilities on a full-time basis, it is recommended:

RECOMMENDATION 2: that UNHCR establish some regular form of observing and reporting on border-crossing procedures and further, organize a more extensive system for border monitoring through the collaboration of such international and national NGOs as Amnesty International, Helsinki Watch, et cetera, to assure, in so far as possible, the fair and legitimate treatment of asylumseekers.

It is further recommended:

RECOMMENDATION 3: that UNHCR request each state to provide asylum seekers information concerning their statutory rights, along with the necessary application forms/questionnaires, legibly printed in a language they can comprehend at each border post, and that border guards be required to make such information and forms available to each person who requests asylum. Thus for asylum seekers from Central and Eastern Europe, information and forms should be provided in Bulgarian, Czech, Hungarian, Slovakian, Romanian, and

'standard' Romany. In the event of illiterate applicants, translation assistance must be made available.²⁴

5.3 *Assistance Pending Asylum Procedures*

Roma, among other Romanian asylum seekers in Germany are being returned to Romania under the mutual 'takeover' agreement signed by the respective Interior Ministers of the German and Romanian governments (see Chapter Two). Although it is clear that the majority of these Roma are not covered by any international legal instruments, it is also clear that there are disagreements, for example, between the German Federal Constitutional Court, certain Administrative Courts and the Ministry of the Interior about the right of asylum in given cases.

UNHCR is not in a position to receive and counsel the large number of asylum seekers who may require legal advice and support. Unless cases specifically come to the attention of UNHCR, or Roma asylum seekers manage to find a way to contact one of the few appropriate organizations in Germany and the existing informal network of legal advisors, they have little chance of understanding their situation, or of obtaining appropriate legal assistance. It is therefore recommended:

RECOMMENDATION 4: that UNHCR through its Branch Office in Bonn, seek to engage, or widen, the availability of the voluntary services of human rights, and related non-governmental organizations in the Federal Republic of Germany (and in other asylum countries, as applicable) to increase the range of, and information about, legal assistance to asylum seekers.

5.4 *Assistance in Asylum Centres*

Every applicant for asylum who has been admitted to a country is assigned to an asylum centre. But the asylum centres are not necessarily monitored on behalf of the asylum seekers to assure the adequacy of food, clothing and shelter, and to advise them of their rights, to objectively examine their claims, and if justified, to assist them with appeal procedures.

It must be taken into account that asylum seekers do not generally speak the local language; that usually there is no official interpreter in residence, nor a social worker to whom they have access on a regular basis. For example, there were complaints of insufficient and inadequate food at an asylum centre visited outside of Warsaw that needed investigation. The director of the asylum centre at Eisenhüttenstadt, Germany, requested that on behalf of UNHCR, I should try to assist in the case of two Roma families that he believed needed legal protection, but which he was not in a position to organize. Both of these matters were brought to the attention of the respective UNHCR offices. It is recommended, therefore:

RECOMMENDATION 5: that UNHCR negotiate with appropriate humanitarian organizations in each country of asylum to maintain a regular watch over asylum centre conditions under the coordination of its nearest Branch, Sub-, or Liaison Office.

5.5 *Observation at Point of Departure*

Roma and other asylum seekers in Germany now being returned to Romania are being sought by the police and other legally empowered agents in the various *Länder* where they are residing. To guard against their flight, apparently no prior notification is being given, children are being picked up in schools by local authorities, and families are arrested for deportation in the middle of the night.²⁵

Apparently no organizations are monitoring the collection and departure of the Roma, and other asylum seekers, or the conditions under which they travel. Considering that more than 100,000 Romanians, including the Roma are to be returned to Romania, the monitoring of the conditions of their return is essential, not only because of the situation in Germany, but also to establish the precedent of fair treatment. In the case of Roma now in the Federal Republic of Germany, it is recommended:

RECOMMENDATION 6: that UNHCR, through its Branch Office in Bonn, arrange with appropriate German NGOs, for the monitoring of the collection and departure procedures of Roma asylum seekers now in the Federal Republic of Germany who are to be involuntarily repatriated, to assure the protection of their human rights.

