

Bureau for European Comparative Minority Research

A Roma's Life in Hungary

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This report is based on the papers prepared by the following experts:

History of the Gypsies of Hungary –

Péter Tóth, István Kemény, László Pomogyi and Ernő Kállai

Demographics and Modes of Existence – *Tibor Derdák*

Employment, Jobs and Joblessness – *István Kemény*

Education – *Gábor Havas*

Health – *Zsolt Zádori*

Rights and Protection of Rights – *Imre Furmann and Erika Muhi*

Media – *Gábor Bernáth*

Culture – *István Kerékgyártó*

Legislative and Policy Initiatives – *Ernő Kállai*

Maps – *Károly Kocsis*

INTRODUCTION

From Conflict Towards a New Consensus

Over the past decade decisive changes have taken place in Hungary, both in the lives of its dominant population and the Roma minority as well in relations between these communities. These changes have thrown up new conflicts and new challenges for all – majority and minority communities and government alike.

The functioning of democratic institutions and expansion of a market economy has brought a strengthening of agencies in the civic sphere and the country's economy. But there have been losers too. The largest group who have missed out is the Roma community, making up 5% of Hungary's current population of 10 million. In the situation as it has developed, discrimination and the ethnicisation of collective and individual rights carry dangerous tendencies. Re-evaluation of this problem and the creation of conditions for harmonious inter-ethnic co-existence have become unavoidable for local government agencies. Without it a whole series of conflicts can be anticipated within society, and progress towards accession to the European Union might be slowed.

Integration with Europe has been a goal for Hungary since the change of régime in 1990. Formal negotiations to this end commenced in 1998. One of the prickliest topics of negotiation has been the position of Hungary's Roma, for the understandable reason that, as matters now stand, Hungary's entry into the EU, with its guarantees of free movement of labour, would inject a whole set of unresolved conflicts amidst the Union's present member states. It is plainly in the interests of the Hungarian government, the Roma minority, and also the dominant population that conflicts should not be sharpened by discrimination, and social and individual rights should not be ethnicised: separate social policies and "citizenship" rights for Gypsies and the dominant population within one country are not an option. Nor is a solution to be found – indeed it would lead only to a dead-end – in pursuing suggestions on the part of certain Roma leaders which, in effect, would release the state and local self-governments from unwelcome obligations and, for example, seek – through a special Roma cooperative association – to construct low-cost "social" housing for indigent, homeless Roma families. A separation of funding along such lines would do nothing to increase effectiveness or transparency; quite the reverse, it would provoke a whole series of new conflicts. The social integration of Hungary's Roma must be harmonised with general social development as part and parcel of the country's integration into the European Union, and that can only happen through the joint efforts and co-operation of both Roma and non-Roma populations.

The challenge is fundamentally one of social and economic organisation. Application of EU developmental techniques offers a significant chance of success in that endeavour. In the process of working towards accession to the EU, one such goal which has been formulated at governmental level is the elaboration of a *regional policy*, with the

possibility that opens up of finding a new social consensus between Hungary's dominant population and its minorities. In its development and implementation, a regional policy could provide a suitable framework for addressing, among other things, the position of the Roma communities scattered throughout the entire country. This is also the lesson hinted at by development programmes for minorities that are under way in Hungary – specifically, an innovative welfare programme to achieve complex local and regional developments in three selected small areas – with funding from PHARE sources.

The striking coincidence between the poorest regions of the country and the geographical distribution of its Roma population that is seen on superposing a demographic map of Hungary on a map of the country's "statistical and planning" regions makes it instantly clear that an approach to dealing with that group's problems can only be envisaged within systems of regional development.

The legislative framework for a regional policy is enshrined in the Regional Development and Organisation Act (Law XXI/1996). In its thinking this law conforms with European Union regional policy by setting out the structure and tasks of institutional systems whilst also following international best-practice. As far as tasks go, Parliament clearly defined the principles of *regional developmental funding* and *decentralisation*, the criteria for designating *favoured regions*, the *magnitude of funding* and the financial instruments; it also required government to give a yearly report on the actions it has taken on regional development. The law enjoins the government to introduce *regional development councils*; it facilitates the establishment of regional development associations at the level of *local self-government*, and it urges interlinkage of development programmes with regional initiatives; it promotes and supports the operation of a national network of regional information centres and the filing of plans within such a scheme. The law also sets out the tasks of a National Regional Development Council and governmental responsibilities to make provision for those tasks in relation to regional development and organisation. It lays down the duties of the minister concerned with regional development and other ministers, amongst which one may highlight the elaboration of a national regional development programme and of concepts and plans entailed in setting up and organising a national regional organisation. It also sets out financial instruments to assist regional development. In sum, the law secures the conditions for creating a set of social and economic arrangements within which the problems of Roma communities might also be planned and dealt with – wherever possible, of course, in cooperation with the already established system of Roma institutions, thereby ultimately asserting the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity (though a November 1999 amendment has now given the Regional Development and Organisation Act a more centralised slant by increasing the scope for government discretion).

A particularly significant element of the Hungarian government's programme is the enhanced role that it envisages for *small- and medium-sized businesses*. The government's goal is for the country to integrate as soon as possible with the European Union's

structural and cohesion frameworks. EU structural funding is directed towards regional, rural and infrastructural developments, whilst cohesion funding is designed to ensure that adequate institutional and infrastructural frameworks are created for community and individual rights. Neither of these can function without participation by small and medium businesses and partial financing from the private sector, both of which are indispensable to job creation and development of local markets.

In this context, it seems natural to see the opportunity these systems offer for tackling the situation of the Roma populace, distributed unevenly as it is amongst 3,200 communities across Hungary. This is all the more so given that a World Bank Report "Hungary: On the Road to the EU" concluded: "Hungary has reached a crossroad. She has to consider whether to continue down the path of making smaller, individual modifications that affect specific areas or to organise her responses to the challenges within an integrated medium-term programme of modernisation which lays emphasis on local autonomy." The 1999 Progress Report of the EU Commission on Hungary's moves towards accession states: "It is necessary to increase budget contributions for strengthening of local governmental bodies, with an eye to political and budgetary decentralisation."

The 1993 National and Ethnic Minorities Act enshrined the possibility of minority communities forming their own self-governments and has prompted the elaboration of a medium-term development programme for the Roma, with a long-term programme currently being prepared. It is clearly imperative that central government and the state administration need to unify their approaches in this respect with those taken under the Regional Development and Organisation Act. Only this will ensure that the particular interests and concerns of majority and minority communities are not seen as mutually opposed goals, with the attendant risks of ethnic conflict. From inception onwards, the task of developing infrastructure and institutions, from education to job creation, can and must take account of the numbers of Roma living in each region and the age profile of their qualifications, with programmes being fashioned accordingly so that, consistently carried through, they create the *possibility of a new consensus* between majority community and Roma.

It goes without saying that regional development policies alone cannot provide a solution to the full range of problems that the Roma community faces. Inevitably, education, unemployment, the encouragement of small businesses, and civil rights are also major aspects for government attention. Nor are these responsibilities that can simply be passed on to any single administrative body or Roma institution.

The following sections aim to offer guidance to those working in governmental, public and administrative capacities, as well as expert advisers in international organisations, who are or may be involved with Roma issues in the course of their work, whether in preparing recommendations or as decision makers. The sections present a brief history of the Roma population in Hungary; the principal elements of their current position; the consequences for the Roma of the widening social gulf that opened within Hungary as the country embarked upon its course of modernisation in the 1990s; the salient social, demo-

graphic, health and educational statistics of the Roma community; the social tensions that have arisen as a consequence of discrimination against them and their resulting criminalisation; measures taken by government, and the opportunities, deficiencies and limitations of rights provisions. Finally, this Report presents a set of recommendations which are aimed, first and foremost, at making more manageable the tensions and conflicts that have arisen between Hungary's Roma population, wakening as it is to a greater consciousness of its ethnic identity, and a majority population which is still learning to cope with the difficulties of transition over the past decade; and, second, at offering a basis for a long-term consensus.

Budapest, October 2000

Erika Törzsök

1. HISTORY OF THE GYPSIES OF HUNGARY

It should be noted at the outset that the Gypsies have a peculiar history insofar as, being an ethnic group without literacy, they left no written sources of their own and thus their history can only be reconstructed on the basis of documents that the surrounding culture chose to produce at the time. In recent years, some scholars have labelled pasts that are revealed in this manner as “external history”, in contrast to “internal history” which has its sources in tradition, analogy, the language, etc. Without seeking to dispute the value of the latter sources for historical research, one is nevertheless forced to conclude that it is primarily through contemporary written sources that a historical past can be reconstructed, whilst acknowledging that documents relating to the Gypsies are largely products of their conflicts with the surrounding culture and thus rather one-sided.

The Feudal Era

The first records of Gypsies appearing in Hungary date back to the fifteenth century. Their settlement assumed a more appreciable scale from the middle of the sixteenth century: the traditional view is that they began to appear *en masse* either fleeing in advance of Ottoman Turkish armies or in their wake. Gypsy groups lived under different circumstances in each of the three territories into which Hungary was divided during that era. Their numbers grew particularly rapidly in the more southerly and central areas of Hungary which fell under Turkish domination, especially in the economically thriving towns directly administered by the Porte: in Buda, for example, they inhabited essentially a separate quarter. In these locations they engaged primarily in trading. The Gypsy population within the then-independent Principality of Transylvania and the eastern territories of Hungary proper that were annexed to it (the so-called Partium) must also have been relatively large. The picture presented by sources for the part that remained under the control of the Hungarian crown is rather different, for here more or less settled Gypsy communities appeared less in towns as in the environs of fortifications.

Following the expulsion of the Turks in the late seventeenth century and the ensuing war for Hungarian independence led by Prince Ferenc II Rákóczi of Transylvania in the early eighteenth century, the history of the country's Gypsies during the remainder of that century, under the policies of enlightened absolutism adopted by Hungary's Habsburg rulers, amounted to no more than a record of successive attempts at regulation with the object of inducing the nomadic Gypsy population to take up fixed places of abode. This was already the aim of a famous decree by King (Emperor) Charles III (IV) in 1724, but the process of regulation began in true earnest during the rule of Maria Theresa. Its main elements to oblige authorities to make provision for settlement of the Gypsies (1760); a

ban on the use of “Gypsy” as an ethnic designation and a directive that Gypsies must be admitted into craft guilds and provided with land plots (1761); a decree allowing Gypsies to be enlisted into military service (1762); a decree requiring Gypsies to adopt the style of dress of the communities in which they lived (1763); an order for a census to be taken of the Gypsy populace, along with a demand that they supply feudal services and orders that temporary shelters of Gypsy nomads be dismantled (1767); a directive permitting passports to be issued only to settled Gypsies (1769); and orders that authorities prepare semi-annual reports about the Gypsies.

This process was pushed further by Joseph II, whose decrees largely reinforced and completed the earlier provisions. Following his death the stream of central directives on the subject of Gypsies receded as the imperial court increasingly transferred responsibilities to Hungary’s authorities, above all, the county administrations. “Gypsy affairs” did not come under debate in Hungary’s National Assembly since the view that was increasingly held during the Reform era of the 1820s and 30s was that the Assembly’s sole function was to facilitate opportunities for Gypsies to farm the land or become artisans; instituting measures against nomadic populations was seen as the responsibility of local government and its agencies.

In all periods, the dominant Hungarian community took care to distance itself from Gypsies, and this also found expression in its vocabulary. Early Hungarian sources, in the Latin that was still the usual language of public documents, refer to them not only as *zingari*, *cigani*, etc. but also *Egiptii* (i.e. ‘Gypsies’) and *pharaones*, or ‘Pharaoh’s people’, alluding to the legend that they had originated from Egypt. Distinctions were also made between subgroups: not just the already mentioned ‘Turkish Gypsies’ but also, from the early eighteenth century, especially in the Transdanubian area of western Hungary, ‘German Gypsies’, which was evidently used to designate those who had infiltrated Hungary from German territories, possibly as a result of persecutions to which they had been subjected there. By then occasional references to ‘Vlach Gypsies’ also crop up as the groups that this term designates began to migrate in growing numbers from Transylvania and Wallachia. The designation then applied not only to the group still known today as ‘Vlach Gypsies’, but also a group nowadays called Beash Gypsies, because the eighteenth-century sources make a precise occupational distinction between coppersmiths and makers of wooden implements, and the latter remains the traditional craft of the Romanian Beash Gypsies, who are still concentrated in the areas that the sources mention as its centres.

Distancing from the surrounding culture also took the form of distinguishing racial marks. Individual Gypsies bore single names, which appear in official censuses as surnames. Amongst these are many words of Romani origin (Dudoma, Pusoma, Lalo/Lali, Murdalo, Bango, etc.), by virtue of which these documents count amongst the earliest Hungarian relics of that language.

Nomadic Gypsies lived in covered carts, in tents or in bivouacs improvised from tree branches and undergrowth; those who chose or, more likely, were compelled to settle

moved into cottages which, small and modest as they may have been, were at any rate solidly built.

A section of the Gypsy populace had links with a primitive gathering economy. One aspect of this was the exploitation of animal carcasses, which included using not only the flesh but also, for example, the hide – indeed, to such good effect that the authorities were obliged to ban the activity in order to protect the interests of the tanners’ guilds. One Gypsy occupation said to be traditional was the physically punishing toil of gold-panning – gathering in the most literal sense – which was carried on by close to 2,000 families in Transylvania during the latter half of the eighteenth century.

One obvious survival strategy was the provision of services in exchange for goods that the Gypsies sought to acquire, and this in fact accounts for the creation of the various traditional Gypsy specialisations. Amongst these, horse breeding and dealing are the most closely connected with a nomadic lifestyle, as attested by the fact that settled Hungarian Gypsies abandoned the trade and it was only revived with the arrival of the later immigrant wave of Vlach Gypsies.

Blacksmithing, the other craft traditionally associated with Gypsies, was a manufacturing industry in the public mind, which no doubt explains how it came to be entered in censuses as an acknowledged occupation.

Much the same can be said of fashioning wooden implements: it is no accident that available sources provide unequivocal evidence that those who pursued this craft enjoyed protection from landlords and village populaces alike – even against legal restraints that hostile authorities attempted to impose.

A further genuine demand arose for musical services from so-called ‘Musician’ Gypsies. This was reflected not just in a constant expansion of their ranks but in a very distinct change in lifestyle, commensurate with their growing prestige in the eyes of the dominant culture.

The 1893 census

This, one of the key documents for the history of Hungary’s Gypsy populace, indicated that on January 31st 1893 some 280,000 Gypsies inhabited the country. That total included approx. 160,000 living in territories that were later (in 1920) to be ceded to Romania, 40,000-42,000 on territories that are now part of modern-day Slovakia, and 8,000-10,000 on territories that were to be annexed by Yugoslavia.

According to a national census carried out in 1850, the number of Gypsies counting as part of the “legal populace” was assessed at some 140,000, whilst in an 1857 census the size of the Gypsy segment in the “native populace” was put at 143,000. Thus within half a century there was a doubling of the Gypsy population, with an increase in its relative size from 1.16% to 1.8% over that timescale or to put it another way, whilst the total population of Hungary rose by 30% during that period, its Gypsy populace grew by 100%.

This increase is largely ascribable to immigration, principally from Romania, the country with the highest number of Gypsy inhabitants.

From the early twentieth century to 1945

By the time of the 1893 census, the great majority of Hungary's Gypsies were regarded as "permanently settled", with around 20,000 classed as "resident in one place for prolonged periods" (or "semi-nomadic" in the official parlance), and barely 9,000 regarded as nomadic or "vagrant".

It seems that this tripartite division of the Gypsy population had ended by the time régime under Horthy assumed power in 1919, for henceforth official documents make no distinction between nomadic and settled Gypsies but refer simply to Gypsies. In view of the seriousness of the social problems that Gypsies (still) posed in the then-new régime, innumerable proposals for resolving them were put forward by public bodies and private individuals. Parliament itself debated the issue on some half a dozen occasions, though never getting any further than referring the matter – ostensibly for preliminary examination – to one parliamentary committee or another. Since the legislative process always got bogged down at this point, the entire bundle of issues was downgraded to an administrative matter in which ministries – the Ministry of Internal Affairs especially – took the lead. By default, oversight of Gypsy settlement and integration fell to various government agencies, such as local offices of commerce, education and defence. Under this pretext, Gypsies in many places found, for example, that they were often denied permits to conduct trade, or those coming from outside a county might be banned from its markets, whilst a 1931 decree of the Ministry of Commerce debarred Gypsies in general from practising their trades outside their county of residence or from using horse-drawn carts in their occupation. In the educational field the aim of settlement led to new school premises being constructed (the villages of Ondód, Pankasz, Bicske and Pankota are mentioned in contemporary sources), though admittedly these ran into big problems of getting children registered (local notaries were not particularly zealous in pursuing this), with the result that no more than one Gypsy child in five or six actually attended school.

Health provision for Gypsies in practice amounted to no more than a series of measures that were taken with the object of preventing the spread of infectious diseases. That did not stop them being blamed for spreading epidemics of cholera and smallpox during the last decade of the nineteenth century and two separate, protracted outbreaks of typhus during the 1920s and 1930s.

Social policies presented a characteristic duality in matters relating to Gypsies. On the one hand, begging was officially forbidden, but in practice it was not merely tolerated but directly institutionalised inasmuch as Gypsies were allowed to beg provided they visited a different street on each day of the week. Child protection, which falls under this heading, displayed similar curiosities. After 1901, children who had been legally aban-

doned, and thus had no carer who could be compelled to look after them, would be committed to a foundlings' home. A radically new situation arose with Ministry of Internal Affairs Decree 6000/1907, under which children whose circumstances were deemed to have exposed them to moral corruption, or who had already embarked on that path, were also classed as abandoned. The authorities used grounds of moral corruption to commit many Gypsy children who were living with their own families to foundlings' homes. As was subsequently revealed, they saw this as a way of solving their Gypsy problem as they fully expected the populations under threat to flee the country *en masse*.

History of the Gypsies from 1945 to the 1989 change in régime

Up until the German occupation of Hungary in 1944, virtually all the country's estimated Gypsy population of some 200,000 had adopted a settled mode of life, and such decrees as were issued to regulate them (policing and epidemiological surveillance) were directed mainly at the few who continued a nomadic lifestyle. A process of gradual marginalisation and decline of the traditional Gypsy occupations had already got under way by the time Austro-Hungary was recast constitutionally as a dual monarchy, in 1867, but thanks to the rapid economic growth and liberalism of the ensuing period Gypsies who lost those trades were able to find new means of subsistence. Between the two world wars, however, the disappearance of the older occupations became precipitate, and Gypsies were increasingly ill-equipped to keep up with the pace of technological and social change, interspersed as it was with jarring economic slumps. The situation was exacerbated by a large influx of Gypsies from surrounding states, since a much diminished pool of employment opportunities now had to be shared amongst a growing number of Roma. As a result, the widening disparities in material, social and cultural status between them and the dominant Hungarian community accelerated alarmingly: "On the brink of our liberation, Hungary's Gypsy population stood, relatively speaking, at a nadir in its history", István Kemény pointed out in his report on a series of research projects that were conducted in 1971.