5.6 Observation at Points of Return

Thus far some 3,000 Roma are reported as having been returned to Romania. There are no formal arrangements for monitoring their return. As the legal situation of many of the Roma is in doubt because of their lack of documents, their possibly illegal departure from Romania, and their having given up their legal places of residence, they may well be subject to immediate arrest upon their arrival in Romania. The legal, as well as humanitarian supervision of the conditions of their return is, therefore, necessary. As noted at the end of Chapter Six, it has been reported (not confirmed) that any money the Roma bring with them from Germany is confiscated, and that a number have been imprisoned without trial. It is therefore recommended:

RECOMMENDATION 7: that UNHCR, through its Liaison Office in Bucharest, arrange for Romanian Roma, or human rights organizations to monitor the return of the Roma from Germany, and to report any infractions of their civil rights to the Bucharest Liaison Office, which in turn will inform the Regional Bureau for Europe for its action.

Because of the insufficient number of appropriate organizations to undertake the needed activity in Romania (and such other Central and Eastern European states that may be concerned now, or in the future), and because of the extremely favourable rate of exchange with and lower salaries in these states, it is further recommended:

RECOMMENDATION 8: that UNHCR directly, on its own behalf, or indirectly, through an appropriate NGO, employ observers at the relevant arrival points in the Romanian republic at appropriate local levels of remuneration.

5.7 Observing and Reporting

It is significant that in a number of cases UNHCR has not been aware of impending, or even actual refugee and migrant movements until after they have been reported by other agencies or by the media.²⁶ Although the problem of the Roma has been building up for more than two years, little information was available to the UNHCR's Europe Bureau in this regard and the Centre for Documentation on Refugees had minimal material. Awareness of events was derived from media coverage and the report submitted from the Branch Office in Bonn concerning the riots at Rostock. No information was available about the attacks upon Roma in Romania, for example, or in other countries.

Even though UNHCR has a formal presence in each Central and Eastern European state, and each Liaison Office knows of local individuals and organizations who are informed about events, the lack of information was such that it was necessary for the

Regional Bureau for Europe to engage a consultant to go to the same states in which UNHCR has its offices, to undertake the same travel and to ask the same questions that could have been done by any suitably qualified Liaison Office staff member much sooner and at far less cost.

This is not said as a criticism of either Headquarters or of the Liaison Offices because the task of observation and reporting has not been primary. Desk officers tend to await information to come to them than to actively seek it. Given, however, the very fragile state of affairs in each of the former East Bloc states as well as across the former USSR, it would seem to be essential that each Liaison Office be constantly up-to-date in its information, well aware of what is going on, and sensitive to impending events, and constantly reporting back to Headquarters. In this sense, there is a need for the *active* rather than the *passive* monitoring of events.²⁷

Such active monitoring is perfectly consonant with the much discussed, and hardly implemented 'Early Warning System' which could keep UNHCR Headquarters regularly informed of impending refugee-causing situations. It has long been realized that there is a need for 'Country Profile' information (a project now well underway after many years of delay), and there are currently other information requirements such as those impinging upon 'Emergency Procedures'.

Based locally, with local and regional contacts and direct access to current publications and documents, Liaison Offices are the most obvious source of information, able to act as UNHCR's 'sensors' and reporting back to Headquarters so that there is less possibility of Headquarters staff being surprised, if not overtaken, by events and on the contrary even being ready for them. In that sense as well, Liaison Offices become the first element in an inter-agency 'Early Warning System' that can enable UNHCR and its associated UN Agencies to be prepared, in so far as it is possible, for any eventuality. In this regard, it is recommended:

RECOMMENDATION 9: that each UNHCR Branch, Sub- or Liaison Office be staffed with a permanent *field information officer* whose task is to familiarize him or herself with such major categories of information relevant to potential refugee movements. The field information officer will be responsible to present a monthly up-date - weekly, or more frequently, in case of emergencies - on all events liable to lead to a heightening of tensions and refugee situations. It should be the responsibility of the local senior officer to be aware of such information, and the task of a *regional information officer* to coordinate the reports from the offices, for forwarding directly to the Regional Bureau for Europe.²⁸

6. A Round-Table Strategy Meeting

This survey into the conditions of the Roma of Central and Eastern Europe has been a UNHCR initiative. The fact that thousands of Roma have claimed refugee status has placed this matter under UNHCR's mandate. The fact that there are refugee-generating conditions that have prompted a small number of Roma to ask for asylum, (admittedly within a broad, rather than a narrow reading of the 1951 Convention) keeps this topic within the purview of UNHCR's responsibilities.

For the moment, events seem to be quiet in Romania. They are getting far worse in the Czech Republic. We do not yet know what will happen in Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia or even in Poland, nor what is happening to the Roma of former Yugoslavia. The question of the Roma in the CIS may also need consideration.

The role of the international community was invoked many times by those interviewed in the course of this survey, as the only means to bring together the various governments, Roma representatives, and those specialists who could offer a way of resolving the Roma situation. UNHCR's initiative in undertaking this survey was appreciated; its help is sought.

But UNHCR has neither the finance, staff, nor the mandate to deal with the wide range of issues upon which an overall improvement in the Roma situation impinges. For that, the full range of the UN's capacities, particularly in the domain of humanitarian affairs, well as other relevant agencies, must be engaged. The way backward is simple. It is to do nothing. The consequences could be hazardous. The way forward requires, in the least, a working meeting of those who are already involved, and those not yet involved, but who can aid in improving the situation. It is recommended, therefore:

RECOMMENDATION 10: that UNHCR initiate a Round-Table Strategy Meeting among the principal parties who are, or should be, involved in Central and Eastern European Roma affairs, in order to formulate the needed policies and strategies for addressing the Roma situation. Such a meeting could be held in Geneva because of the availability of relevant international organizations, or in Budapest because of its proximity to Central and Eastern Europe's Roma populations. It should be held as soon as possible in 1993.

The purpose of this meeting should be to integrate the diverse findings of various international researchers and their sponsoring organizations; representatives of the Roma communities, their organizations, and the national and international non-governmental organizations concerned with Roma affairs and intergovernmental organizations whose mandates implicate them in finding solutions to the Romany situations.

6.1 Suggested Representation

6.1.1 United Nations Organizations & Affiliates

- UNHCR - Coordination; International Protection;
- UNDP - Development Programmes;
- UNICEF - Family and Child Care;
- UN Centre for Human Rights - Human Rights Abuse & Protection;
- UNESCO - Education & Culture;
- UNRISD - Social Research;
- ILO - Economy & Employment;
- WHO - Environmental & Family Health and Medicine;
- UNV - Skilled Volunteers.

6.1.2 Other Intergovernmental Organizations

- Council of Europe;
- Commission on Security & Cooperation in Europe;
- European Community;
- International Organization for Migration;
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

6.1.3 Governmental Representation

- Bulgaria;
- Czech Republic;
- Hungary;
- Poland;
- Romania;

- Slovakia.
- 6.1.4 *National Non-governmental Organizations*
- Bulgaria (to be determined);
 - Czech Republic (to be determined);
 - Hungary (to be determined);
 - Poland (to be determined);
 - Romania (to be determined);
 - Slovakia (to be determined).
- 6.1.5 *International Non-governmental Organizations*
- EuroRom;
 - Helsinki Watch;
 - International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies;
 - Minority Rights Group.
- 6.1.6 *Proposed Round-Table Topics*
- Culture;
 - Demography;
 - Economy;
 - Education;
 - Ethnic Conflict;
 - Health;
 - Housing;
 - Human Rights;
 - International Assistance;
 - Law & Jurisprudence;
 - National Assistance;
 - Present Circumstances & Requirements;
 - Self-Organization.

7. Financing

Among the many aspects of the Roma situation, two areas require specifically targeted financing: (a) community development projects and, (b) the proposed *Round-Table Strategy Meeting*.

As indicated in Chapter Six, the Federal Republic of Germany among other nations, is having to spend considerable sums for the maintenance of its asylum seekers. In the case of the Roma, in 1992 the amount exceeded DM 600 million, with a large, but unknown amount, unavoidably devoted to administrative costs.

Because of the high rate of exchange of Western European against Central and Eastern European currencies, the Federal Republic would obtain much better value for its money, and at the same time help to reduce the flow of Roma migrants by underwriting local and community development projects. This could follow the same principle, although it would have to be differently conceived, as the present *Ausbildzentrum* programme now under way in Romania.