The plight of the Roma was made all the worse by the ever more sharply hostile thrust of official action against them following the German occupation. Ideas of "re-educating", "civilising" or concentrating them in forced-labour camps of one kind or another had already been toyed with as ways of handling the "Gypsy question". A process of mustering so-called "labour service" battalions was by then already under way and after March 19th 1944 this was rapidly switched into a policy of genocide as the solution to the problem. The declared original aim of the new Nazi masters and the leaders of Hungary's home-grown Arrow-Cross movement was merely to deport the country's nomadic Gypsies, but since few, if any, such were to be found, entire communities of fully settled Gypsies were carted off to death camps. How many fell victim to the slaughter has not been convincingly documented to the present day; what are thought to be the most reliable

researches put the total at 5,000, but a strongly disputed estimate made by the Committee for the Victims of Nazism Persecution suggests a figure of over 30,000.

For Hungary's Gypsies, then, the end of World War II signified, above all else, survival and escape from destruction. The ensuing brief period of democracy up to 1947 or 1948 considerably altered their relations to society as a whole. The pre-1945 authoritarian régime had refused to acknowledge Gypsies as anything but second-class citizens, whereas democratic Hungary proclaimed equality of rights. Although the country's newly constituted police force, which in rural areas took over the role of the earlier semi-military gendarmerie, was indeed deployed as an instrument in the gathering political struggle, it was forbidden to exercise racial or ethnic discrimination and it was anyway essentially aligned on the side of the poor simply by virtue of the social strata from which it drew its recruits. Against that, however, the Gypsies were hit hard economically by the break-up of Hungary's many big estates as this reduced their scope for employment. They also lost out on the redistribution of land under this reform, even though many of them depended for a significant part of their income on work in the agricultural sector. The principal reason for that exclusion was that the shortage of land to meet the needs of all claimants, so that overlooking the Gypsies meant more to share out amongst non-Gypsies. The impact of democratisation was also seen in education. Whereas before the war some half of all Gypsy children had not attended school, that ratio fell rapidly after 1945; by 1957 only around 10% of children in the age range for which schooling was compulsory were failing to attend.

On the political front no real progress occurred over a protracted period; indeed, no attempt was made even to entertain the notion that the Gypsies might pose specific issues. For a long time, an article by András Kálmán which appeared in the Communist party's journal of political theory in 1946 was the first and only analysis to tackle the subject at even a conceptual level. Though never adopted as an official standpoint, the article still exerted a perceptible impact, albeit short-lived, on the founding principles of a Cultural Association of Hungarian Gypsies set up in 1957. On the instigation of Mária László, its first Secretary-General and herself of Gypsy descent, this was set up on 26th October 1957 on the model of other ethnic associations reporting to the Nationalities Department of the Ministry of Culture. The organisation's declared aims included fostering original creative work by Gypsies in the fields of literature, music and other arts as well as the preservation of Romani for academic enquiry. The founding charter did, however, also have amongst its general goals the promotion of job creation and better schooling, health care and living conditions; one of its more significant activities, in fact, was to extend patronage to artisan's cooperatives of Gypsy nailsmiths which had been formed during the 1940s. Since these goals amounted to seeking recognition for Gypsies as a distinct ethnic group, those in power took a dim view of the Association from its outset. Furthermore its efforts were increasingly taken up in handling individual complaints, which in itself is a measure of the pressing need that was felt in Gypsy circles for some

form of organisation to defend their interests. The authorities were unwilling to tolerate such types of activity for long, however.

A resolution passed by the Politburo of Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party in 1961 brought a decisive turn by defining the position of the country's Gypsies as a social, rather than an ethnic, issue: "The starting-point for policies directed at the Gypsy population must be the principle that, despite certain ethnographic peculiarities, it does not constitute a nationality. In addressing their problems, their specific social situation must be taken into account and their full rights and obligations as citizens must be guaranteed, whilst the requisite political, economic and cultural conditions to exercise these must be created." And elsewhere: "Many people perceive this in terms of a nationality issue, and urge cultivation of the 'Gypsy language' and the establishment of schools and colleges teaching in that language, Gypsy farming cooperatives, etc. These views are not just misguided but harmful since they preserve a special status for Gypsies and retard their integration into society." Quite clearly, this was no more than a drive to assimilation masked as an approach to handling a social crisis. Despite that, the resolution makes a valuable point by noting in summary that living conditions in the 2,100 Gypsy settlements to be found in the country could only be described as inhumane.

A survey on a national sample of the Gypsy population that was carried in 1971 under István Kemény's direction, a quarter of a century after the end of World War II, was the first reliable source of data for a long time – and indeed for a considerable time afterwards. That survey suggested that the number of Gypsies was then around 320,000, of which 71% had Magyar as their mother tongue, 21% were Romani speakers, and not quite 8% had Romanian as their native language. Two-thirds of that population resided within distinct Gypsy settlements, and more than two-thirds of them were living in small cottages of wattle-and-daub, tamped-earth or mudbrick construction. As many as 44% of abodes had no electricity supply. Piped water was available in a mere 8% of abodes and from a well on the property in only another 16%, whilst 37% had to fetch water from a well up to 100 metres away, and 39% from still further away. A flush toilet was present inside 3% of homes and outside another 4%, whereas 61% of homes had an outside earth privy, and fully 32% not even that.

The same survey indicated that some 39% of Gypsies over the age of 14 years were illiterate. Only 26% of young Gypsy adults in the age group 20-24 years had completed the eight years of general (primary) school education; the rest had all completed less, and more than 10% had never attended school. Amongst other findings recorded by the research, due to the country's massive industrialisation during the 1950s and 60s, some 85% of male Gypsies of working age were in employment by 1971, with 11% of heads of household being skilled workers, 10% semi-skilled, 44% unskilled, 13% agricultural manual labourers, 3% day labourers, and 6% self-employed or supporting themselves from seasonal work or by assisting another family member. The proportion of working-age women in paid employment was 30% in 1971, though that had increased to 50% by the early 1980s.

In 1965 the government initiated a programme of demolishing the Gypsy settlements. This offered Gypsies who were in permanent paid employment the chance to obtain loans at favourable interest rates in order to construct new “low-grade” homes or to purchase old peasant houses that fell vacant. For the most part, the “low-grade” properties were built within housing estates, whereas opportunities to buy older housing were predominantly confined to declining small villages, with the result that this simply created new forms of segregated settlements. For all that, the Gypsies experienced very substantial improvements in their housing and residential conditions.

Overall, it would be fair to say that by the end of the 1980s Gypsies were in a more favourable position than in preceding decades. Many had been offered a chance of advancement in life, and those who were able to take it found they were no longer regarded by the surrounding community as “real” Gypsies. Those achievements rested on singularly shaky foundations, however. Their generally poor educational standards and lack of job skills constituted a time-bomb that exploded with devastating force in the period after the unforeseen collapse of the socialist régime in 1989, to engulf a substantial proportion of the Gypsy population, along with all the efforts and illusions of the foregoing few decades.

Since the change in régime

As noted above, the spectacular rise in fortunes on which the Gypsy population had seemed to be set was obliterated almost overnight following Hungary’s change in régime. Even under socialism those employed workers of Gypsy descent who were in unskilled jobs that required no or minimal skills (which applied to more than half of the Gypsies active in the workforce) were the first to be shed by firms as soon as they were privatised. Whereas 85% of working-age Roma men had been in employment in 1971 (barely below the 87% for non-Roma men), that figure had plummeted to 29% by the end of 1993 (compared with 64% for non-Roma men). The badly schooled, who, even in the preceding period, could only be used on jobs that demanded minimal training, often had not the slightest chance of successfully gaining work in a market that was now shaped purely on business lines. Many Gypsy families found that not only did this put their subsistence on a precarious footing but, being now unable to repay interest on the loans they had previously taken out to acquire their housing, large numbers lost those homes through repossession.

The shock effect of the years immediately following the change in régime have led to a continuing differentiation in the Gypsy population over the last few years. There is an emerging stratum – as yet rather narrow – which has demonstrated that it is able to respond successfully to the challenges. For the most part, these are the people who have taken on entrepreneurial roles, some with outstanding success, though this is less true of those who were compelled, rather than voluntarily chose, to assume that path; on the whole, the lat-

ter are able to achieve little more than provide an ordinary subsistence for their family, yet even so they are more fortunate than a substantial sector of the Gypsy population.

Some have found niches in professional jobs or in public life, but by far the greater number of Gypsy families have seen their standards of living rapidly slip back to levels last experienced decades ago and, due to their lacking of training, they have little prospect of employment. For many in this hopeless situation the sole means of keeping body and soul together is to resort to opportunistic crime. This, in turn, has led to a renewed outbreak of anti-Gypsy hatred amongst members of the dominant society, whose own material well-being was often threatened by the change in régime. During the 1990s, on top of increasing day-to-day discrimination that Gypsies face over education, employment, housing and their treatment by the authorities, schemes have been mooted for re-settling them to designated places and they have been subjected to an escalating number of attacks and abuse perpetrated by organised groups. Political groupings that overtly advocate racial discrimination, holding marches in which there is chanting of racist slogans and glorifying of Nazi “heroes”, have frequently been allowed to cling to the coat-tails of nationally recognised political bodies, enjoying their public or covert support. Alarming, the Gypsies who, affronted at having to bear the brunt of abuse during a now-notorious parade at Tiszavasvár, decided to institute a civil action to uphold their individual rights have passed into the public consciousness as “lice-infested scum”. Distorted notions of democracy and freedom of speech have been applied to stir up hostilities that have lain dormant for decades.

The change in régime can also be said to mark the beginnings of political awakening and self-organisation within the Gypsy population. After a long period when the only bodies speaking on their behalf were centrally directed organisations, such as National Gypsy Council, established in 1985, or the (from 1986) reconstituted Cultural Association of Hungarian Gypsies, the passage of laws proclaiming the freedoms of association, speech and press that are constitutional statehood opened the way to the formation of independent organisations. During the term of the freely elected 1990-94 parliament the representatives of several national parties included three who openly avowed their Gypsy descent (Antónia Hága, Aladár Horváth and Tamás Péli). In elections since then, though, only one of these has had a continued role in the legislative chamber; the country’s parties have evidently not regarded Gypsy issues as forming an important element in their electoral platforms.

The activities of civic bodies set up by Gypsies had much more auspicious beginnings, with 96 such organisations being officially registered by the end of 1991. However these ran into growing problems with discharging their functions due the vagaries of financing, with successful applications for grants often being tied to loyalty to whichever parties happened to hold power. The state set up a number of public foundations from which support can be given for various types of programmes. The *Hungarian Public Foundation for National and Ethnic Minorities*, for example, was established in 1995 pri-

marily to support efforts that promote the self-identity and preserve the cultures of minority communities, whilst in 1996 the *Public Foundation for Hungarian Gypsies* commenced its work, 80-90% of whose budget (HUF 70 million in 1997) has been disbursed in grants for approved schemes aimed at encouraging agricultural production. The *Office for National and Ethnic Minorities*, set up following the change in régime, is also intended to fulfil a major role.

The National and Ethnic Minorities Act (Law LXXVII/1993) was a landmark for the assertion of political rights in Hungary, and for the country's Gypsies in particular. For the first time they were recognised as constituting an ethnic minority and thus, over and above the individual rights, were entitled to set up their own bodies to pursue their collective rights. Coupled with existing legislation on associations and parties, this opened up the way to forming their own minority self-governments at both local and national levels. During 1994-95 a total of 477 local Gypsy self-governments were established, whilst in the capital the district minority self-governments set up an indirectly elected Metropolitan Gypsy Minority Self-Government, and a 53-strong National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (NGMSG). Elections for these bodies were held for a second time in 1998, with a sizeable increase in the number of municipalities – to 764 – where local self-governments were voted in, though it proved impossible to form such a body for the capital. The new elections for the NGMSG were won for the second time by a coalition grouping led by the Lungo Drom party, with Flórián Farkas again assuming the presidency. As second terms of office have got under way, however, it has become increasingly evident that problems are occurring which can only be overcome through modifications to the Minorities Act. In particular, the Act makes no provisions for financing the functions of minority self-governments, as a result of which they are becoming pawns of the local majority self-governments. This is particularly evident in the case of the Gypsies given that they have no homeland to which they can turn for moral or financial support in the way that Hungary's other minorities can. It has also become clear in recent years that, in consequence of the disturbingly low educational level of much of the Gypsy population, many of their elected representatives, and even some of their nationally known politicians, are ill-equipped to discharge their functions and elaborate long-term plans. Successive governments attempt to put together packages of measures and set up diverse bodies, but these experiments have not, as yet, proved strikingly successful.

Several newer initiatives, however, have given reason to be more hopeful. The Gandhi Grammar School in Pécs, with its European-wide reputation, and the Romaversitas Invisible College in Budapest, which provides training for the more highly talented specialists are two such beacons. Slowly but surely a stratum of highly professional Gypsy intellectuals is emerging that it will be increasingly difficult to exclude from decision-making that relates to the Gypsy population.

In summing up, the years since the change in régime have witnessed a tragic setback in the fortunes of Hungary's Gypsy population, which represents no mere halt but a

significant reversal of the advancement and solid progress that were achieved in preceding decades. The gravity of that setback has repercussions which are now beginning to be felt at politically. Once it is accepted – and the fact is hard to dispute – that the greater mass of Gypsies in Hungary are now living at the barest levels of subsistence, forming the stratum that society at large is most prone to despise and regard as superfluous, then if what now amounts to several centuries of co-existence between Gypsies and the Hungarian majority population is to remain on a peaceful course, there is an urgent need for well considered change. With member states of the European Union taking an ever more sharply critical view of the present circumstances of the country's Roma population, and with those conditions becoming intolerable and seemingly with little prospect of redress to the bulk of that population, particularly in light of the now notorious case of a group of Roma families in Zámoly,¹ other groups may be prompted to take similarly desperate actions. That would do nothing to further the cause of Hungary's accession to the Union.

¹ The high-handed and indeed, as was later ruled, illegal demolition in late 1997 of a group of houses that a Roma woman and her family from the village of Csór, just west of Székesfehérvár, had purchased during the early 1990s in the village of Zámoly, 15 km to the north of the city, sparked a further long train of flagrant mishandling by local authorities and abuse from the local population, culminating in an unprovoked attack by a small gang of Zámoly youths in August 1999 during which one of the latter died. This incident was fanned by national media mis-reporting to the point where the Roma families concerned feel their life is under threat anywhere in the country. Due to the consistent unwillingness shown by national and local authorities to back or protect them, the families have now appealed for help to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

2. DEMOGRAPHICS AND MODES OF EXISTENCE

Demographics

Most discussion of this topic perforce rests on the survey data collected by István Kemény and Gábor Havas, who estimated the population of Gypsies living in Hungary at 320,000 in 1971 and around half a million by 1993. They counted as a Gypsy anyone regarded as such by the surrounding society, and here it needs to be borne in mind that relations between social strata can and do change over time, so that in the present climate of high unemployment and reborn awareness of ethnicity many families now regard themselves as Gypsies who twenty years ago would have kept quiet about their true origins. Equally, there are others for whom the past decade has opened the possibility of entering into mixed marriages or gaining social advancement and, as a result, they have cast off, or are in process of casting off, their ethnic ties.

Even allowing for such factors, it is a salient fact – one that is assuming ever-growing importance in the political arena – that the country's Roma population is expanding rapidly. Kemény's data indicated that in 1970 the number of live births per 1,000 inhabitants was 32 amongst Hungarian Gypsies, whereas it was somewhat under half of this (15) for the population as a whole. Better schooling, higher incomes and improved housing conditions over subsequent years were accompanied by a gradual fall in both rates, so that by 1993 the number of live births per 1,000 inhabitants had fallen to 28.7 amongst the Roma, compared with 11.3 for the entire population. In absolute terms, there were 116,000 live births in Hungary in 1993, of which – on Kemény's data – 13,833 (11.2%) were to Roma mothers. On their projections from these data, the authors reckon that by the year 2015 the country will have some 750,000 inhabitants of Gypsy origin, representing some 8% of its forecast total population.

That forecast points to an overall absolute population decline for Hungary, the roots of which lie not just in falling birth rates but also in mortality rates that are conspicuously higher than European means: the overall figure of 14.4 deaths per 1,000 inhabitants in 1993 significantly exceeded the birth rate. The impact of high mortality on the total Gypsy population is less marked only because the numbers of Gypsies who live to an advanced age has historically always been very small and younger age groups relatively large. That said, however, the average life expectancy for Gypsies is dismally short and in some communities can be as much as ten years less than that for the general population.

To focus on several key areas within Hungary, the data show that 5% of inhabitants in the three easterly counties of Szabolcs-Szatmár, Hajdú-Bihar and Békés were Gypsy, and by 1993 that ratio was over 6%. In the three northern counties of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Heves and Nógrád Gypsies likewise made up 5% of inhabitants in 1971 and had already

reached 9% by 1993. These two regions have proportionately the highest numbers of Gypsies in the country, with the native Magyar-speakers amongst them represented at levels considerably above the average for the Roma population as a whole. Despite the significant differentiation, both material and cultural, that has occurred here, Gypsy society in this north-eastern part of Hungary has remained very predominantly Roma based.

Representative of the other extreme are Vas and Győr-Sopron, Hungary's two most westerly and also most highly developed counties, where Gypsies made up no more than 1.3% of inhabitants in 1971 and still under 2% in 1993. In these Transdanubian areas, incidentally, more than half the Gypsy populace are not native Magyar-speakers; in large part, their ancestors were amongst the last big wave of newcomers to the present territories of Hungary, and their communities still show the least differentiation in material circumstances relative to other parts of the country. Unlike in the north-easterly region, then, the group that can be considered to be Gypsy is the one that, overall, most visibly and uniformly stands out from the surrounding non-Roma majority population.

The degree to which the Gypsies of Eastern Europe, and thus Hungary too, have become urbanised is conspicuously low by wider European standards. To the present day Gypsies are still, above all, long-established components of traditional rural society. In 1971 78.4% of Hungarian Gypsies were living in village communities, and in 1993 the figure was 60.5%. Less than 10% of the country's Gypsies live in Budapest, despite the fact that 20% of Hungary's entire population has long since been concentrated there. That rural character is even more striking in the case of the Romanian-speaking Beash populace of Transdanubia, 94% of whom were still living in villages in 1971. This sizeable population of non-Magyar-speaking Gypsies arrived in this relatively well-developed region of Hungary at a fairly late date, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and it is a good index of the limited extent to which they had managed to integrate into wider society that 57.35% of their adult members were still illiterate even as late as 1971. Where else, indeed, would they find a niche if not in the village, that most traditional of all settlement types.

The Gypsy colony on the fringes of a village or in a forest glade is a classical East European form of residential separation. Depths of privation barely imaginable in western Europe were not only the rule in the past but in some localities still predominate to the present day. In 1971, for example, 40% of homes of the Beash Gypsies were situated far removed from Hungarian settlements, mainly in forest settlements. The other Roma groups then lived principally in colonies on the boundaries of villages, with no more than one-quarter of homes being located amongst the housing of non-Roma villagers. The programme of systematically demolishing these colonies that was initiated in the mid-1960s did bring a reduction in the degree of segregation, but this was by no means as precipitate as the improvement in housing amenities. Thus, 30% of Gypsy families in 1971 were still living in locations where all the surrounding families were likewise Gypsy, whilst a further 30% were living in close proximity to at least some non-Roma families, though still with many Gypsy neighbours.