In addition, as also indicated in Chapter Six, as a consequence of its commercial advertising, across Central and Eastern Europe, the international corporate community bears considerable responsibility for encouraging the westward flow of both involuntary and voluntary migrants, thereby adding to the costs both of UNHCR and its member states

in servicing the asylum seekers. The international corporate community, therefore, could be invited to financially participate in the costs that are an inevitable consequence of its activities.²⁹

It is, therefore, recommended:

RECOMMENDATION 11: that UNHCR initiate discussions among Western asylum nations, and particularly with the Federal Republic of Germany, to assist in local and regional development projects within the context of eradicating 'root causes' of asylum-seeking, particularly in areas of high concentrations of impoverished Roma in Central and Eastern European states in the first instance, and consider approaching the international corporate community to contribute to the costs of special programmes, such as the proposed Round-Table Strategy Meeting, and related projects concerned with alleviating the 'root causes' of asylum-seeking.

8. Further Options

It would be inappropriate to attempt pre-empt the conclusions of the proposed *Round-Table Strategy Meeting*, should it take place, by recommending additional steps to be taken. Yet, the Roma situation demonstrates the need for three further levels of activity, and as a number of these were discussed during the course of the survey, it seems appropriate to indicate some of them here for further consideration.

8.1 A European Commission for Roma Affairs

The need for comprehensive programmes, policies and practices, and yet the lack of research and development capability among the Roma, suggests the need for an integrated approach - the 'consortium of competence' alluded to in the discussion on 'primary health care' that can help to put in place the needed infrastructure. For this purpose it is recommended that a *European Commission for Roma Affairs* be established for a period of 10 years, to enable national Roma communities to build up their own strengths and competence at which point they should be in a position to take greater control of their own activities.

The Commission, to be headed by a Commissioner, should be staffed by a 'lean' but competent team of ethnologists, sociologists and social-psychologists, economists, regional development professionals, and international human rights experts, including qualified Roma professionals and those experienced in Roma affairs.

The task of the Commissioner would be to oversee the implementation of the international and constitutional provisions to guarantee the Roma their rights as a recognized ethnic minority in each country; to act to assure that all states concerned honour these rights; to negotiate with national governments concerning such rights, and to assist in the preparation of such additional international and national legislation as may be required.

The Commission should comprise representatives from appropriate intergovernmental and governmental and non-governmental agencies and the directors of the proposed National Roma Institutes (see below) and representatives from nominated Roma organizations.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR ROMA AFFAIRS				
COMMISSIONER				
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PROGRAMMES		DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FINANCE		
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE				
Intergovernmental Organizations	Governmental Organizations	National Roma Institutes	Non-governmental Organizations	Roma Organizations

gional development professionals, and international human rights experts, including qualified Roma professionals and those experienced in Roma affairs.

The task of the Commissioner would be to oversee the implementation of the international and constitutional provisions to guarantee the Roma their rights as a recognized ethnic minority in each country; to act to assure that all states concerned honour these rights; to negotiate with national governments concerning such rights, and to assist in the preparation of such additional international and national legislation as may be required.

The Commission should comprise representatives from appropriate intergovernmental and governmental and non-governmental agencies and the directors of the proposed National Roma Institutes (see below) and representatives from nominated Roma organizations.

8.2 *A European Roma Institute*

The second level of activity should be the establishment of a European Roma Institute under the direction of the European Commission for Roma Affairs. Its task would be to bring together the expertise already extant in the international community to concentrate on the following five areas of research and development which it will then make available to the National Roma Institutes (see 8.3 below):

- Economy, Employment & Regional Development
- Human Development, Education, Science & Culture
- Human Rights, Law, Protection & Jurisprudence
- Community Health & Welfare, Medicine & Sanitation
- Urban & Rural Habitats

It is suggested that the European Institute be also regarded as an interim body, such that once the National Institutes have become well established and are able to function fully in their own rights services may no longer be required.

EUROPEAN ROMA INSTITUTE				
A	B	C	D	E
Economy, Employment & Regional Development	Human Development, Education, Science & Culture	Human Rights, Law, Protection & Jurisprudence	Community Health & Welfare, Medicine & Sanitation	Urban & Rural Habitats

8.3 National Roma Institutes

The third level of activities should be the establishment of a *National Roma Institute* in each European state according to the size of its Roma population, and not restricted to the nations of Central and Eastern Europe.