Nowadays the phenomenon of segregation, both in towns and villages, is manifested first and foremost in educational institutions. A growing predominance of Gypsy children on a school's rolls is often an early indicator that the locality is on the way to becoming a largely Roma settlement. There are parts of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County in the north and Baranya County in southern Hungary where this shift in population in certain villages has indeed proceeded to a striking degree, raising, in the fevered imaginations of local middle-classes, dire visions of an entire country being overrun by Gypsies. Even as far back as 1984 there were 16 villages in Borsod where Gypsies formed over one-quarter of the populace. When that sort of ratio is reached, this triggers an accelerating rate of departures amongst the non-Roma peasant inhabitants. That, in turn, upsets the established division of labour between Gypsies and peasants, with the result that most families lose the traditional links to a means of subsistence.

The Ministry for Public Welfare in 1993 made calculations, based on numbers of uninhabited dwellings, unemployment levels and the ratio of householders currently paying income tax, to identify the worst blackspots amongst Hungary's smallest hamlets. It found 41 such settlements in Borsod and 11 in Baranya County, with 28 of the former being concentrated around the town of Encs and 8 of the Baranya settlements falling within district of Siklós. Undeniably, then, essentially ghetto-like conditions have sprung up in a few villages in these two regions within the space of recent decades. Although there are certainly some other districts where similar marginalisation may yet take place, it is untrue to say that this is in any way a national trend.

Modes of Existence

Hungary's Gypsies, like the Roma populations of other Eastern European countries, have long had a settled pattern of life, the type of nomadism that is known in the more westerly parts of the continent having long been set aside by them as no more than a museum relic of a heavily mythicised historical past.

Far from being a uniform ethnic group, the Gypsies of Hungary are, in fact, a collection of distinctive groups that can be readily distinguished ethnographically and sociologically. In the 1971 survey referred to above, István Kemény divided them by native language into three main groups, and each of these may be subdivided further on grounds of ethnicity and mode of life. The three main groups may be briefly characterised as follows.

The purely Magyar-speaking Romungros make up approximately 77% of the entire Hungarian Roma population. Though their biggest concentration is in the north-eastern region, they live in smaller or larger pockets essentially throughout the country. In view of their substantial numbers and that wide dispersal, a process of marked differentiation has long been under way amongst the Romungros. The predominantly urban and, indeed, middle-class Musician group has had little in common for a century and more with the lifestyle of the rural masses of Romungros and their traditional occupations of mud-

brick-making and agricultural labouring. That separateness in modes of life now presents an impression of difference of an essentially ethnic character as even marriages between 'Musician' and 'Mudbrick-making' Romungros become increasingly rare. During the Socialist era, rural Romungros in disproportionately large numbers took jobs as unskilled workers on the construction sites and in the factories of Miskolc, Ózd, Salgótarján, Budapest, Tatabánya, Oroszlány and other industrial cities, though most of them maintained their residences in the villages. The collapse of Socialist heavy industry and state farms after 1989 pitched large numbers of these Gypsies into an appalling plight. More or less in parallel, the Musician Romungros found that their own means of subsistence was virtually wiped out by the global spread of music culture via cassette and CD. Substantial groups of Romungros can also be found in Slovakia, the Ukraine, Romania and Serbia. In those countries their native Magyar tongue and a musical culture that is oriented to Hungarian tastes ties them primarily to the peasant lifestyle of the Hungarian minority communities there, which in some cases lie as much as several hundred kilometres beyond the present borders of Hungary. Even so, marital links with ethnic Hungarians tend to occur only in cases where impoverished Hungarians choose to abandon their ethnic affiliations and effectively become Gypsies through marriage.

The group most commonly referred to as Vlach Gypsies, who speak both Romani and Magyar, make up approximately 11% of Hungary's Gypsies. They are the most mobile of the groups, frequently cultivating family and business ties over large geographical areas, though they cannot be said to be nomads proper. Their strong preference for a life as independent traders was anathema to the Socialist authorities, but after the change in régime that very strength was instrumental in turning many a family into successful entrepreneurs. Many of those who did not succeed have been left to fend for themselves in indescribable poverty, so that it is within this group that differentiation has led to the widest disparities in material well-being. By virtue of their Romani language, it is also this group which feels the greatest sense of community, and cultivates the widest and most durable links, with Gypsy communities elsewhere in Europe – ties which are now also being continually strengthened through marriage alliances. They have already begun to evolve their own institutions, such as the Roman Catholic church fair at the village of Csatka, in order to foster these cross-border business and family links.

The bulk of the Romanian- and Magyar-speaking Beash Gypsies live in the villages of southern Transdanubia. They are currently the group which displays the least geographical mobility. Having largely adapted to employment in agriculture and industry during the Socialist era, the change in régime led to mass unemployment within their ranks, though that plight has been somewhat mitigated – as compared with, say, the horrors experienced in Borsod and Szabolcs – by a greater communal solidarity that is manifest in Transdanubia. Despite starting from a weaker baseline, their educational attainments, to take one example, have demonstrated a relatively stronger improvement; as a result, it appears likely that trends in their mode of life will break definitively from those of their

kindred in Croatia, Serbia and Romania, with their markedly more traditional and mobile lifestyle. That change also appears to be accompanied by a loosening of ethnic ties. Thus, just as the Vlach Gypsy communities are preserving a sense of ethnic identity based on similar lifestyle over large distances, and even across frontiers, the opposite process is in evidence with the Beash, where a gradual divergence in modes of living is being accompanied by a detachment of bonds of ethnic cohesion.

The most successful attempt to categorise objectively the various modes of existence that can be observed amongst the Gypsies of the present day is that made by Gábor Havas. Eschewing a static approach, he aimed to capture the true dynamics of the picture and thus he speaks not about groups but about the range of strategies that lie behind changing occupations. When confronted with a kaleidoscope of ethnic subgroups, distinct both from one another and from the dominant society, this approach certainly seems to make more sense than trying to deal with that variability in terms of monolithic groups.

The first of the strategies identified by Havas is what he terms “itinerant opportunist” mode, characterised as follows: “In scale it extends from serious business transactions advantageous to both parties to aggressive or submissive importuning, which is not to say that every single Gypsy pursuing this mode of existence strikes on all possible notes of the scale, since some of them are more adroit, resourceful and flexible, whilst life’s second violinists are not so blest and barely make ends meet... He is able to, and indeed in necessity must, fall back on the resources of the community and the strength of family connections. Access to the wider kinship network is indispensable both to gathering information and fully exploiting whatever opportunities happen to be on offer at any given moment.”

The second strategy that Havas describes is the “long-distance shuttler” mode, when male members of a family take on jobs in places that may be up to several hundred kilometres from their place of residence: “Men who travel away from home to work in the construction industry undoubtedly earn more money than if they had stayed put. In the case of communities that are living in isolated colonies or colony-like aggregations within shrinking small settlements, however, that higher income has little impact on the living circumstances of those who stay at home...” What Havas’ description was obviously not able to foresee was the history of the past decade, which has seen the disappearance of the opportunities for such shuttling, so that the menfolk have again been reduced to seeking out the intrinsically erratic opportunities of casual work for peasants or trying out elements of the “itinerant opportunist” mode. Their position is made all the worse by the drift of the Hungarian inhabitants away from these communities and the segregation of housing within them. In near-ghetto villages that are abandoned, bit by bit, to the Gypsies the destitution often reaches a point where it is irremediable.

One of the subsets of the “long-distance shuttler” mode of existence covers those instances where kinship groups moves residence from the village to urban slum district. Such “interlopers”, as Havas terms them, include groups, from splinter family units to extended kindreds, who typically enter a downward spiral of illegal squatting, growing

criminalisation and fragmentation as they try to contend with the multitude of obstacles that stand in the way of fitting into their new environs. Most of the vociferous conflicts surround Gypsies of this category, though it is their willingness to seek employment at any price which brought them to the towns in the first place, even if that meant seeking an urban workplace when obtaining housing by legal means looked and, indeed, subsequently proved to be an insuperable problem.

The third distinctive mode of existence is as a “daily commuter”, which has evolved over the last sixty years around the fringes of industrial districts in places which offered a relatively sizeable number of workplaces, so that women as well as men were able to obtain employment, whilst the children would be sent to school. In that way a family might accumulate a measure of material wealth rather than have it diverted into the traditional communal consumption. Whole families were thereby able to acquire the key elements of having skilled jobs and learning how to assert their own interests. The sole tangible reason why segregation might remain in place when it came to housing and schooling was discrimination on the part of local non-Roma leaders who, disturbed to see individual Gypsies on the point of reaching their own level, tried to preserve their social privileges. Thus these communities also had their struggles over issues of poor training and discrimination. Nevertheless many families managed to cross the threshold of full assimilation; indeed, had it not been for the collapse of socialism, many of them would no longer be regarded as Gypsies. The widespread unemployment and renewal of ethnic tensions that accompanied the change in régime pushed their ethnic origins to the forefront again and served to reinforce the segregation of their children at schools. Competition for jobs has brought them into confrontation with former non-Gypsy colleagues, and it can only be hoped that they will be able to halt the process of retrenchment. Whatever may happen, their social problems have irrevocably acquired an ethnic dimension that most of them would certainly have preferred to avoid, and Hungary itself would have been better off had they been allowed to do so.

In relation to all three linguistically distinct groups of domestic Gypsies, it should be pointed out that there is no provision for their own independent religious formations, literacy or schools teaching in the native tongues, whilst their political organisation has barely a decade and a half behind it. The socialisation of young Gypsies outside the family circle takes place entirely within the structures of Hungarian society; virtually without exception, therefore, social mobility is aligned to the lifestyle and value-system of Hungarian society. Ethnic differences are therefore most apparent within the poorest strata and in those few families where the struggle for an existence is played out within the framework of family enterprise and outside the world of schools and the nine-to-five workplace. Ethnic differentiation, in other words, usually endures only as long as economic isolation.

In Hungary, it is primarily amongst the Vlach Gypsies that one finds examples where material wealth has been accumulated within the frame of a patriarchal family

enterprise, with economic autonomy being retained even under circumstances of advancement, so that language, distinctive dress, endogamy and other attributes of ethnic difference have gained potency and are flourishing. As a rule, these families have made a success of trading through the “procurer-peripatetic” strategy, with their wealth founded on dealing in antiques, second-hand cars, foreign currencies and the like. They have been able to turn to profit the capital represented by a geographically dispersed kinship network and a Romani language that is spoken amongst Gypsies across the length and breadth of Europe. All too often, the new relations which have been established between rich and poor families are based on merciless exploitation rather than solidarity: the communality of wealth and democratic spirit that once prevailed in Vlach Gypsy communities tend to vanish definitively with prosperity.

In Hungary the Socialist authorities succeeded in plugging the Beash Gypsies into the large-scale industrial and agricultural conglomerates of that era, and with the collapse of those enterprises they were unable to find a way back to independent, economic activity organised on patriarchal family lines.

A process comparable to the kinship-based enterprises now encountered amongst Hungary’s Vlach Gypsies and the Beash of Serbia took place roughly a century ago within Musician families of the Romungro group. Over the long term, however, their musical careers reinforced neither economic independence nor patriarchal structures but assimilation into the middle classes of Hungarian society.

Throughout the world, the chief instrument that regulates ethnic separateness is the prohibition on marital links outside the group. The three linguistically distinct Roma groups outlined above are not only set apart by endogamy from the surrounding Hungarian dominant society but also do not inter-marry amongst themselves, and in this sense they can therefore be regarded as ethnically distinct. The groups which display this ethnic separateness are in no way preserving a form of cultural continuity which stretches all the way back to some original Gypsy homeland in India but are simply showing the kaleidoscopic nature of their variability: the mere fact of separateness is the only real continuity here.

The above-cited examples of ethnic separateness have all evolved within the economic niches offered by Hungarian society. Like the Jews of Eastern Europe prior to World War II, the Gypsies take advantage of any opportunities where mobility may be at a premium but which the majority society has left unexploited, and in doing that they fulfil an indispensable economic function. A free market economy coupled with guarantees of human rights evidently coincides with the interests of such groups who are seeking, for whatever reason, to preserve their separateness, for in the absence of both these conditions, during the decades of Communism, they were perpetually at loggerheads with the state, whereas today their endeavours can sometimes be crowned with genuine economic success.

Gypsy families, as a rule, are not calling for the politically legitimated rights of a national minority; furthermore, they tend to be as suspicious of all official cultural institutions, self-governing or not, as they are of any form of separate treatment that may be man-

ifested in the educational field. Having as yet no substantial intelligentsia of their own, they have good reason to believe that any “national rights” imposed on them from above are unlikely to serve their own interests but will merely facilitate the processes of segregation and discrimination.

With the disappearance of markets for their traditional skills and the socialist reorganisation of agriculture, the Gypsies’ old economic and social roles were eliminated one after another. Heavy industry created a uniform market throughout the country and generated employment in the factories, with a consequent proletarianisation of those who had formerly belonged to a peasant economy. In most places the old feudal order, which once had minutely demarcated the choice of roles open to Gypsies in the economic and social sphere alike, likewise vanished.

The moment that feudal constraints disappeared, the tendency on the part of Gypsies to assimilate to the dominant society received an instant boost, for the obvious reason that the majority’s institutions were far more powerful and offered many more opportunities than did Gypsy communities. The social institutions of the dominant society exert a huge attraction on most Gypsies of all three linguistic groups, most notably on the poorer segments, since for them economic detachment from that society translates into nothing else than an absence of prospects, frustration of chances, and in many cases an economic barrier raised by discrimination. In such cases any advancement that a Gypsy can attain would be achieved via the institutions of Hungarian society, and for those concerned this is a momentous decision. For them the path to normalising their life is not seen as remaining enclosed within the framework of their own community but one that is tied to schooling, military service and workplace. It is, first and foremost, what Gábor Havas termed the “daily commuter” stratum who opt for this strategy of assimilation.

Since there is no part of Hungary in which Gypsies exclusively run, on a broad scale, their own work organisations, religious bodies, schools and administrative areas, meeting the need for leaders, professional staff, languages and external partners entirely from within their own ranks, nor is such a state of affairs readily imaginable, poor Gypsies naturally direct the main thrust of their efforts towards gaining a foothold in the institutions of the country’s majority. That means accepting cultural role-models from the dominant society; their own language, marital isolation, traditional skills, dress and customs are all felt to be burdensome.

Though such integrationist aspirations met with full approval from the Socialist régime, they have proved a dead-end since 1989 with the disappearance of most workplaces where there was a demand for unskilled labour. In the words of Gábor Kertesi, “a Gypsy population which had become used to being in employment” lost its jobs once and for all, but it also had no way back to the traditions of the family enterprise. The ambition to assimilate lives on for these people but now the state’s guarantees to provide opportunities to do so have been withdrawn. It is interesting to note that in the very organisations that set a Roma national character amongst their explicit goals what actually goes on dis-

plays many of the hallmarks of assimilation, with the use of Romani being supplanted by the Hungarian language, traditional dress becoming a festive trapping, and impulses to maintain ethnic distinctiveness being tacitly overridden in marital strategies. Paradoxically, these institutions offer one realistic route for meeting the integrationist aspirations of an earlier era.

At present it appears that further steps towards social integration are unlikely in the political sphere as the Roma politicians who hold office, poorly educated and of limited personal wealth as they are for the most part, are beholden for their careers to the needs of the majority Hungarian political class rather than to the political movements of the broad Roma mass. Whilst Gypsy leaders who have gained posts at the highest level have acquired considerable political nous over the past years, few of them would be able to sustain an independent existence and thus are mere pawns of the Hungarian government of the day. The positions of these increasingly professional Roma politicians would be greatly strengthened if they were backed by a stratum of more able Gypsies who were not dependent on the powers that be for their living. For all the legislation to implement collective self-government and promote ethnic identity, that political leadership stratum amongst the Gypsies should in truth be seen more as a product of assimilationist processes than evidence of Roma political integration.

Under the auspices of a growing string of educational institutions: the Kedves Ház ('Sweet Home') at Nyírtelek; the Amrita Club in Transdanubia; the Work-Study School at Edelény; the Don Bosco Technical Middle School at Kazincbarcika; the Romana Kher, Romaversitas, the Józsefváros School and Kalyi Jag Technical Middle School, all in Budapest; the Collegium Martineum at Mánfa; the András Hegedus School and College in Szolnok; and the Gandhi High School of Pécs, recent years have seen the emergence of a category of Roma youngsters who in respect of their family environment all belong to traditional Gypsy communities and have assimilated the ideologies of Roma nationality in the course of their schooling but crucially, thanks to the skills they have acquired, are no longer puppets of Hungary's majority political class. Without exception, these institutions were set up through private or church sponsorship and thus, from the viewpoint of funding alone, are not easily integrated into the national educational system. Since they are virtually the only such institutions to win support from the West, the Hungarian state finds it hard to accept paternity for these "children" – a stance that generates political tensions which serve only to reinforce a sense of separateness amongst Gypsies.

3. EMPLOYMENT, JOBS AND JOBLESSNESS

For Hungary's Gypsies the year of 1945 marked survival and escape from destruction. The period of limited democracy between 1945 and 1947 altered their relations to society and the state, for whereas the pre-1945 authoritarian régime had refused to acknowledge equality of rights for Gypsies and instead applied racial discrimination against them, the new democratic state proclaimed equality of rights and forbade manifestations of racial or ethnic discrimination.

Economically, however, Gypsies had to endure extremely heavy losses. As Zsolt Csalog has suggested: "With the disappearance of the old consumer strata, the long-standing market for Musicians simply vanished (the fact that it partially revived later on, in the Sixties, is another matter), whilst history swept away what remnants there were of other traditional occupations. The vast historical capital for which Gypsies had toiled so strenuously was nullified... It proved an unresolved contradiction that the end of the second world war, whilst terminating a very real peril to life and threat of destruction for Gypsies and bringing them the promised emancipation, did not provide them with the means of subsistence."²

The commencement of land reform in the spring of 1945 set a seal on the former economic and political domination of Hungary's land-owning gentry and gave land to the country's poorest peasant smallholders and landless agricultural labourers. The Gypsies missed out on this redistribution. True, most of them did not lay claim to any land, but even those who did apply, with rare exceptions, did not receive plots. There was insufficient land, so land redistribution did little more than turn a country of "three million beggars", as it used to be characterised, into one of two million beggars. The Gypsies were the easiest of all groups to ignore, and indeed were ignored, even though more than one-third of the Gypsy populace sustained themselves from seasonal agricultural work, and the land reform meant that opportunities for jobs that the medium-sized and big farm estates had once offered them simply dried up.

The 1950s marked the beginning of a countervailing process that only got fully into its stride during the 60s and 70s and came to an end in the latter half of the 1980s. Forced industrialisation in Budapest and its environs, the north-east of the country and Transdanubia led to full employment and later workforce shortages which brought in their wake a precipitate growth in job opportunities for Gypsies. At the time of the 1971 national survey (see Chapter 2), that process had reached a point where three-quarters of all male Gypsies of working age (15-59 years) were in a permanent job, a further 10% were self-

² Csalog, Zsolt: A cigánykérdés Magyarországon 1980 előtt [The Gypsy issue in Hungary prior to 1980]. In: *Bibó Emlékkönyv*, II. kötet. [In memoriam István Bibó. Vol. II]. Budapest: samizdat edition, 1979. Reprinted Budapest-Bern: Századvég – Európai Protestáns Magyar Szabadegyetem, 1991, pp. 282-311.

employed or earned a living by assisting another family member or through casual work, leaving 15% who were receiving state assistance.

In the country as a whole, at the time of the 1970 census, 87.7% of all working-age males were active in the workforce and just 12.3% were in early retirement or dependent. Small as the difference between Gypsies and non-Gypsies might appear at first sight, in reality it was fairly substantial. A mere 2.7% of all the country's working-age males were not actively participating in the workforce due to unfitness for work through poor health or disability. Amongst Gypsies 7.3% of the menfolk were incapacitated, but the vast majority of them did not qualify for state assistance or early retirement because they had not been in employment long enough. Similarly, whilst 8.2% of Hungarian working-age males were still in education, that ratio was just 0.5% amongst Gypsies.

Nonetheless, the Sixties were a time of huge change to the better for Gypsy families, with the adult males approaching a state of full employment. The livelihood, standards of living, sense of security, and comforts of Gypsy families improved – almost out of recognition. For many Gypsy families this transformation enabled them to afford construction of a low-grade housing unit or purchase an old peasant cottage, to leave their segregated colonies and move into the village or town proper. Only a small number had the means to afford this from their own savings; the majority covered the costs with loans, but the necessary condition for those, of course, was continued employment.

Whereas adult Gypsy males living in Hungary's industrialised regions enjoyed full employment, this was not the case in rural areas. Thus the proportion of dependants was 5.5% in the Budapest area, 4.3% in Transdanubia and 3.8% in the industrial north-east, but 10.2% in the Alföld (Central Plain) region and 15.2% on the eastern fringe of the country. The proportions of those who were incapacitated for work were 4.5, 5.4 and 6.8%, respectively, in the three industrialised regions, 8% in the Alföld and 10% in the east.

Patterns of employment showed much wider variations amongst women than men. At the time of the 1970 national census, 64% of all Hungarian women of working age (15-54 years) were in active employment, 6% were pensioned, and 30% were dependent. The Roma survey of the following year, however, showed that just 30% were employed and 70% dependant. That low take-up of employment, according to the research findings, could be attributed to two main factors: the greater number of children born to Gypsy women and the fact that in rural areas there were fewer job opportunities for women, especially those with little or no schooling.

In 1971, 11% of heads of Gypsy households were skilled workers, 10% semi-skilled, 44% unskilled, 13% agricultural manual labourers, 3% day labourers, whilst 6% were self-employed or supported themselves from seasonal work or by assisting another family member. Here big disparities were evident between the different linguistic groups as to how important a role agriculture played in providing a living. Whilst 8.8% of Romungro and 10.5% of Vlach Gypsy family heads were agricultural manual labourers, that proportion was 47.5% for Beash family heads. Prior to 1945 the only employment

available to Gypsies in agriculture was seasonal or, of the full-time jobs, those as shepherds or tending other livestock. In 1971 15% of Gypsy family heads worked in the agricultural sector but of these a mere 5% were members of a cooperative farm, 1.5% market gardeners, and the rest worked as day labourers, field-guards, nursery-men, foresters, shepherds, animal tenders and vine-dressers. For the manual workers in this sector the employment was merely seasonal in 40% of cases. Looked at from another angle, just 9% of Gypsies in full-time employment but almost half of those in temporary employment were working in agriculture.

During the 1950s and 60s Gypsies, like the rest of the Hungarian population, streamed out of agriculture to work in industry. With its job opportunities largely crammed into the summer harvesting months, agriculture had never been able to offer an income out of which a family could live comfortably throughout the year. Widespread industrialisation gave Gypsies the chance not only to earn a steady, dependable income but also to win a respectable place for themselves within society. The dominant process within Gypsy circles during these decades, then, was one of proletarianisation – a process that, for the Musicians at least, represented somewhat of a comedown in status. Despite this, seasonal agricultural work continued to play a big role for Gypsies in making ends meet – most typically with the husband in a full-time job at a mine, foundry or factory, whilst his wife took on day-work and seasonal farming jobs. Indeed, it was very common for the husband himself to join in such seasonal work, with or without permission from his permanent workplace. As a result most Gypsy families were able to secure a living from two (or more) sources, and it should be noted that Hungarian agriculture at the time would have been unable to function without the resource of Gypsy seasonal workers.

Forced industrialisation continued to run its course for more than a decade and a half after the 1971 survey was carried out, with manpower shortages not only continuing but deepening as new workplaces sprang up continually, even in areas that in 1971 had been a long way from displaying full employment, and ever-growing job opportunities were opened up to women. One consequence was that Gypsy women too began to take on regularly paid permanent jobs, with the proportion in such work approaching 50% before the end of the 1970s (as compared with 30% in 1971) and exceeding that by the early 1980s.

In the second half of the Eighties, however, these trends began to reverse as employment in Hungary dipped – at first gradually but then with ever more precipitately. By the end of 1993 the proportion of all male Hungarians in the 15-59 age-bracket who were in work was just 64%, but amongst male Gypsies just 29%. The disparity was even wider for women: whereas 66% of all female Hungarians in the 15-54 age-bracket were in work, the figure for Gypsy women was just 15%. The decline in employment was reflected in increases in the numbers and proportions of both unemployed and those who had withdrawn altogether from the workforce. At the time detailed research was carried out in 1993-94, official unemployment was running very high in Hungary – at an average of 640,000 between October 1993 and January 1994 – as compared with figures under

100,000 up to the end of 1990 and a peak of 703,000 in February 1993. Since then it has gradually diminished, to 496,000 in 1995, 477,000 in 1996, 464,000 in 1997, and 404,000 in 1998, though the fall in the official figures for the unemployed does not correspond with the numbers of those who are actually out of work since a segment of those who are not entitled to state assistance see no point in registering.

Against this background, 57,000 Gypsies were registered as unemployed at the end of 1993, or 8.9% of the country's unemployed register. Of those, the 37,000 Roma men made up 9.6% of the total of 386,000 males who were officially unemployed and 20,000 Roma women represented 7.9% of the 254,000 unemployed females. Those levels meant, however, that official unemployment amongst Gypsies at the end of 1993 was 49.68%, as compared with 12.84% amongst non-Gypsies. Although the rates were not so high in Budapest (31.8% amongst Gypsies, 8.1% amongst non-Gypsies), that only meant they were worse outside the capital; the worst unemployment blackspot was, in fact, in the north-east of Hungary, where the rates hit 59% amongst Gypsies and 17% amongst non-Gypsies.

When it comes to statistics for people recorded as no longer active in the workforce it is well known that these include a large measure of concealed unemployment, and this applies to the non-Roma and Roma populace alike. Whereas in 1982 the total number of the working-age population who were in employment in Hungary was still as high as 5 million (5,437,000 if one includes old-age pensioners who were in paid employment), the corresponding figure in 1995 was just 3.7 million (or 3,882,000 million including active pensioners). Out of the 1.3 million difference, somewhat less than a half (632,000) were officially registered as unemployed, 100,000 were unregistered unemployed, and the rest had withdrawn from the labour market.

What lay behind those statistics, of course, was that during this period a segment of those who had formerly been gainfully employed dropped out of the labour market and fell back immediately on a pension of some sort. It is notable that between 1989 and 1995 the number of people receiving a disability allowance rose from 500,000 to 700,000. Another segment of the previously employed, having reached the limit of their entitlements to unemployment and income-support benefits, simply stopped visiting the labour exchange office and thus were no longer included on official registers. A third segment of previous wage-earners were lost to the workforce indirectly because, having been on maternity leave or child-support, they were unable or did not wish to find employment after those benefits ended, then became inactive after a further period on unemployment benefit. A fourth category of previously employed became inactive in the sense that after losing their job they turned to work in the unofficial, or 'black', economy; in reality, they are earning an income but, since the job is not officially declared, they are not recorded as employed in official statistics.

At the end of 1993, then, 58,000 Gypsies were officially in work and 57,000 were unemployed, but at the same time 151,000 – approaching three times the number of offi-

cially unemployed – were inactive. That latter total amounts to 56.5% of the Gypsy population in the 15-74 age-bracket, which compares with 44% amongst non-Gypsy Hungarians. Taking the men separately, 37,000 were in work and the same number were officially unemployed, whilst 55,000 of a total 131,000 in the age-range of 15-74 years were inactive – or 42% as compared with 36% for non-Gypsy males. Amongst women the disparity was much greater, with 21,000 in work, 20,000 unemployed, and 95,000 of the total 136,000 in the age-range of 15-74 years inactive – or 70% as compared with 52% for non-Gypsy women, though here it needs to be kept in mind that rates of childbearing are much higher amongst Gypsy women.

In seeking to account for such disparities, one has to look first to educational backwardness. Up until 1986 every child who had completed the eight grades of general schooling could be guaranteed to find a job, but nowadays that, even if supplemented with a vocational qualification, is no longer sufficient. According to a workforce survey carried out by the Central Statistical Office in the last quarter of 1993, overall unemployment in the non-Gypsy population was then running a 12.84%, but amongst those with college degree qualifications it was 2.94%, amongst those with a secondary school-leaving certificate it was 9.91%, amongst those with vocational training it was 15.55%, and amongst those with only eight grades of general schooling it was 17.52%.

A second factor is the location of the majority of Gypsies. Unemployment has hit rural areas, especially the smaller villages and hamlets, much harder than the towns, and 60% of the Gypsy population live in rural areas, 40% in small communities. Unemployment rates are substantially lower in the Budapest area and Transdanubia and much higher in the north, east and central Alföld regions, where 56% of all Gypsies reside.

A third reason is the fact that Gypsies had found work prior to 1989 primarily in those sectors of the economy which were worst devastated after the change in régime. For example, during 1993 unemployment in the construction industry was running at virtually double the national average, yet in 1971 some 26% of Gypsies who were in employment were in that branch or working on building projects of some sort (at that time there were 25,000 of them, or 10% of the total workforce in the construction industry).

Even taken together, however, the above three factors do not account for the current levels of unemployment amongst Gypsies. A fourth factor is undoubtedly discrimination, but we have no means of quantitatively assessing its impact.

The intervening period from 1994 onwards has seen massive changes taking place in the Hungarian economy and in society. The year of 1997 marked the start of a phase of vigorous and durable economic growth, and that expansion has had a favourable impact on employment, including that amongst Gypsies. As has already been noted, there was already a big reduction in official unemployment between 1993 and 1997 (from 663,000 to 464,000); however, this did not represent a fall in the true number of those without a job, simply in the numbers signing on at labour-exchange offices, since the overall size of the national labour force continued to shrink over these years (from 3,867,000 to

3,646,000). In 1998 and 1999, by contrast, the overall labour force actually increased: by 51,000 in 1998 (to 3,698,000) and by a further 145,000 in 1999 (to 3,843,000). There are no data as to how many of those 200,000 new jobs went to Gypsies, but one may hazard a guess that it lay between 10,000 and 20,000. It seems highly probable that the accelerating expansion of the job market can be sustained for at least several years to come, and that the growth in the labour force will prove durable, but even so unemployment is historically still high and the levels of employment that were recorded during the 1970s and 80s are unlikely to be regained for a long time to come.

The rigours of the catastrophic situation suggested by the foregoing outline have been somewhat mitigated by the workings of the invisible economy. As has already been mentioned, a portion of the officially unemployed and economically inactive Gypsy population is actually engaged in the grey and black economies, and there is no question that incomes from those sources play a big part in the subsistence of many Gypsy families. In this regard, agriculture still looms large in the lives of Gypsies of all three main ethnic groups to this day. The form it takes is almost always as temporarily hired labour, for shorter or longer periods, for individual peasant landowners which neither they nor the farmers declare to the authorities. In addition to such hired work, many Gypsies also farm on their own account. Self-sufficiency in produce from their own domestic plots is often a vital element in sheer survival, with some 56% of Gypsy households in 1994 engaged in such activity. Looking at some staple crops, the proportion of Gypsy households which at least partially met their needs for potatoes, for example, was then 27.5%, with a further 13.5% meeting their needs in full. Similar ratios were also recorded for beans, onions, tomatoes and peppers. In the same year, 13.3% of Gypsy households slaughtered one domestically bred pig, and 14.7% two or more pigs, whilst 15.5% raised at least 30 chickens.

It is primarily amongst Musician Gypsies, though also to a smaller extent amongst the Beash and Vlach Gypsies, that one encounters families, and even whole communities, which engage in cultivating crops or raising livestock for the market, rather than hiring out their labour or working a household plot purely for their own consumption. Such enterprises are not unfailingly declared to the authorities, any more than they are by Hungarian peasants generally, so that such production is poorly captured by official statistics.

Despite the renewed upswing that was seen in the construction industry during 1998 and 1999, output has not yet regained even the levels of the 1970s. Nevertheless, one can be certain that Gypsies will be found on every building site and only a small percentage of them are likely to be officially declared; a surprising number of such construction companies, including some which are well-known nationally, are actually owned and run by Gypsies.

Gypsies are also widely known to be active traders in horses, cattle, pigstock, clothing, tobacco, coffee, feathers, scrap metals, flowers, peppers, second-hand cars, property and antiques. The last of these was the subject of an in-depth study by Elza Lakatos. According to her researches, roughly 100-120 Gypsy antiques dealers have formally

joined the Hungarian National Association of Curios and Antiques Dealers, though it is common knowledge that many more are actually engaged in the trade: the Association's president, Csaba Nagyházi, estimates that there are over one hundred Roma antiques dealers living in the capital alone. On the author's own estimate, though she does not put any figures to it, the majority of Gypsy families living in the XIVth (Zugló) and XIXth (Kispest) districts of Budapest make a living from the business in some shape or form. Lakatos herself was born into a Roma family that had been engaged in antiques dealing over several generations and, having learned the trade from early childhood, set up her own successful business whilst still in her twenties, even though it is the general rule in this field (as it is in Musician families) for the sons to learn from the fathers, and even so it is hard for newcomers to gain admission to the ranks of the leading dealers: "Most antiques dealers try to make money in the narrow border area between strict legality and outright illegality," she writes, which is why it is near-impossible to extract hard information from them. Many of them also deal in other sectors, such as cars, property, jewellery and clothing. They see personal wealth as a fundamental value, with both luck and adroitness being required to attain that, although a careful reading of Lakatos' study indicates that freedom and independence are the most important traditional virtues in the ideology of Vlach Gypsies.

The business activities and spatial distribution of Vlach Gypsies living in Budapest have been analysed by László Hajnal in a recent paper on 'Gypsies in Big Cities'.³ The Gypsy colonies of old are no longer found in the capital, their former inhabitants having in the meantime scattered across various districts: with only 6.5% of its Gypsies resident in dwellings for which a majority of the neighbours are likewise Gypsies, Budapest has the lowest such concentrations anywhere within the country.⁴ Nevertheless, most Gypsies live in the VIIth, VIIIth, IXth and XXth districts, with few in the Ist, IInd, Vth, XIth and XIIth districts. For the Gypsies themselves, the most prestigious locations are those in the green suburban area of Zugló which is bounded by Mexikói út – Erzsébet királyné útja – Öv utca – Csömöri út and the adjoining areas around Miskolci út and Szugló utca; slightly lower down the scale, but still highly sought after, are residences in Pesterzsébet (XXth district), Kispest, and those parts of Rákosszentmihály (XVIth district) which lie closer to the city centre.

For these metropolitan Gypsies a car is seen as indispensable to their business: rarely will they make use of buses, trams or the underground. A car offers protection and security, a non-hostile environment in which friends and family members can sit together. By zipping around in their cars to meet relatives in the various parts of the city, and through mobile telephones, they gather the intelligence they need for their business: who has something to sell, be it gold, gemstones, antiques, objets d'art, a car, non-ferrous scrap

³ In: Kemény, István (ed.): *A romák/cigányok és a láthatatlan gazdaság* [Romans/Gypsies and the Invisible Economy]. Hungarian Academy of Sciences – Osiris (in press).

⁴ Havas, Gábor–István Kemény: *A magyarországi romákról* [On the Roma of Hungary]. In: *Szociológiai Szemle* 1995/3, p. 15.

metal, clothes or property, and who might be interested in purchasing it. On the whole they dislike getting involved in deals that require much investment of time or energy, or call for long-term strategic thinking; the ideal is a rapid turnover – in one door and straight out the other – and turning a quick profit. Most such Gypsies have no bank account, pay no taxes or social security, do not purchase stocks and shares, and only ever handle hard cash. Depending on the state of the economy, they are willing to switch from one business to another – from scrap metal to antiques, or from housing to cars, or whatever – at the drop of a hat, which is all the easier because they tend not to have registered companies or offices.

Because the slum areas of the city, where the struggling, impoverished, down-trodden, alcohol- and drug-addicted lower classes are concentrated, are familiar stamping grounds, they have access to goods that can be bought cheaply; at the same time they have contacts with potential buyers of such goods. They also have their own lawyers and paid informants in government offices, local councils and the police. In a postscript to his study, Hajnal points out that in the last year or two, with markets becoming more orderly, hopes have been expressed that the Vlach Gypsies of Pest will set their businesses on a legal footing, though most have not done so as yet. Sooner or later they will be faced with the choice of either getting out or turning themselves into properly registered, tax- and social security-paying entrepreneurs with bank accounts.

Many Gypsy businessmen are currently making a living out of supplying or subcontracting Gypsy labour for casual jobs, paying pittances to those who actually carry out the work and providing them no social security coverage or job protection. This sort of broking currently satisfies genuine needs on both sides and is unquestionably a useful service, however it seems equally inevitable that it has to be placed onto a proper legal footing. The disappearance of such illegal activities, or legalisation of the businesses that are currently operating in a grey area between legality and illegality, can only take place, of course, if due process of law is fully implemented in all other areas of Hungary's life.

4. EDUCATION

Even up to the end of the 1950s, it was still more the rule than the exception for school-age Gypsy children in Hungary either not to attend school at all, or to attend for only a very brief period. Around 1960 a significant proportion of adult Gypsies were barely able to read and write or were completely illiterate. In the wake of the 1961 Politburo resolution to take steps to improve the position of the country's Gypsy population (see page 15), considerably more attention started to be paid to encouraging enrolment and continuing school attendance by their youngsters. As a result the overall numbers of Gypsy children who were taken onto school registers and were more or less regular in turning up for lessons rose by leaps and bounds. Real progress was still painfully slow and gradual, however, in that there were plenty of municipalities and Gypsy communities where schooling became a matter of general routine for the children only by the mid-1970s.

The data produced by the 1971 national sample survey of the Gypsy population that was carried out under the direction of István Kemény showed that only 26-27% of the age-group 20-24 years had completed the compulsory eight grades of general schooling, and fully 39% of Gypsies over the age of 14 years were functionally illiterate.

The significant improvement that was seen in indices of school attendance and duration of schooling amongst Gypsies during the 1960s and 70s had its unfortunate repercussions, too, for a segment of the dominant Hungarian society was distinctly hostile to the sudden growth in numbers of Gypsy children enrolling for school. Nor was Hungary's school system at the time, based as it was on a tradition that emphasised authoritarianism and rigid adherence to a centrally directed, nationally uniform curriculum, and that roundly rejected any attempt at experimentation or innovation – a tradition with its roots in nineteenth-century Prussia – well placed to know how to cope with the special problems that were bound to arise with trying to teach the influx of Gypsy children who were frequently from extremely poor families with no educational background.