NATIONAL ROMA INSTITUTES																																		
BULGARIAN ROMA INSTITUTE					CZECH ROMA INSTITUTE					HUNGARIAN ROMA INSTITUTE					POLISH ROMA INSTITUTE					ROMANIAN ROMA INSTITUTE					SLOVAK ROMA INSTITUTE									
A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E					

The function of each institute would be to undertake research and development in the same five areas designated for the European Roma Institute, upon whose resources it can draw, but with specific application to its own national situation.

In order to guarantee its political independence, each National Institute should be established as a 'quasi-autonomous non-governmental organization' (QUANGO).

NOTES

1. Mr Walter Koiser, UNHCR Representative in the Federal Republic of Germany has discussed this problem in relationship to Germany. His comments have wider applications:

These rising xenophobic tendencies may in part be explained by the increasing social insecurity, which especially has to be noted in the new *Länder* where a large part of the population is either unemployed or threatened with losing their job and where the hopes of a speedy economic recovery have been disappointed. An enormous housing problem and higher taxes to finance reunification have sharpened the social competition in Western Germany as well. Under this tense social and financial situation parts of the population are not willing (any more) to spend large financial resources, which according to governmental sources amount to 6 billion German Marks, for refugees and asylum seekers many of the latter considered to be economic migrants.

2. An affirmation of the potential volatility has appeared with the creation on 1 March, 1993, of the *Gypsy Rights Project* in Prague, as an attempt to defend the Roma against what is taken to be both governmental and non-governmental prejudice. '... a Gypsy Rights Project was launched in the Czech Republic at the request of the Human Rights Commission of the Czech branch of the Helsinki Citizens Assembly (HCA)'; *The Czech Republic: Gypsy Rights Project (Europe's Gypsies—A Holocaust in the Making?)*, Prague, HCA, 1993, 6p. Received through courtesy UNHCR, Prague.
3. Breslau, Karen, 'The Romani Enigma', *Newsweek*, March 1, 1993, p.49.
4. It would be extremely useful in the case of the Roma, and for other projects as well, if aid agencies would register their projects on a unified database so that an immediate inventory of 'work in progress' could be available, to decrease the possibilities of duplication and increase those of collaboration.
5. From a letter of 8 April, 1993, from Mr José Luis Gómez del Prado, the UN Centre for Human Rights, Geneva

From 30 November to 4 December 1992, the Centre for Human Rights, organized in collaboration with the Romanian Institute for Human Rights in Bucharest, a seminar for 40 Romanian judges, lawyers and procurators. It included Mr Nicolae Bobu, a Roma advocate,

who is the president of the Roma General Union and member of the juridical commission in the World Union of Romas.

Mr Bobu, as a representative of a Roma NGO, is also a candidate for a fellowship organized by the Centre to carry out studies in Human Rights in Strasbourg and Geneva.

In the field of education and training, the Centre is organizing a workshop on Human Rights and the Resolution of Conflicts between Citizens and State Organs, to be held in Bucharest from 10 to 14 May 1993. The audience will be composed of NGOs, trade unions and national minorities including the Roma.

The Centre [has] also planned a seminar on 'National methods and institutions for the protection of human rights: ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities and human rights'. Once again, the Roma will be participating in this activity.

6. See, for example: Council of Europe, *Activités du Conseil de l'Europe relatives aux nomades et aux Tsiganes*, Strasbourg, Conseil de l'Europe, 1993, p.9:

La Recommandation 1203 (1993) relative aux Tsiganes en Europe (voir Annexe 1 ci-jointe) adoptée par l'Assemblée parlementaire le 2 février 1993 souligne que suite à l'admission de nouveaux Etats membres d'Europe centrale et orientale, le nombre de Tsiganes vivant dans la zone du Conseil de l'Europe s'est considérablement accru. Le Conseil de l'Europe a adopté plusieurs résolutions et recommandations relatives aux minorités, et cependant les Tsiganes du fait qu'ils constituent l'une des rares minorités dépourvues de territoire en Europe, nécessitent une protection particulière. L'Assemblée recommande au Comité des Ministres de prendre, le cas échéant sous forme de propositions à l'adresse des gouvernements ou des autorités locales et régionales des Etats membres des initiatives dans le domaine de la culture, de l'éducation, de l'information, de l'égalité des droits et de la vie courante. Parmi les mesures d'ordre plus général l'Assemblée propose, entre autres, que le Conseil de l'Europe accorde le statut consultatif aux organisations tziganes internationales représentatives et désigne un médiateur pour les Tsiganes.
7. Physicists, for example, talk about the 'butterfly effect', i.e., the vibration of a butterfly's wings in China can create storms in California. A more mundane version is known as 'Toilet Paper Syndrome', to be understood as follows:

A young woman despairing of her grim and dark lavatory decided to brighten it with a roll of bright yellow toilet paper. The toilet paper made the walls look even worse, so she was forced to paint the walls. The freshly painted walls made the door look shabby, so that received a coat of paint as well. But when the lavatory door was open, then its bright paint shone into the dark hallway, leaving the young woman no alternative but to paint the hallway. And so, wall by wall, room by room, her apartment was transformed, thanks to a roll of yellow toilet paper.

Corollary 1: Any block in any part of a system will cause a blockage throughout the system.

Corollary 2: Any change in any part of a system ultimately requires a change throughout the system.
8. *The International Conference on Primary Health Care*, held at Alma Ata, 12 September 1978.
9. See, the 'Declaration of Alma Ata', *The International Conference on Primary Health Care*, Geneva, World Health Organization, 1978, pp.2 ff.
10. See 'Education', Chapter Three.
11. Contact: Dr Jan Binar, Olomouc, Republic of Slovakia.
12. From a report in the *Curierul National*, Bucharest, 23 March, 1993, courtesy of Pdraig Czajkowski.
13. See, Piaget, Jean, *The Language and Thought of the Child*, London, Routledge, 1951 (and other volumes).
14. 'Wealth in Services', *The Economist*, London, February 20th, 1993, pp.13 ff.
15. Breslau, Karen, 'The Romany Enigma', *Newsweek*, March 1, 1993, p.39.
16. See this report, p. 91.
17. UNHCR.

18. Council of Europe, *op.cit.*
19. See: Zahrdien Rajudeen *v.* Minister of Employment and Immigration (Canada), 1985, in Hathaway, James C., *The Law of Refugee Status*, Toronto, Butterworth, 1991, pp.129 ff.
20. *Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on UNHCR and Minorities*, Geneva, UNHCR, 1992, p.6.
21. *Op.cit.*
22. *Op.cit.*
23. One can also refer to the information received from Roma lawyers in Budapest (indicated in Chapter Three) of Romanian Roma being shot by Romanian border guards, after being refused entry into Hungary by Hungarian border guards. 'Due process' as the right of an applicant for asylum to be interviewed and to make a formal request for asylum is apparently not necessarily followed in Hungary. Evidence, of course, must be obtained to sustain the presumption.
24. A German application form, made available to UNHCR, is essentially illegible, as well as being printed in German, which Roma, for example, are not likely to understand.
25. Personal communication from Mark Fisher, *International Herald Tribune*.
26. The arrival of Somalian refugees by boat on the beaches of Yemen was, according to its spokeswoman, unknown to UNHCR until a week after their arrival.
27. There are two main aspects to the gathering of such information. One is static, literary, and based on library research, covering published and unpublished ('grey') literature. This is essential as libraries become the repository of what was, at one time, current, and therefore provide background information that helps to explain contemporary events.

The second aspect to gathering information is dynamic, and field-based (and from which the data later found in libraries derives). Field-based information involves travelling around the country, talking to people from farmers to professors and from peasants to diplomats, and constantly observing, in order to keep one's finger on the pulse of local events.
28. Information categories such as those designated in this report are suggested, i.e.: History and Culture; Economy; Education; Ethnic Conflicts; Health and Medicine; Housing; Human Rights; International Assistance; Law and Jurisprudence; Migration; National Assistance; Politics; Property Rights; Religion; Self-organization and Welfare.
29. This suggestion for corporate contributions derives from discussions with a Swiss business leader, Mr Donald Hess, President of Hess Holdings, Berne, Switzerland. It points to the present situation in which public health authorities in many countries have to bear a large part of the costs of caring for those suffering from respiratory and cardiac illness caused by the tobacco industry. Or, on a more positive note, is the fact that corporations are now beginning to be charged for their environmental damage as, for example, in the case of the *Tory Canyon* disaster.

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