The better attendance rates and growing numbers of school-age Gypsy children very speedily prompted moves to segregate them at school. Whole classes of Gypsies, often enough located in a separate building, and in the larger municipalities even entirely separate Gypsy schools were established from the early 1960s onwards. Thus segregated, Gypsy children received their education in buildings that, as a rule, were in poorer condition and worse-equipped, and at the hands of teachers who were less knowledgeable and not so well-qualified – indeed, not infrequently unqualified – as compared with their non-Gypsy peers. The standards that they attained at the end of their general (primary) schooling were correspondingly poor, leaving them with barely a chance to continue studies. The swelling school rolls of Gypsy children in the Sixties also prompted a tendency to assign Gypsy children to remedial-type schools and classes that had originally been set up to serve the needs of mentally handicapped non-Gypsy children, which resulted in as many

as 11.7% attending such schools or classes by school year 1974-75, and – with the practice still on a slowly but steadily rising trend – 17.5% by 1985-86 (by comparison, just 2% of non-Gypsy children were diverted into such ‘remedial’ teaching). The greater proportion of the children were placed in remedial classes – often made up of mixed age-groups – within normal general schools but more often than not under the care of unqualified “special needs” teachers. Officially, eight years of remedial school education were recognised as equivalent to six years of regular general school, though any knowledge picked up under these conditions was in reality even less than that suggests.

Although, by definition, referrals to remedial schools (and classes) ought to have been restricted to children who had been shown by professionally acceptable means, through individual testing, to be mentally impaired, for very many years the procedure routinely failed to meet even that minimum requirement. Referral thus became a powerful instrument for segregating Gypsy children within the school system. Its consequences were all the more severe in that, for all practical purposes, it was irreversible: once a child had been placed in the remedial stream he or she was rarely returned to mainstream schooling even when there was unequivocal evidence that the child was mentally completely normal.

During the 1970s a growing band of critics began to raise grave professional reservations about the then prevailing methods of referral and the discriminatory intentions that lay behind them. Partly in response to this pressure, educational authorities during the 1980s began a progressive tightening up of referral procedures by incorporating various professional guarantees (expert committees, assessment standards, etc.); however, this made little real difference to the ratios as schools continued to exploit any loopholes that were found in the new regulations: even in 1992 as many as 15.8% of all Gypsy children at general school were still being taught in remedial schools or classes.

A major contributory factor to the abnormally high proportion of referrals of Gypsy children to remedial education was the fact that, on average, significantly fewer of them had attended nursery schools, and for significantly shorter periods, than non-Gypsy children, despite the fact that such pre-schooling ought to have been playing a decisive role in narrowing socio-cultural disadvantage. In 1981, for example, whereas 87.3% of all Hungarian 3- to 6-year-olds went to nursery school, the equivalent figure for Gypsy children was just 50%.

In summary, it would be fair to say that over the three decades before the change in régime school attendance became the general rule for Gypsy children, as it already was for non-Gypsy children. Between 1971 and 1994 the ratio of Gypsies in the age-group 20-29 years who had completed the eight grades of general (primary) education increased to 77%. Whilst the proportion who stayed on to obtain the secondary school-leaving certificate (*érettségi*) also grew significantly, from 3.6% in 1981 to 10.6% in 1994 (see Table 4.1), this had virtually no effect on the difference in attainment between Gypsy and non-Gypsy children.

Table 4.1. Ratios of Gypsy and non-Gypsy children entering secondary education in 1994

Continuing study	Non-Gypsies	Gypsies
Vocational school	6.0	9.4
Skilled crafts school	35.5	31.2
Technical middle school	32.0	10.0
Grammar school (<i>gimnázium</i>)	24.2	0.6
Total:	97.7	51.2

After 1990 two opposing tendencies were manifested in the schooling of Gypsy children. From the mid-1980s the total enrolment of children entering the Hungarian school system each year had swung into a continual decline, and this began to make itself felt in secondary schools from the early 1990s onwards. Alongside this, the disciplines of normative financing were introduced into state education, which had the effect of motivating secondary schools to increase enrolment and retain as many enrolled students as they could. These two trends served to boost the chances of children from social groups with disadvantaged backgrounds (including Gypsies), previously unable to compete for school places, being accepted by a secondary school and eventually of sitting the *érettségi* examinations, thereby somewhat reducing the conspicuously high drop-out rates of earlier years.

In many places the reduction in school rolls was accompanied by an improvement in teaching conditions: class sizes dropped, and teachers had more time and energy to give pupils individual attention and deal with special needs. In addition, the content of the school curriculum was increasingly liberalised, giving more opportunity for alternative syllabuses and teaching methods to be piloted and introduced. Educational authorities also displayed a great deal more sensitivity to the problems of small schools and proved willing to modify their decades-old policy of elevating economic rationalisation, through aggressive expansion of the catchment areas around a decreasing number of schools, to a sole absolute principle.

From the early 1990s, the recognition that the smaller a school’s roll, the greater the school’s unit costs led to differing but dependable forms of extra spending provision being made in the central education budget for the funding of small schools to ensure their continued survival; during the first half of the decade, indeed, money was even found to re-open a number of schools that had earlier been closed. These measures are particularly important to Gypsies as a much higher proportion of them live in rural communities, and dwindling small villages and hamlets in particular, than is true for Hungarian society at large.

A further factor that is helping to favour the trend to improved schooling are the signs of a shift in the attitude of Gypsy society itself towards education. The shock impact of the change in régime on the broad mass of Gypsies, with so many being squeezed out of employment in the legal job market, was to make them aware that there was little

chance for them, even in the long term, to claw back the position they had managed to achieve earlier, or even to halt the slide into ever-greater marginalisation, without better educational qualifications.

According to a study carried out by the Institute for Educational Research (IER) during the recently finished 1999-2000 school year, some 38.3% of Gypsy fathers in skilled occupations, 24.5% of fathers in unskilled or semiskilled jobs, and even 14.7% of unemployed fathers, expressed the wish that any of their children who are now in general school should carry on at least until they have gained the secondary-school *érettségi* qualification (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Intentions, by father's occupation, for children's career after completing general (primary) school

Intention	Non-manual	Entrepreneur	Skilled worker	Semi-skilled, unskilled	Unemployed	TOTAL
<i>Érettségi</i>	37.5	37.2	40.9	26.7	18.4	22.0
Vocational	56.3	41.9	49.5	54.2	59.9	57.7
Paid work	6.3	9.3	1.1	4.9	4.4	4.4
Don't know		11.6	8.6	14.2	17.4	15.9
Total	1.1	3.1	6.6	16.1	73.1	100.0
No. of cases	16	43	93	225	1024	1401

Gypsy segregation, Hungarian Institute for Education Research, 2000 (in press)

In recent years, under the combined effect of the above-mentioned factors, there has been a significant increase in the numbers of Gypsy youngsters enrolling at secondary schools that award *érettségi* qualifications and at institutions of higher education. Admittedly, national statistics on the scale of such continuing education are no longer available, since collection of separate school data for Gypsy children was ended in 1993 in order to comply with the requirements of Hungary's Data Protection Act; however, on the basis of research conducted into the topic during recent years and indirect sources of information, there is no reason to dispute that an improvement has taken place in this respect.

Table 4.3. The proportion of general (primary) school children staying in full-time education

Continued education	1996/97		1997/98		1998/99	
	Non-Gypsy/Gypsy	Non-Gypsy/Gypsy	Non-Gypsy/Gypsy	Non-Gypsy/Gypsy	Non-Gypsy/Gypsy	Non-Gypsy/Gypsy
Did not continue	2.3	16.5	2.8	16.1	3.2	14.9
Vocational school	4.4	8.6	5.4	10.4	3.2	9.4
Skilled crafts school	36.5	61.6	34.9	57.5	36.8	56.5
Technical middle school	38.3	9.3	37.3	12.0	38.1	15.4
Grammar school (<i>gimnázium</i>)	18.3	3.7	19.3	3.8	18.4	3.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No. of cases	167	168	176	176	177	182

Gypsy segregation, Hungarian Institute for Education Research, 2000 (in press)

The aforementioned Hungarian Institute for Education Research study indicated that in their survey of the subsequent paths of all Gypsy children who had completed the eighth grade at a total sample of 192 general schools, 13% of those finishing in 1997, 15.8% in 1998, and 19% in 1999 went on to take up a place at a technical middle school or grammar school (see Table 4.3).

The scope of this particular IER study extended only to general schools where there were at least 100 Gypsy children or they made up at least 25% of the total roll in school year 1992-93. It is quite possible, therefore, that a disproportionately high number of the sampled population were children from the most highly segregated and marginalised Gypsy families for whom the likelihood of staying on in school were correspondingly low. It is therefore instructive to compare these findings with the results of a similar investigation earlier this year (2000) by Delphoi Consulting, who looked at a sample of general schools where the ratio of Gypsy children was 8.5% or more in 1992-93 but without uncovering any essential difference in the proportions of students who went on to study at secondary school.

A rough picture of the numbers of Gypsy students passing on to higher education can be formed from the data of the scholarship programmes that have been set up to assist them, for in recent years some 400-500 young Gypsies annually have qualified for bursaries to study at university or college. Since that equals the annual total of Gypsies who had passed the secondary school *érettségi* examination during the 1980s, it is evident that this represents significant progress. For all that, such advancement weighs little in comparison with the statistics for non-Gypsy Hungarian children, amongst whom 70% of those whose complete their general school courses go on to secondary schools, and half of those obtaining the *érettségi* qualification gain admission to some institution of higher education. The gap between Gypsies and non-Gypsies is thus as large as it ever was.

What makes the consequences of this all the more serious is that what relative improvement in educational performance has occurred is largely limited to the small segment of the Gypsy population who are either already part of the middle class, or else aspire to it and align themselves to middle-class values. As far as schooling goes, most Gypsies are still afflicted by the same handicaps as research work and analyses were already demonstrating during the 1970s and 80s when they were characterised as the main obstacles to raising educational levels.

A variety of factors stand in the way of Gypsy children staying within the educational system. One of these is their segregation of schools, which takes several forms:

1) *Residential segregation.* Recent years have again seen a sharpening of the separation of Gypsy dwelling places, in part through spontaneous population movements but also in part as a result of deliberate exclusionary tactics applied by the dominant majority of Hungarian society. Even back in 1994, a survey of a nationally representative sample of Gypsies was able to show that, despite the demolition of most of the old Gypsy colonies in previous decades, by the early 1990s around 60% of Hungary's Gypsy population were

still living in conditions of marked segregation. There were two clear seeding-points for this new form of residential separation, with an accelerating “gypsification” being seen, on the hand, in certain declining small villages and, on the other, in decaying urban slum areas and former proletarian colonies. What was, and still is, happening in both settings is that an initial influx and then growing presence of Gypsy families triggers a snowballing process of departures by non-Gypsy families.

One consequence of these demographic and segregationist shifts is that 30% of Gypsy children of primary school age attend schools in communities with total populations of fewer than 1,000 where they make up more than half of the school roll, whereas in Hungary as a whole not quite 8% of the population lives in such settlements. Much the same applies to the dramatic increase in the ratios of Gypsy children that has been seen in some schools in the Budapest districts which straddle the Outer Ring Road (Nagykörút), notably in the Józsefváros (VIIIth) and Ferencváros (IXth) districts. In the twelve Budapest schools captured by the sample investigated by the previously cited IER study the ratio of Gypsy pupils on the school rolls more than doubled, from 22.7% to 49.1%, within the decade from 1989 to 1999.

2) *School selection tied to an exodus of non-Gypsy children.* Alongside the re-emergence of residential segregation, with a rapid growth in numbers of Gypsy residents in certain rural settlements and urban neighbourhoods, other active discriminatory steps taken by Hungary’s majority population played a big part in sharpening segregation in schools. In Budapest and the main county towns, it is easy for families who do not wish to see their children attend schools where the ratio of Gypsy children exceeds the threshold that they perceive as “tolerable” to vote with their feet for they usually have a wide range of schools to choose from. Yet similar transfers of children are also routine occurrences in places that have only a single local school, so that a change of school involves a greater expenditure of time, effort and money for the child to attend an establishment in another community.

Due to such exoduses, the ratio of Gypsies to non-Gypsies amongst school-age children who actually live in a given location can diverge markedly from their ratio in the local school. In larger communities the schools themselves often respond to the pressures placed on them by the dominant majority by taking active steps to increase the disparity in these ratios. Thus schools which happen to be placed closest to areas with the densest Gypsy populations often find themselves marked out eventually to become exclusively Gypsy schools, whereas the other schools take great care, by means of various tricks, to ensure that the proportion of Gypsy children on their own rolls should not exceed the danger threshold. For instance, they will introduce streaming even for first-graders who are just starting school and then invite the applicants to the school for an entrance interview, which then serves as a basis for screening out the children who are not “the right sort”. Should any unwanted children gain admittance none the less, the teachers will then make efforts to demonstrate during the first year that they really do not fit in because they are unable to satisfy the higher standards that have been set them.

One of the most pernicious consequences of such school selection, with the corollary emergence of schools that cater wholly or in large part for Gypsy children, is that it is attended by an equally strong selection of teachers. Most teachers are unwilling to take up posts in schools that have only Gypsy children on their roll, or are moving towards that state. From a purely professional point of view, they are daunted by the scale of special educational and developmental needs and have a feeling that teaching in such institutions will deprive them of a sense of achievement and entail a serious loss of prestige. In addition, a goodly number of teachers are strongly prejudiced against Gypsies and consider that any attempt to educate their children is doomed to failure from the outset. One point that the IER study threw up was that whilst the fall in numbers of children represents a threat to teaching posts in many areas, there are still many who are teaching in predominantly Gypsy schools without proper qualifications to do so; in one purely Gypsy school four of the seven teaching staff have the school-leaving *érettségi* as their sole qualification. For many of those who are unqualified, moreover, the sole reason for their taking a post in a “Gypsy” school is that this is an easier route to acquiring a teaching qualification; as soon as they have secured that, they move on to another school.

3) *Selection within schools.* The use of procedures that serve to separate Gypsy children within a school, as has already been pointed out, has a past that goes back several decades within the Hungarian school system. To this day schools resort to the same time-honoured procedures whenever they feel the need arises.

Amongst 2,722 school classes examined in the previously cited IER study during academic year 1999-2000, it was found that the ratio of Gypsy children was higher than 50% in 960 (35.3%) and above 75% in 559 (20.5%), even though in the very same schools, during the same period, there were 865 classes (31.8%) in which the numbers of Gypsy children was less than 25%. Even more tellingly, within the 192 schools making up the study sample, which had an average enrolment of 40% Gypsy children, there were 157 classes that contained not a single Gypsy child and 311 classes comprising Gypsy children exclusively. Thus 17.2% of all the classes investigated – roughly one in every six – could be said to be ethnically “pure”. It needs to be borne in mind that the existence of such “pure” Gypsy classes is inevitable in that segment of the schools which, through the processes that have been outlined above, largely or wholly cater for Gypsy children; nevertheless, fully one-third of the “pure” Gypsy classes were to be found in schools where Gypsy children made up less than half of the total school roll. Furthermore, the existence of “pure” non-Gypsy classes could not be justified in a single one of the schools in the IER sample on the basis of representation in the overall school.

It is evident that the greater the ratio of non-Gypsy children, and thus the smaller that of Gypsy children, within a school class, the more likely it is that the class in question, by means of streaming or in some other manner, is being taught to above-average standards or, to put it another way, is providing teaching at a level above basic educational needs. Equally, the smaller the ratio of non-Gypsy children, and thus the larger that of

Gypsy children, within a class, the more likely it is that the standards of teaching for pupils attending the class in question will be below average, on the pretext that the children lack the necessary abilities and/or inclinations, or that the deprivations entailed by their families' social circumstances are too great to be remedied by the school.

In many places, however, the rationale for establishing "catch-up" or remedial classes is explicitly in order to allow Gypsy children to be separated. In principle, "catch-up" ought to mean the adoption of special motivational pedagogic methods that are designed to minimise the socio-cultural disadvantages by reason of which children coming from poor, socially marginalised families are unable to keep pace with the rest of the class from their very first days in school. In most schools that operate "catch-up" classes no such special programmes are in place and the methods that are employed do not alleviate the problems or have any perceptible effect in reducing the disadvantages. In most cases, the teachers themselves have no clear idea of what to do or the various techniques that are on offer from educational reformers who have worked these out in schools set up to pilot such methods. All that most teachers perceive is that the Gypsy children under their care perform badly and for that reason they cannot get through the curriculum material as rapidly as might be desirable for the other children. For such teachers "catch-up" classes are a neat solution because they permit standards to be adjusted to the children's actual performance, even though this means the children are falling ever further behind their peers. For the most part, the effort to catch up amounts to no more than regular repetition of a given body of teaching material, or in other words recycling the same material more frequently than usual but without any change of teaching approaches that are more or less foreordained to be unsuccessful. The mere fact that in many places assignment to such catch-up classes tends to stick with the children as they pass through the school, more or less ensuring that Gypsy children continue to receive a segregated education in later years, is a measure of the dead end that they represent.

A similar function is offered by the remedial classes that operate in ordinary schools, though generally only in those situated in small communities where the ratio of Gypsy pupils in relatively high (in the bigger communities children who are assessed as being mentally handicapped are taught in separate special needs schools). The number of such classes rose continuously, in parallel with the widening enrolment of Gypsy children into regular schooling, from the early 1960s up until the end of the 1980s. The practice has declined somewhat since then as the growing democratisation of Hungary has forced schools to take much more care in how they apply it. The fact is that many Gypsy parents always were affronted if one or more of their children were obliged to attend remedial classes, but during the era of party-state rule they had little chance of bringing any influence to bear on a school's decisions. In recent years, however, it has become increasingly common for civic bodies, minority self-governing councils or the parents themselves to take an active stand against the manner in which referral to remedial classes is handled. To put it another way, school decisions are increasingly subject to social oversight, but at the

same time the dominant component of society in many places is exerting strong pressure to maintain the various forms that Gypsy segregation assumes, including the resort to remedial classes. The net result is that the number of remedial classes being operated in ordinary schools remains significant, and it is overwhelmingly Gypsy children, in comparison with non-Gypsy children, who are channelled into such classes.

Despite repeated tightening of the criteria for referral, ways to get round such obstacles are found in all places where there is a strong drive to segregation and local conditions permit. It is all too often the case that the expert assessors who are responsible for ordering transfers will elicit from the care-givers at the local nursery school precisely which children they believe will be unable to cope with the demands of the regular curriculum, and the committee members reach their decisions on this basis alone, without examining any individual child. There is an abundance of reported experience to suggest that overtly discriminatory aims are highly prevalent in making such referrals. Thus there are recorded cases where teaching of the regular curriculum but to "pure" Gypsy classes and resorting to the use of remedial classes are evidently treated as alternatives to one another. For example, a school that, over many years, had taught the regular curriculum to separate classes of Gypsy children might then, after having to discontinue this practice, introduce remedial classes in which again only Gypsy children would be found. In another case, several Gypsy children were ordered to transfer to a remedial school in the nearest town but their parents objected and managed to win agreement that the children should attend regular classes in the local school, where it transpired they could cope without any special problems – an outcome that of course raises a serious doubt about the grounds for the "expert" decision to transfer them in the first place.

The total number of Gypsy schoolchildren in the sample of 192 schools investigated by the IER study was 22,623, of whom 3,554 (15.7%) were learning in 311 "pure" Gypsy classes. Extrapolating the data to the country as a whole, it can be estimated that around 8,000 children are currently being taught in some 700 Gypsy-only classes in Hungary's eight-grade general (primary) schools. As part of the study, however, the researchers also looked at a subsample of schools that only offered teaching at the lower grades, and amongst these there were a further 35 "pure" Gypsy classes attended by 700 pupils. Taking these too into account, it can be concluded that close to 10% of Gypsy children who are now attending primary school in Hungary are being taught in completely segregated classes, and another 6-7% are in classes where Gypsy children form a majority of the pupils. In short, segregation at school is the lot of one out of every six Gypsy children currently at primary school in Hungary.

5. HEALTH

In attempting to present a picture of the health status of Hungary's Gypsy population, it must be noted from the outset that few reliable, up-to-date research data are available on which to base it. The primary reason for this is a general dearth of academically acceptable work on the subject over past decades. Furthermore, since Hungary's Data Protection Act (Law LXIII/1992) came into effect, the constitution now stipulates that all data relating both to ethnic affiliations and to individual health records are now classed as confidential, so that the written consent of each and every person must be obtained before any information is viewed or employed in any way. In consequence, few definitive research findings are available, and even here one must be careful in drawing any general conclusions from them. As part of a package of medium-term measures, a recent government order (1047/1999 (May 5th)) called for a comprehensive review of the health status of Hungary's Gypsy population as one of its objectives. Insofar as this can be accomplished, it is to be expected that such a review will furnish a substantially sounder basis of information on which to address the topic.

Given that the country's health services have been plunged, from the 1980s onwards, into a continuing and ever-deepening crisis in which it is unable to cope with any new challenges, the health status of any particular segment of the population is plainly going to be closely correlated with that group's social status. It is now a generally accepted view that the health of a particular country or community is not determined primarily by the prevailing standards of health care but by quality of life factors such as education, employment, living conditions, levels of cultural provision, and the general norms that prevail in the community. A better job, a bigger income, living in a more pleasant area under more hygienic conditions, and higher educational qualifications are all factors that contribute to adding up to several decades to life expectancy; conversely, people living in poor conditions also tend to be in a poorer state of health. In the light of the known sociological facts summarised so far, the health of Hungary's Gypsy populace is incontrovertibly far worse even than that of the population as a whole.

Mortality

The health status and demographic trends of the Hungarian population are strikingly poor by any measure. The rate of live births is very low: from a level of 14.7 per 1,000 inhabitants in 1970 it had sunk to an unprecedented low point of 9.6 per 1,000 by 1998, and as many as 8.2% of liveborn babies are of low birth-weight (under 2,500 g). In the same year 69,000 terminations of pregnancy were performed, which amounts to 70.8 abortions for every 100 live births. Mortality is increasing at the same time as the fertility index is declining. Deaths amongst middle-aged men are now running at a rate that puts Hungary

almost at the very top of international league tables. Males born in 1997 have a life expectancy of just 66.4 years – far below the European average – as compared with 75.1 years for females.

Even in the context of such poor indicators for the country as a whole, the figures for Hungary's Roma population are appalling. Though the rate of childbirth is significantly greater amongst the Roma, mortality is far higher, so that life expectancy is correspondingly shorter. As a result, children under 15 years of age make up 38% of the Roma population, which is twice as big as the representation of this age-cohort in the whole population (19%), whereas adults over 59 years of age have over four times higher a representation in the general population (19%) than they do amongst the Roma population (4.5%). One study carried out in the late 1980s found, in a single village in Pest County, that Gypsy men had an average life span 12.5 years shorter, and Gypsy women 11.5 years shorter, than the non-Gypsy inhabitants of the same community. A book by Zoltán Szirtesi, district medical officer for the area of Szeged that includes the Gypsy colony of Kiskundorozsma, and himself of Roma descent, confirmed published data which show that mortality amongst Roma reaches a peak between the ages of thirty and fifty years, with women suffering from much higher mortality and morbidity than the men. The prime causes for this, his figures indicate, are diseases of the heart and circulatory system.

Many who have commented on the dismal picture painted by these statistics account for them by reference to the precarious economic situation that Hungary has been facing, which imposed unfavourable conditions on the entire population both before and after the change in régime. British and American researchers have shown, however, that the mortality rates for developed countries are not correlated with GDP but with inequalities within society; in other words, it is not the absolute size of the economy so much as economic disparities within a society that are the best indicators for health status. The strong correlation of worsening health with lower socio-economic status holds true even after allowance is made for the traditional risk factors of smoking, obesity and sedentary lifestyle.

Morbidity

Health statistics for Hungary as a whole, let alone its Gypsy population, suffer from a fundamental lack of reliable data for disease incidence. Survey data collected in Baranya County in 1978 and in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County in the late 1990s, however, permit one to conclude that undiagnosed illnesses are likely to run at a high level amongst the Gypsies since they are under-represented in relation to their numbers as far as picking up problems through routine screenings and check-ups is concerned.

What the available data (see Table 5.1) indicate is that infectious diseases, digestive system disorders, and especially perinatal mortality are distinctly more common amongst Gypsies than in the population at large, confirming that the Roma population is

placed at a disadvantage to the non-Roma majority in respect of its health status just as it is in relation to its social status. Though morbidity patterns are subject to constant change, the lack of more up-to-date, reliable data prevents a more detailed consideration of the matter.

It has been suggested that the commonest respiratory diseases to be found in the Roma population are emphysema and chronic bronchitis linked to the widely prevalent smoking habit. Smoking, coupled with a typically raised consumption of cheaper, high-fat foods, presumably also accounts for the conspicuously high incidence of cardiac and circulatory disorders amongst them.

Table 5.1. Main causes of death amongst the Gypsies of Baranya County in 1978

Disease group by International Classification of Diseases	Incidence per 1,000 population / Ranking			
	amongst Roma		amongst non-Roma	
I. Infectious and parasitic diseases	262	3rd	183	5th
II. Neoplasms	13	15th	16	15th
III. Endocrine, nutritional and metabolic diseases	29	14th	26	12th
IV. Blood and blood-forming organs	31	12th	21	13th
V. Mental disorders	90	11th	108	10th
VI. Nervous system and sense organs	119	9th	133	8th
VII. Circulatory system	164	6th	265	3rd
VIII. Respiratory system	800	1st	606	1st
IX. Digestive system	345	2nd	328	2nd
X. Genito-urinary system	117	10th	94	11th
XI. Complications of pregnancy, childbirth, etc.	30	13th	17	14th
XII. Skin and subcutaneous tissue	130	8th	113	8th
XIII. Musculo-skeletal system	161	7th	196	4th
XIV. Congenital abnormalities	8	16th	10	16th
XV. Certain conditions originating in the perinatal period	1	17th	3	17th
XVI. Signs, symptoms and ill-defined conditions	178	4th	140	7th
XVII. Injury and poisoning	166	5th	151	6th

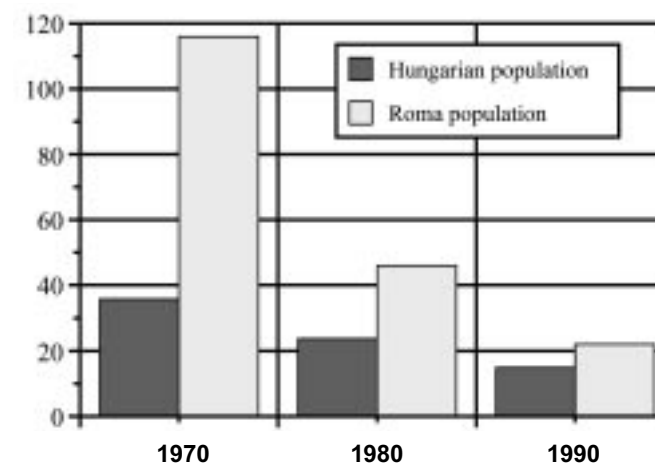
Source: Pécs University Medical School

Pregnancy, birth control, birth rate

This is the one aspect of the health status of the Roma population which has tended to come under closer scrutiny if only because of widely expressed fears on the part of the dominant majority over many decades that the higher birth-rate seen amongst Gypsies (and implicit here are the usual stereotypes which link fecundity with irresponsible parenting, lack of family planning and sexual promiscuity) will eventually result in the country becoming swamped by Gypsies. Sheer prejudice has much more bearing on this than any respect for the real facts.

As far as genuine experts are concerned, by far the most worrying problem in the Roma population is the high rate of infant mortality that it displays (see Figure 5.1), and particularly the levels of perinatal deaths (i.e. deaths up to the age of six months).

Figure 5.1. Changes in infant mortality (per thousand) for the Hungarian population as a whole, and for Roma infants specifically, between 1970 and 1990.



Source: National Institute for Family and Social Policy

Even in 1990 infant mortality in the Gypsy population was still running at 30% above the national average, with the unusually young age of Roma mothers, smoking during pregnancy, and living standards in their communities being the factors likely to play a prominent role in this. A history of stillbirth, induced and spontaneous miscarriage in earlier pregnancies are all significant additional risk factors. One study conducted in Szabolcs-Szatmár County at the beginning of the 1980s concluded that a predisposition of this kind could be established twice as often in pregnancies of Gypsy women as non-Gypsy women. The same study also showed that the body-weight of Gypsy women at time of childbirth was 3.3 kg lower (and in the case of smokers 4 kg lower) than that of non-Gypsy mothers. The finding that Gypsy mothers living in Roma colonies had a body-weight 2.1 kg lower than Gypsy mothers not living in such colonies is one index of the influence of living conditions, since low maternal body-weight is associated with a higher likelihood of the neonate being underweight, shorter and have a smaller cranial circumference. In this study 63% of the pregnant women were smokers, 48% lived in insanitary colonies or under conditions “equivalent to those in a colony”, and malnutrition of mothers-to-be during their own childhood was a predictor of poorer reproductive outcomes.

Thus what little research has been done points quite unequivocally to the bulk of problems being ascribable to the conditions in which pregnant Gypsy women live and the standards of their care. It is not the job of a health service to improve living conditions, but Hungary’s network of health institutions have yet to devise a form of care delivery that

takes proper account of the special needs of the Gypsy women who make up an already large and ever-increasing fraction of mothers giving birth in Hungary. That would have a significant impact on the present adverse situation.

Nutrition

Adequate nutrition is a fundamental aspect of every individual's mode of life and a prime determinant of health status. In the civilised modern world, the major issue is no longer the quantity of food intake but its quality: the proportions of fats, vitamins, carbohydrates, minerals, vegetable fibre and animal proteins in the diet and the frequency of meals and snacks. For a significant segment of Hungary's Gypsy populace, however, even at the beginning of the twenty-first century, an adequate intake of food is still not guaranteed, nor does anyone have much idea of the magnitude of the problem of undernourishment amongst them. It should give pause for thought, though, that in a 1991-92 survey carried out by the Ministry of Public Welfare, among the 774 Roma households in northern Hungarian which made up the study sample, the per capita income in 7% of the families was less than HUF 1,000 (roughly US\$4.00) per month, and for 90% of the families it was below what was then considered the minimum required to sustain life.

This suggests that the Roma population have a different attitude to eating and food than the rest of society: whilst they are well aware of the basic principles of healthy nutrition, they do not adhere to them because they cannot afford to do so. Although many Gypsy children are overweight and obese, that is not a consequence of material comfort; on the contrary, it is because they fail to receive the diet appropriate for their age and instead consume cheap, unhealthy foods with a high content of fats and carbohydrates.

Effects of environmental pollution and workplace hazards

A majority of Hungary's Gypsies live in areas that present an environmental threat to health, above all in the northern and north-eastern parts of the country, where the extensive heavy industrialisation of the immediate post-war decades has caused the most environmental damage. Those living in more or less segregated colonies are the most intensively exposed of all. The sight of Roma who dwell in "Gypsy rows" besides refuse tips, open-cast mines or other health hazards and scavenge for a living on refuse tips and abandoned industrial sites is almost as accustomed a part of the landscape as the poles of draw-wells used to be in the countryside of old. The revival of certain traditional Roma modes of survival, in particular the recycling of items discarded as useless by the rest of society, during the years since the change in régime carries with it serious risks for the health of those engaging in such activities.

Research has shown that a Roma whose health becomes impaired in the workplace is forced into a predicament that is hard to escape. The insalubrious circumstances at work

make the employee ill, so he is then either placed on sickness benefit or fired, but in either case is now in a worse financial situation, which in turn diminishes any chances of recovery. With the national health service itself in such grim financial straits, the social welfare system is unable to halt the patient's slide into growing poverty and, as a result, within a few years the individual is found at the very bottom of the social hierarchy.

Attitudes to health and access to care

A study by György Gyukits in Miskolc has shown convincingly that the Roma will only seek medical attention if forced to do so by either pain or fever (the two aspects of illness that people generally find the hardest to endure); any other signs or symptoms are subordinate to these. One corollary of this is that they will only exceptionally take active steps to protect their health and prevent disease.

The extent to which the Roma are fearful of health institutions is a fraught question. Work by Mária Neményi led her to conclude that the divergence of the Roma world from that of the public health system at present amounts to a gulf that precludes smooth and effective communication between the two. Gyukits' investigations suggest that when they live in small rural communities, as the bulk of them do, the Roma tend to build up mutually cooperative relations with their local general practitioners precisely because such interdependence is in their common interest, but conflicts between doctor and patient are the general order of the day when it comes to hospital or specialist care.

The progressive narrowing of the state's willingness to underwrite most of the costs of prescription medicines over the past decade, along with a dwindling of the support that was once available from local government, has had an extremely adverse impact on Roma communities. Since the costs of medicines often represent a huge burden, "self-treatment" is becoming increasingly common. With "tipping" of medical staff by now a long-entrenched feature of the country's health care system, financially hard-pressed Gypsies are simply not in a position to purchase the means to proper treatment of any illness.

People who are familiar with the health care field point out that it too is not free of overt and deliberate discrimination against Gypsies. Mária Neményi goes so far to assert that the kind of stereotyping which is the breeding-ground for discrimination is, indeed, one of the defining features of the relations that health authorities have with their Roma clients. The antagonism to such attitudes that the Roma themselves feel, and often express verbally, is perceived by substantial numbers of those on the health care delivery side as an attack on the dominant society, and dismissed as a manifestation of an unjustified, presumptuous and irritating sense of self-importance on the part of the Gypsies. It is almost an article of faith in the health care sector that the Roma population are more prone to complain about their doctors and to instigate malpractice suits. The reality uncovered by research, however, demonstrates precisely the opposite: Gypsies hardly ever resort to law in order to obtain redress for grievance about the treatment they have received.

6. RIGHTS AND PROTECTION OF RIGHTS

Virtually all legislation currently in force, from the Constitution of the Republic of Hungary and on through the codes of civil, criminal and labour law, makes specific provisions to proscribe discrimination. The country was a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, many of whose articles expressly forbid discrimination, as long ago as 1976, and since the change in régime, a growing number of such international conventions relating to human and minority rights have been incorporated into domestic law, along with their interdictions on unfairly discriminatory practices. The reality of implementing these various measures, however, cannot be said to be unproblematic.

Article 8 (1) of the Constitution states: “The Republic of Hungary recognises the inviolable and inalienable fundamental rights of man, the respect and safeguarding of which are the primary responsibility of the state.” The article which governs the prohibition on discrimination – §70/A (1) and (2) – can be found in Section XII, which details the fundamental rights and responsibilities: “The Republic of Hungary guarantees the human and civil rights of all persons resident on its territory without distinction, namely discrimination on grounds of race, colour, gender, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, financial standing, birth or other position”, whilst “any unfair discrimination under the terms of paragraph (1) is subject to severe penalty under law”.

The basic constitutional right framed in §70/A (1) is translated into everyday practice by a range of lower-level legislation and statutory provisions. In the Civil Code (Law IV/1959), §75 states that it is binding on every person to respect individual rights, and those rights are protected by law, whilst §76 sets out what the legislation regards as a violation of individual rights. In each and every breach, depending on the seriousness of the violation, the law imposes various sanctions: it can order a judicial declaration that a violation has occurred; require that the infraction cease and forbid the violating party from any further infractions; demand satisfaction in the form of a written declaration; order that a situation in which a violation has arisen be terminated or restored to the *status ante quo*, as well as requiring redress of damages. In other words, the means exist by which a complainant can seek amends for any injury that may be suffered on account of his or her origins. In practice, however, it is extremely hard to produce clear evidence of such discrimination since it is not usually overt. In civil law the burden of proving the facts of a case lies on the side of the party in whose interest it is to obtain the court’s acceptance of those facts. It is markedly more difficult to supply such proof in cases of tacit discrimination since, by its nature, this leaves no witnesses or documentary evidence, and for that very reason there is a need to allow alternative or ancillary approaches that are better designed to uncover undeclared motives.

A separate section of the Criminal Code (Law IV/1978), as since amended, likewise contains specific provisions against discrimination. Thus, under §174/B “Anyone

who assaults another person on account of that person’s known or supposed national, ethnic, racial or religious affiliation, or who compels another by force or threat to do, not do or tolerate something on that account, “ is held to be committing an act of violence against a member of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.

The legislation as amended from July 15th, 1996 directs that racially motivated acts shall be penalised as a separate offence, because prior to that date penalties for such acts could only be handed down on the basis of conviction for some other offence (e.g. common assault, grievous bodily harm, etc.). This new provision was intended to overcome at least some of the pitfalls of prosecuting under the old article; however, even as now amended it is not without problems as difficulties with proving such charges are encountered here too. It is quite often the case that the origins and statements of an injured party give reasonable grounds for concluding that an offence has indeed been committed under §174/B of the Criminal Code but it is impossible to prove this for lack of witnesses or other material evidence. It hardly helps that neither the investigating authorities (police and public prosecution service) nor the judiciary or even the complainants’ own legal representatives are usually equipped with any special expertise in handling human rights case. In the end, then, it comes back to bringing prosecutions on charges of common assault, grievous bodily harm, etc.

Amongst the offences against public order that are covered by the Criminal Code is that of fomenting communal hatred (§269), point b) of which likewise directs that a person who “publicly incites hatred against any national, ethnic, racial or religious group or against particular groups of inhabitants” shall be penalised. Prosecutors have an easier task in such cases inasmuch as an offence takes place only if the incitement is committed in public (e.g. in a television broadcast, a demonstration, etc.). However, determining precisely what verbal or other manifestations can be said to incite hatred is a matter of judicial discretion. Under the accepted interpretation of the article, what counts as incitement is conduct which seeks, not through logical argumentation but through fundamentally negative emotive appeal, to bring influence to bear on others with a view to influencing their thinking or behaviour, arousing antagonistic beliefs, and encouraging them to act accordingly. Establishing that in court, however, is again far from a simple matter. Proof that a criminal offence has been committed requires that hatred is shown to have been aroused against the group or groups specified in the charge and that this prompted or actuated some form of activity that was manifested as hatred.

To give one example, statements made by the mayor of Zámoly and an elderly female villager in the course of the previously mentioned controversy over the housing of a group of Roma families (see pages 58-60) were deemed by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Minority Rights to qualify as incitement. The ORTT, what is more, imposed sanctions on a television news programme which had broadcast these statements in its prime-time bulletin. However, no criminal proceedings were instigated against the two people who had actually made the statements, even though the criminal offence of incit-

ing anti-communal hatred can be prosecuted if it comes to attention of the investigating authorities, even without any complaint being lodged. In this case no action was taken.

Hungary's civil, criminal and administrative rules of procedure, as well as law relating to summary offences all stipulate that those appearing in proceedings have a basic right to use their native language. No person involved in legal proceedings must be placed at a disadvantage through failure to understand the Hungarian language; anyone is free to use his or her native tongue, and in criminal proceedings a defence counsel is obligatory in any instance where the accused is not familiar with Hungarian. Thus the constraint on discrimination in proceedings before any authority, be that the police, the public prosecution service, a court or an organ of state administration, is fulfilled in part by requiring that everyone should be treated as equal before the law, and any individual is fully entitled to use his or her native language. That alone is insufficient since an effective legal provision against unfair discrimination, even at the level of rules of procedure, has to go further than merely a declaration of freedom to use one's mother tongue.

During the 1990s various organisations have been established in Hungary that concern themselves with civil rights protection, including protection of Roma rights. Amongst these are some bodies that concentrate exclusively on civil rights issues and others which are concerned primarily with protecting Roma interests or providing legal advice but do also take on civil rights cases. With one small exception, no forms of state or parliamentary aid have emerged to fund such bodies; in its absence, those organisations which are involved in protecting rights are reduced to applying for grants to foreign foundations, with their yearly application and accounting cycles. It is unacceptable that the sole state funding in this area is the tiny annual sum that is distributed via the Public Foundation for Hungarian Gypsies since it is unarguably part of the state's responsibilities to promote and ensure a society free of discrimination. If anyone violates that principle and the state does nothing to intervene and stop the infraction, then the injured party has to do it himself or herself – in opposition to the state, if need be. Any organisation which, through its activities as a defender of legal rights, helps to ensure that the law of the land is upheld ought to receive active support, since those activities are merely seeking to enforce the state's avowed responsibility.

A related point is the need to shape the present statutory provisions and environment in order to give civil rights defence organisations proper legal standing and representation. Hungary currently lacks any such provisions. To put it starkly: rights organisations are debarred at present from being party, as organisations, to any criminal or other proceedings in law. All they can do is request an attorney to take on a case – for a fee that will be far below the going market rate – on an injured party's behalf; the actual authorisation to represent the case in court must come from the party in question, however, as this is the only legally recognised form of representation.

One of the tasks that rights defence organisations take on is that of providing support in criminal cases where offences have been committed against Roma individuals, and

here additional problems can arise in relation to the rules governing the representation of injured parties. An injured party can seek legal redress by filing a complaint in cases where the authorities refuse to investigate, or suspend or close an investigation into a case, but should that complaint be rejected then the avenues open to the injured party are exhausted, beyond suggesting to the judicial branch questions that might be raised and making a statement after the public prosecutor. The injured party has no right to appeal and is excluded from the list of those who are permitted to move for an exceptional remedy (i.e. a retrial or case review); as a result, the party can only take note of a sentence passed in a court of the first instance. In cases where the injured party has died there is not even a right to legal representation on his or her behalf; except in civil law cases, the injured party's dependants lose that right under current rules of procedure.

The Labour Code (Law XXII/1992), under §5 (1), expressly forbids unfair discrimination in the following terms: "In respect to employment, it is forbidden to apply unfair discrimination amongst employees on grounds of their gender, age, nationality, race, origins, religion, their political convictions, their affiliation to any organisation which represents employees' interests, or activity related to such an organisation, or any other circumstance that is unrelated to their employment." An important new feature of the regulations is that in any case where a dispute arises over the prohibition on unfair discrimination, the burden is placed on the employer to prove that his actions did not infringe the law. Judicial practice is also consistent in that the above-cited provision also covers any discussions that took place prior to a party entering into employment, in other words, it also extends to applicants for a post. That having been said, however, it should also be pointed out that no case of this kind has so far been heard since the Labour Code came into force, so that the tribunals in question have no case-history to fall back on. There are few enough such instances where law furnishes the opportunity to shift the burden of proof onto the defendant that this lack of experience merely adds to the difficulties that may be foreseen in adopting such an approach. There is nothing left but to return to the more traditional procedure of requiring the complainant to prove that he or she has been discriminated against due to his or her origins, etc., but that again runs into the same problems as before when it comes to supplying proof of an offence. For instance, interviews with job applicants, by their nature, are not held in public and, unless there is a flagrant case of abuse, employers are able to reject applicants whom they do not wish to hire without revealing that this may be for discriminatory reasons (e.g. by claiming a post has already been filled, etc.). Such tacit discrimination is again very difficult to uncover, particularly when, in a free-market economy, it is ultimately the employer's right to offer a job to whomsoever he deems most suitable for the post. Against that, of course, society cannot tolerate that an employer may reject any applicant simply on the grounds that he or she has the "wrong" skin colour or gender, etc.

Employees with grievances also have the option, apart from the courts, of taking their case to Hungary's Labour Inspectorate. Under §3(1)d) of Law LXXXV/1996, inspec-

tion of the workplace extends to policing the ban on unfair discriminatory practices. One problem that has arisen, however, is that inspectors can only investigate these in relation to cases where there is an existing employment contract; they have no power to check unlawful denial of employment to applicants for jobs, though it is more typically this latter type of discrimination from which the Roma suffer.

As a final example, an explicit proscription on unfair discrimination is also incorporated into §2 of the general provisions of the legislation that governs the promotion of employment and unemployment benefits (Law IV/1991), with the rider that this does not exclude the possibility of paying supplementary entitlements to those who are disadvantaged in the labour market. Such supplementary entitlements typically take the form of jobs on public works programmes and the increasingly widespread communal welfare projects that are organised by labour exchanges. Though these can provide a temporary remedy for some of the drawbacks associated with long-term unemployment, they are unable to address the problems that stem from the poor educational background of much of the Roma population.

Possibly the most important instrument in bestowing effective legal protections on Hungary's minorities is the National and Ethnic Minorities Act (Law LXXVII/1993). To be considered a minority under the Act, an ethnic group must have been indigenous to the present territory of the Republic of Hungary for at least one century and its members must be Hungarian citizens yet differ in language, culture and customs from the rest of the population and constitute a numerical minority of inhabitants of the state. By defining the concept of a minority in these terms, the Act has taken current international standards into account and is in line with Council of Europe Recommendation 1201(1993). Under §3 of the Act, minorities have a share in the power of the people and are factors in the state formation; they have the fundamental right, furthermore, to exist and maintain their existence as a national or ethnic community. The Act prohibits unfair discrimination as well as any policy which is aimed at, or would result in, forced assimilation of a minority, or which persecutes, impairs the living conditions or restricts the exercise of rights of any individual belonging to a minority on account of that affiliation.

The detailed regulations governing individual rights are contained in Section 2 of the Act, those governing collective rights in Section 3. The members of a minority have an inalienable right to avow their affiliation to that minority but cannot be obliged to do so. Members of a recognised minority have the right to establish associations to promote and protect their interests, their own political parties and other social organisations. They can choose whatever form of forename they wish for themselves and their children, and they have the right for the forename and surname to be entered into the register of births in accordance with the conventions of their native language. All individuals of a minority also have the right to learn about the minority's language, culture and traditions, and to receive education in their native tongue and culture. Communally, a minority has the right to preserve, cultivate, strengthen and pass on its sense of self-identity, as well as to culti-

vate, develop, preserve and propagate its traditions and language, which includes education in the mother tongue, the production and broadcasting of regular programmes for the minority on public radio and television channels, and publication of their own newspapers.

The legislation in respect of collective rights includes provisions for minorities to form their own self-governments, with every minority having the right to form such institutions at both local and national level for the purpose of representing and protecting the interests of the minority. Funding for the operation of minority self-governments is covered in part from the state's central budget, with the possibility of contributions from self-governments at the municipality or county level. Whether or not a local self-government for the wider population is able to provide assistance to a minority self-government at the settlement level depends on its finances. Apart from these sources, minority self-governments can seek funding for their activities from their own revenues, funds from grant-giving bodies and other organisations, the proceeds of any property placed at their disposal and bequests. In principle, then, the finances needed to meet operating costs can be obtained from a variety of sources; the realities, however, are very different. In the 1998 local government elections substantially more minority self-governments were formed than at the previous round of elections. Whereas the mainstream self-governments had, as a rule, previously given subventions to the operating costs of all local minority self-governments within their boundaries, they were now unable to continue such support for the expanded numbers and, as a result, the minorities in many settlements found that finance from this source dried up. The subvention from the central budget, which is the only guaranteed source of funding, is insufficient in itself to cover all costs, whilst the other forms of assistance are not dependable since most of them are granted on a competitive basis. This hits the Gypsies especially hard since they are the one minority that has no homeland to which they might turn for moral and financial assistance. If minority self-government is to operate in any effective manner, it is certainly necessary that a higher level of subvention is provided from either central or local government budgets. At the same, there needs to be a tightening of legal controls over the management of such funds to ensure that corrupt practices are picked up and stamped out. Without such an overhaul the law on minority rights will be a dead letter and will be unable to live up to the hopes that are attached to it.

A further key instrument in the battle to overcome unfair discrimination and protect minority rights is the creation of the office of Parliamentary Commissioner – or Ombudsman – for Minority Rights which is provided for under the 1993 National and Ethnic Minority Rights Act. The Ombudsman, who is empowered to act in all matters that fall under the purview of the Act, is appointed by parliamentary approval of a candidate nominated by the President of the Republic, who is required by law to canvas the views of the national self-governments of the various minorities before putting any name forward as a candidate.

To return to the various areas of individual rights, essentially all regulations, from health care, through child protection to broadcasting, contain provisions that explicitly forbid any form of unfair discrimination. How well these principles translate into practice is

hard to determine, though it has to be noted that in cases where discrimination is claimed to have occurred, the only remedy that can be pursued is a claim in civil law that the complainant's individual rights have been infringed.

In summary, both Hungary's domestic legislation and the international conventions to which Hungary is a signatory contain plentiful provisions that aim to prevent unfair discrimination, yet difficulties are encountered in implementing these fully because it is sometimes far from simple to prove that an infringement has occurred. Experience has also shown that the courts themselves may have difficulty in understanding the true facts of a case. For these reasons, there is a need for legislation that subsumes all forms of discrimination within a single, unified framework. Furthermore, effective sanctions need to be attached to breaches of such a law, with the courts being empowered to insist on the sanctions being applied. As matters currently stand, deficiencies in the way provisions of rights are formulated, as well as in the institutional system and procedures that are intended to oversee those rights, are leading – or threaten to lead – to a growing number of cases of discrimination in which the complainants do not obtain remedy at all, or do so only with huge difficulty. This assumes particular importance when it is borne in mind that certain individual cases in Hungary, such as the aforementioned incident involving the Gypsies of Zámoly, are now gaining publicity in other European countries. Even though the Ombudsman's own investigation confirmed that the claimed infringement of rights had indeed occurred, the failure to provide any redress left the complainants feeling they had no option but to take the case to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The mere fact that such cases are occurring should be seen as a sign that the country's human rights legislation is not operating satisfactorily, and that implementation of current statutory provisions is both deficient and cumbersome.

A possible outcome of ethnic conflict in Hungary: the incidents at Zámoly⁵

Around the time of the change of régime in Hungary, a Roma woman from the village of Csór, 10 km west of the city of Székesfehérvár in Fejér County, purchased a house for herself in the municipality of Zámoly, 15 km north of the city; later on her children and grandchildren moved into the houses next door. The dwellings had all been owned by the local council and were in poor state of repair, so that after two of them suffered storm damage in October 1997 there was a threat that the roof would collapse. Officials from the Zámoly self-government disputed the ownership of the buildings and, with reference to their hazardous condition, ordered the Roma families to take up temporary accommodation in the local cultural centre. It then demolished the dwellings with the declared intention of using the site to set up an industrial business park.

⁵ This case outline is based on the fact-finding work of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation and the published report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Minority Rights.

An investigation launched by Jeno Kaltenbach, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Minority Rights, on receiving a complaint about this handling, found that Zámoly's self-government had indeed infringed the law in the manner and speed with which the demolition order had been given and executed, and moreover advised that criminal proceedings should be instituted against the mayor and local notary. The public prosecution service, however, rejected that advice. The District Development Council of Fejér County made promises of financial assistance to resolve the issue, but instead of applying for a grant from the Council the municipality chose to put pressure on the Roma families to leave the village. At this juncture, Flórián Farkas, President of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (NGMSG), announced that this body would purchase the land-plot and construct new houses for the hapless Roma victims. Unfortunately, this intervention had the effect of relieving the local self-government, which was indisputably responsible for the problem arising in the first place, from further responsibility, and added an explicit ethnic angle to what until then could be treated as a case of abuse of powers and dereliction of duties towards the disadvantaged by the local authority.

The Roma families in question, having been unlawfully evicted from their homes, meanwhile had no option but to make use of the single 80 square-metres hall of the Zámoly cultural centre as their living quarters. With construction of the dwellings getting under way, and now finding themselves under national scrutiny, many inhabitants of the village by now strongly resented the presence of these families. On a number of occasions attempts were made to terrorise them, by smashing windows of the cultural centre and other means, so as to induce them to leave the area. On top of that, the Zámoly self-government claimed to have obtained a court order requiring the families to vacate the cultural centre. In a bid to prevent further escalation of the dispute, the NGMSG arranged for its by now desperate victims to move into its own cultural centre in Budapest, in response to which the Zámoly self-government demanded that the departing families give official notice of their intention to leave the municipality as it was unwilling to continue paying out the social and family benefits to which they were entitled.

Some time later, in order to speed up the pace of house construction by contributing their own labour, the families moved back to Zámoly into temporary wooden cabins erected on the building site. The local mood against them was now extremely hostile. In August 1999, following an exchange of words at a local place of amusement, three young men from the neighbouring town of Csákvár turned up that night at the building site, according to some statements armed with baseball bats and knuckle-dusters and with obvious intent to threaten the Roma families. An affray developed in which one of the Csákvár group received a fatal injury. A country-wide wave of anti-Roma sentiment was whipped up over the death, in no small measure due to biased reporting of the incident by the press and its failure to mention the events that had led up to it. Again forced to take refuge in the capital, the Roma families were then victims of an attack by a group of rowdies in Budapest.

In the meantime, two young men from Csákvár who were planning a revenge attack were arrested by national security forces on charges of illegal possession of weapons and explosives.

With events having taken this course, the Roma families at the centre of the disputes no longer dared move into the dwellings which had in the meantime finally been completed as they could obtain no assurances that their persons and property would be safeguarded. Instead they chose to retreat for a while to a house in their former community of Csór, but in the growing climate of hostility towards Gypsies they no longer felt safe anywhere in Hungary. In this plight, they felt that the only avenue left for them to obtain protection, personal security and justice was to resort to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

It would be wrong, in the light of the above outline of this case, to conclude that the majority of Hungary's Roma population are now subject to direct, institutionalised political persecution. Nevertheless the Zámoly events provide a telling example of what can happen when suitable mechanisms are lacking for satisfactorily resolving local social conflicts. Such problems instantly acquire an ethnic dimension which all too easily spills over into anti-Roma sentiment. A further lesson to be drawn is that the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government should not have allowed itself to assume responsibilities that in practice release the state and local government from their obligations to defend the fundamental rights of all citizens to a life in which their human dignity and personal safety are respected. As a final comment, were the above case to result in the Zámoly Roma families leaving the country altogether, that might be seen by Hungary's Roma community as a signal for mass emigration. Not only would such a development not be countenanced by the member states of the European Union under any circumstances, it would be bound to gravely compromise Hungary's efforts to gain admittance to the Union.

7. MEDIA

The Roma community of Hungary is nowadays beset by a massive and widespread degree of prejudice which is gaining continual ground in everyday discourse. Researches that Guy Lázár has been pursuing for several decades demonstrate that this prejudice has assumed such dimensions that it also plays a significant part in the communications processes that shape public opinion. Crucial to the likely success of any efforts the government may choose to make to combat this is investigation of the extent to which anti-Roma prejudices are reinforced by the picture of this community that is presented in media serving Hungary's majority population, which, even when it is not along the deliberately slanted or racist lines of certain portrayals, at any event panders to the majority's stereotypes.⁶

Typical portrayals in Hungary's dominant majority media

Analyses of the contents of articles from media serving the country's dominant majority with respect to their image of the Roma shows that they present the Roma in a far more stridently questionable light than was the practice in the past. During 1997 the press published an article of this nature on average every two or three days, with two-thirds of all articles dealing with Hungary's minorities being concerned with the Roma, and such articles being on average twice the length of articles dealing with other minorities. It is not just isolated overtly inflammatory portraits in the media but the overall picture that emerges from the totality of reports which can serve to reinforce the dominant majority's stereotypes about the Roma. It is a matter of ascertainable fact that ethnic labelling is highly prevalent when it comes to portrayals of the Roma in the press, and it is common for any Roma directly affected in a given matter not even to have their views sought.

It is evident from Table 7.1 that the press concentrated the attention it gave to the Roma population under four main topics: inter-communal strife, crime, cultural issues, and poverty. Fully one-quarter of the articles concerned local conflicts between Roma and the dominant community and an equal proportion crime connected with the Roma. Nothing characterises the biased coverage of the Roma in the press so unequivocally as the routine manner in which they were mentioned in connection with crime reporting up to 1997: with

⁶ The analyses and interviews referred to in the following sections are taken from a study carried out by Gábor Bernáth and Vera Messing. The study comprised an analysis of all published articles dealing with Hungarian minorities that appeared in the 12-months period from November 1996 to October 1997 in two national daily newspaper titles (*Népszabadság*, *Mai Nap*) and four provincial daily titles (*Hajdú-Bihari Napló*, *Dél-Magyarország*, *Észak-Magyarország*, *Kisalföld*). Interviews were also conducted with 19 leaders of Roma organisations and institutions, or editors of minority media, 12 editors from media of the dominant majority community, as well as the producers of the two TV current affairs programmes with the biggest viewing figures, and an executive each from the two biggest advertising agencies in the country. For a full report on the findings, see: Gábor Bernáth & Vera Messing: "vágóképként, csak némában" – Romák a magyarországi médiában ["Like a freeze-frame, only silent": the Roma in Hungary's Media]. Budapest: Office for National and Ethnic Minorities. 1998.

no other minority except the Roma was the ethnic affiliation of an alleged offender ever printed. The change which has occurred since then is that the Parliamentary Commissioner for Minority Rights ruled in 1997 that publicising a person's ethnic affiliations is unlawful under both the Data Protection and the National and Ethnic Minority Rights Acts.

Table 7.1. Number and subject-matter of newspaper articles dealing with minorities

Subject-matter	No. of articles		Proportion	
	Roma	National minorities	Roma	National minorities
Activities of Roma political organisations, and minority self-governments	58	37	11%	19%
Government policies, financial aid	89	38	18%	20%
Legal issues, minority rights	83	11	16%	5%
General background	53	21	11%	11%
Social issues/poverty	101	0	20%	0%
Employment	19	0	4%	0%
Enterprise, wealth	8	0	2%	0%
Culture	110	109	21%	56%
Education	72	52	14%	27%
Media	13	0	3%	0%
Health	7	0	1%	0%
Crime	129	0	25%	0%
Inter-ethnic conflicts	126	1	25%	1%
Topics with foreign affairs angle	11	28	2%	14%
Other topics	48	15	9%	8%
Total no. of articles	508	196		

(N.B. Since a single article may raise topics under several headings, the sum of the numbers given for the individual topics is greater than the number of articles examined.)

More than one-fifth of the articles that appeared in the press of the dominant majority during the period under study were reporting on some aspect relating to Roma culture. At first sight that may seem to be a fairly strong showing, but closer analysis shows that the largest group of articles were actually rather brief pieces about cultural events, mostly reports on exhibitions, concerts, or dance group performances, though another substantial group was made up of profiles on individual artists, which are the prime means by which the Hungarian press considers it can offer positive models to its readership in the majority and Roma communities.

For all that, the media image of Hungary's Roma community is dominated by its coverage of their disadvantaged social situation. Here it should be noted that the subject of poverty amongst the Roma also forms a large part of the reporting that deals with government and other measures. Conversely, in the entire one-year sample not one article so much as mentioned a thriving Roma enterprise, and a near-negligible number were articles that reported on ways in which the Roma themselves were actively trying to take responsibility for their own fate.

Roma roles linked to cited individuals

No more than one-quarter of all Roma individuals named by articles in the sample were quoted directly; in all other cases opinions were only relayed to readers *indirectly*, as interpreted by others. This serves to reinforce their treatment as a homogeneous group, which is a first step in the process of forming stereotypes and prejudices.

Table 7.2. Roles of cited Roma individuals according to whether their opinion was quoted directly or interpreted at second hand

Theme	Direct quote, opinion sought	Not quoted, opinion not sought	Total
Rights, political	56 (42%)	78 (58%)	134 (26%)
Minority self-government	35 (29%)	87 (71%)	122 (24%)
Culture, art	39 (43%)	51 (57%)	90 (18%)
Civic	21 (44%)	27 (56%)	48 (9%)
Economic	0	1	1
Crime-related	13 (14%)	80 (86%)	93 (18%)
Gypsies in general	35 (12%)	269 (88%)	304 (60%)
Other	5 (22%)	18 (78%)	23 (5%)
Total	204 (25%)	611 (75%)	815

Reports relating to local conflicts (66%), social issues (54%) and economic subjects (79%) typically presented the Roma as passively involved; they were portrayed as taking an active role only in articles dealing with their political activities and self-governance (78%) or with cultural events (70%), leaving the impression that these are the only spheres in which they engage positively. Close to two-thirds of all articles mentioning the Roma populace concerned reports of conflicts, with the story being characterised as a clash between them and the dominant Hungarian community in nine cases out of ten. In fewer than one-quarter of the articles on such conflicts were those in the minority community quoted directly.

The Roma media

Compared with other countries in the region, Hungary can boast a diverse and extensive Roma media sector. Four or five journal titles are published on a more or less regular basis, whilst a Roma Press Centre has been operating since 1995 and achieved considerable success in getting stories placed in newspapers of the country's mainstream press. There are weekly Roma programmes on the public service Hungarian Television and Hungarian Radio channels and also regular slots at some ten provincial television and radio stations, whilst one group has been waiting for several years, in vain, to be allocated a radio frequency in order to start broadcasting a Roma service to be named Radio C. Alongside this, general observation and what scanty research has been done suggest that key items of information do not penetrate to a significant proportion of Hungary's Roma communities.

Based on circulation figures reported in 1997, of the Roma journals *Amaro Drom* was purchased by 0.26% of the country's Roma populace, *Lungo Drom* by 0.3%, and the now defunct *Phralipe* by 0.07%. The fact that much the same is true for the readerships of most of the journals published by other Hungarian minority communities is little comfort. The 'Roma Magazin' (formerly 'Patrin Magazin') slot on Hungarian Television and especially the 'Gypsy Half-Hour' programme on Hungarian Radio attract much bigger audiences: the viewer figures for 'Patrin Magazin' during 1997 ranged from 20,000 to 240,000, whilst 'Gypsy Half-Hour' attracted a more stable weekly listenership of 170,000-330,000.

Table 7.3. *Story selection in the minority and majority press: the image of the Roma presented to the majority community as compared with an analysis of the Roma press itself*

	Phralipe	Lungo Drom	Amaro Drom	Roma press, as % of all articles	Majority press, as % of all articles on Roma topics
Activities of Roma organisations and minority self-governments	82	51	56	51%	11%
Government policies	24	10	12	12%	18%
Right issues	1	6	21	8%	16%
Roma history	6	7	11	7%	1%
Social issues	11	31	13	15%	20%
Employment	10	26	12	13%	4%
Enterprise, wealth	6	24	18	13%	2%
Culture	5	41	31	21%	21%
Education	16	35	9	16%	14%
Media	4	10	8	6%	3%
Health	0	4	1	1%	1%
Crime	4	5	9	5%	25%
Inter-ethnic conflicts	15	10	12	10%	25%
Cases of discrimination	21	13	43	21%	
Foreign affairs angle	9	13	17	11%	2%
Majority community topics	1	5	0	2%	
Other topics	2	7	4	3%	9%
Total no. of articles	103	146	122		508

When comparing the relative coverage given to different types of stories by the minority and majority press (see Table 7.3), one indication of the stereotyping that is manifested in the press serving the dominant community is the substantially greater store that they set on covering government policies relating to the Roma community. By contrast, they hardly ever run articles on the history of Hungary's Roma community – a subject that is virtually unknown to the majority readership. There are also striking differences in the relative attention given to Roma entrepreneurship and crime: whereas fully one-quarter of all articles in the majority press touched on crime, that was so for no more than 5% of the coverage in Roma journals.

As a further point, it has to be noted how “market realities” play little or no role in how the Roma media in Hungary operate, though it is by no means obvious that this should be the case, even if one takes into account the fact that these media are satisfying a “niche” demand and its audience in general is in a desperate economic plight.

Media image and majority prejudices

It has been well documented by various studies of prejudice that the mass media play an important role in disseminating negative attitudes towards the Roma population. In examining the image of the Roma in the media serving Hungary's dominant majority, one has to ask whether those media actively contribute to keeping the majority community's stereotypes alive.

Guy Lázár's researches into the construction of the Hungarian sense of national identity have shown that the image that the majority society has of the Roma is strongly linked to its own self-image. The Roma are a crucially important group to that self-image insofar as they act as a negative reference point, particularly in relation to notions of diligence, honesty and sophistication of living standards. In a 1997 survey, 81% of respondents agreed with the statement “the Roma do not like work”, and 87% with “the Roma have looser morals”. In studies that he carried out in both 1987 and 1992, Guy Lázár found that around two-thirds of respondents agreed with the assertion “Gypsies will never fit into Hungarian society”, whilst a series of surveys that Gallup has carried out regularly since 1993 make it clear that since 1995 public opinion has shown little evidence of having any inhibitions about openly professing anti-Gypsy sentiments.

In that light, to re-address what has already been demonstrated in connection with the image of the Roma in the majority media, it is obvious that the predominance of criminality in that image, which has traditions stretching back for decades, if not centuries, is reinforcing deeply rooted prejudices. The heavy emphasis that reports on Roma poverty place on state assistance and institutional efforts to combat it may serve simply to intensify the sense of an unchanging gulf between those efforts and the extent and depth of the poverty. Based on the findings of the various opinion surveys, a considerable segment of the public rationalises that gulf by blaming the Roma themselves for the lack of change in their situation, imagining they are just lounging around waiting for state benefits to drop into their laps.

A further factor that has a significant bearing on this issue is the manner in which public figures address it, since the rhetoric that such figures adopt in speaking about matters relating to a minority community plays a big part in determining to what extent displays of overt prejudice are acceptable in a country. If it becomes a widely accepted feature of public discourse, and one that is tolerated by local and national government, that the issue of deprivation amongst an ethnic group, for example, can be side-stepped merely by reference – and, moreover, repeated reference – to the group's own passivity or idle-

ness, all the media have to do in order to sustain and reinforce that rhetoric is simply to report the statements made by those figures. Furthermore, public figures who elect to take this path count on the existence of widely held prejudices to ensure that their comments meet with approval rather than criticism. That said, it would be unfair not to mention signs that Hungarian newspapers are now giving an increasing amount of coverage to publicising protests against such appeals to bigotry.

For the Roma community, the 1990s were in many respects a period of intensifying residential segregation and hostile intervention by local authorities. A lengthy list could be compiled of instances where village or municipal leaders tried to rid their community of its Roma inhabitants or to prevent them moving into the area. A survey carried out by TÁRKI in 1998 provides a measure of the widespread scale of the phenomenon and the blatancy of its motives. One-third of the 3,000 local self-governments who received the questionnaire responded; of these, 43% of the officials declared that they would not allow Gypsies to move into their district, which compares with a figure of 23% who had given that response in 1997.

Once “sanctified” through being articulated by elected officials, such anti-Roma rhetoric, with its freight of majority community biases, passes into wider public discourse. To give just one example: in a letter to the January 26th, 2000 issue of the *Fejér Megyei Hírlap* [‘Fejér County News’], the mayor of Zámoly attempted to suggest that, rather than using child benefits to build their own homes, the Roma families involved in the previously mentioned dispute there – whom the local authority had, in fact, unlawfully turned out of their homes onto the streets – “ought to have been working day and night to better their own future and fortunes, but they did not do that”. Unlike the mayor himself and others, who had been able to purchase their homes out of their own pockets, the Zámoly Roma had used “their child-bearing skills” for that purpose. In late 1997 and early 1998 several villages in the county, with their mayors taking the lead, had held demonstrations to prevent Roma families from the county centre of Székesfehérvár from moving into their villages. It should not need to be stated that such public figures, and not least members of the national government, have a key role, and indeed a particular responsibility, in cultivating a climate of public debate in which racism has no place.

Essential conditions

A study completed in 1998 showed that most editorial offices in the majority media have not built up networks of contacts in the Roma community: many journalists, like the rest of the dominant society, have at best a narrow and superficial acquaintance with Roma life. A general lack of investigative reporting, and constant constraints on time and money, make it particularly difficult for the Hungarian media to present a well-rounded picture of an ethnic group whose ability to assert its own interests is equally constrained, which is trapped, often in unspeakably dire poverty, in highly segregated “ghettos” into which it is

exceptionally rare for journalists – perhaps overly accustomed to the comforts of press conferences and other media events – to venture.

One possible way of encouraging both the development of more balanced editorial policies towards minorities and the cultivation of better contacts would be to integrate more journalists from minority communities into the editorial work; however, most editors spoken with reject such an approach. Another method of building greater awareness of minorities might be to introduce a specific code of ethics relating to coverage of minority affairs in the media, but again editors feel such an approach is unnecessary as they believe it is already adequately taken care of by their existing code of professional conduct. Lastly, though, it needs to be pointed out that, in view of the prevalent economic poverty in the Roma community, there is little hope that market forces will lead in the short term to them being seen by the majority media as a consumer target group for whose sake they might need to develop new strategies.

Funding of Roma media and programmes

The Hungarian government currently provides the Roma media with substantial funding and also concessions as an integral part of minority rights legislation (this latter aspect is routine practice in most western European states). The financial assistance is distributed via the Public Foundation for National and Ethnic Minorities and, under various headings of the media section in its medium-term package of measures, via the Public Foundation for Hungarian Gypsies, on top of which there is a commitment under the 1996 Media Act to expedite compliance with commitments that have been accepted under various international accords. The bulk of the assistance of the first type goes to supporting nationally distributed minority journals, with almost negligible amounts being used, for example, to help train journalists from the minority communities.

Under the Media Act, the national public-service broadcasting media are obliged to set aside regular slots for transmitting minority programming (though there are constant complaints on the part of the minorities that these slots are allocated to times in the day when the audience is low anyway). Furthermore the National Radio and Television Commission (NRTC) initiative provides subventions (subject to annual audit by the NRTC) for programme-makers who undertake to provide such services in line with the goals of the various national, ethnic or other minorities. This was an explicit criterion in the awarding of local frequencies, with bidders who undertook to produce programming for minorities receiving preference. Despite those undertakings, however, most of the local radio and television stations in question have failed to deliver any such programmes. It underlines the weakness of the general political support enjoyed by Roma minority media, hugely influential though they would be in their own community, that plans drawn up ten years ago to introduce a Radio C station – which the European Union was willing to help fund – have been in limbo ever since due to failure to allocate a radio band.

8. CULTURE

When a people that undergoes a change in its mode of existence which entails discarding its traditional patriarchal lifestyle, and along with that the traditional culture that has been the ancestral and basic vehicle of its identity, it is natural that members of the community who are most tightly bound to those traditions will desire to preserve and transmit the values of the vanishing mode of life and culture. They feel a compelling necessity to record and pass on the tradition – the craft skills that are on the point of disappearing, the customs that attend communal enterprises and festive occasions, the tales, sayings, songs and dances of their community – in order that these should not be lost without trace as the passage of time alters and obliterates the old forms of life.

Alongside the documentary and preservationist aims, though, another, more active aspiration also asserts itself in the form of an assessment of what elements of the tradition can be drawn on, continued and embedded in the present to become a living part of the current and future culture. The chief representatives of such aspirations are intellectuals who have been awakened to a sense of their people's identity. And the desire to hand on to posterity acquired knowledge and experience is powerful in people whose childhood, youth and even adult lives were shaped by contact with the traditional mode of life.

In the case of Hungary's Gypsies disruption of the traditional forms of life, commencing in the early 1950s, took place in several stages, most intensely during the 1960s and 70s. Heavy industry swept them out of the isolation of their rural slums, forcing many to adopt an existence of shuttling to and from work as manual workers. Yet by the end of the 1960s a small group of educated Roma thinkers and, predominantly, artists had grown up who, despite the destruction of the traditional culture that was evident around them, chose to vaunt that culture and their Romani language and set about making that language more amenable to literary expression. A revival of Gypsy traditions of music and dance during the 1970s and 80s coincided with the growth of a rather similarly motivated 'dance house' movement amongst the youth of Hungary's majority society, for whom this was likewise the first opportunity to gain acquaintance with the programmes of various folk music and folk dance groups and an authentic Gypsy culture.

Hungarian ethnographers started to show serious interest in Gypsy culture at a very early date, in the closing few decades of the nineteenth century, with the then still newly founded Hungarian Ethnographic Society forming a "Gypsy Section" already in 1889. The publication of Gypsy folk poetry that the Society sponsored in its journals and books made little headway in reaching the broader Gypsy community, however, which continued to rely on its own oral culture right up to the end of World War II, and indeed only began to be concerned at all with written culture as state schooling gradually spread through the community. That can also be taken as marking when the Roma began seriously to engage with high

art, to gain a grounding in the literary, visual art and musical traditions of Hungary and Europe, and to integrate their own traditions into a wider cultural perspective.

Literature

A Romani-language written literature has only come into existence in Hungary over the last three decades. Admittedly, sporadic initiatives are known from the final decades of the nineteenth century: for instance, Ferenc Nagyidai Sztojka compiled a Romani-Hungarian dictionary and translated various prayers, song texts and several of Sándor Petőfi's poems into Romani, as well as writing poems of his own in the language. That proved to be an isolated phenomenon, however, so that the real beginnings of Roma literature in the country stem from the emergence of a handful of Gypsy intellectuals during the 1960s, with the process picking up momentum in the early 1970s, when one Roma writer after another began to appear – most of them initially choosing to write in the Hungarian language.

Two outstanding individuals were part of this sudden flowering of talent. In 1970, the then 18-year-old Károly Bari, who had written his first poems whilst still a pupil at Miskolc Gimnázium, had his first volume of poetry published under the title *Holtak arca fölé* (Above the Faces of the Dead). With his early verse showing the influences of László Nagy and Paul Éluard, Bari's exceptional talent was recognised early on by Hungarian literary critics, and he has since gone on to publish not only further volumes of his own poems but also to undertake the systematic collection and editing of Romani-language folk poetry, and the translation of Romani texts into Hungarian, as well as providing drawings to illustrate his own works and his volumes of folk poetry. The appearance of Menyhért Lakatos' first novel, *Füstös képek* (Smoky Pictures), in 1975 was a fresh literary sensation as the first work in the genre by a Roma author. The novel immerses the reader in the thick of Gypsy life through its combination of ethnographic and social authenticity with a discerning psychological portrayal of the Roma belief and dream worlds, and is rightly the most popular and best known of the writer's works, having so far been translated into 16 other languages.

Whereas Bari chose from the outset to blaze an ascetic and aesthetically rigorous trail of his own, Menyhért Lakatos has been an important figure in building contacts amongst Roma creative artists and harnessing their joint efforts, being the prime mover during the 1970s for a loose friendly quartet of himself, József Choli-Daróczi, Tamás Péli and József Kovács who comprise the first major grouping of Roma writers. From an early stage, they had to confront the burning issue of the language in which they write. Specifically, can works that are written in Hungarian properly be considered part of Roma literature, or do only those in Romani qualify? The periodically renewed debates that swirl around this question leave no doubt that language is a supremely important vehicle for a group's identity and for transmitting its culture; but that should not, and cannot, imply that works which happen to be written in Hungarian but still give an insider's view of the life and fortunes of Gypsy life somehow fail to convey the singularities of the Roma way of thinking and imag-

ination. In any case, a process of cross-fertilisation between Roma and Hungarian culture is already under way. József Choli-Daróczi, for instance, initially writes his poems in Romani but then himself translates some of these into Hungarian; conversely, he sets verse by his own favourite Hungarian poets into Romani, and thereby provides an example of a single person who expresses himself creatively in both language traditions. Gusztáv Nagy, one of Choli-Daróczi's pupils, has likewise chosen this bilingual path of creative expression, and a similar parallel use of Romani and Hungarian characterises the poetry of György Farkas-Rostás and Pál Ruva-Farkas. They and others of the second and third generation of Roma writers feel a growing need to enrich the expressive possibilities of Romani by tackling translations of great works of world literature. Examples of this kind include Gusztáv Nagy's rendering of *The Tragedy of Man* by the nineteenth-century Hungarian playwright Imre Madách, Zoltán Vescho Farkas' Romani version of *Hamlet*, and the translation by György Farkas-Rostás of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's 'fairy tale' *The Little Prince*.

The period from the mid-1970s right up to the present day has seen a whole series of distinctively individual poets make their debuts. The formally fastidious and delicately crafted poems of József Szepesi continue older traditions of lyric verse. After much experimenting with various styles, Lajos Rácz finally settled on the conventions of the biblical psalms to fashion from these a fluid and richly imaginative style of his own. By the latter half of the 1970s the first collections of Béla Osztojkán, József Hontalan Kovács and Attila Balogh were already signalling their alliance to modern poetic trends. Of these, the broad sweep of Osztojkán's free verse is the most innovative. Kovács is terse, lapidary, utilising silence as a means for creating tension, whilst Balogh's stance draws on irony and a lyricism of the grotesque.

During the past three decades Hungary's Roma literature has explored most of the developmental phases in the history of the novel. József Holdosi's most memorable work is the Romantic novel *Cigánymózes* (The Gypsy Moses), whilst Béla Osztojkán has cultivated the more objective approach of the *nouveau roman*. Thus whereas Holdosi's novel achieves a lyrical intensity through emotional and passionate engagement with its subject, Osztojkán preserves a striking detachment between his creative self and the world that is conjured up in his work, the raw, near-naturalism of its descriptions being blended with evocations of dreams, superstitions, beliefs and visions to yield a vivid portrait of social and psychological realities.

Tales and children's verse form a branch of Roma literature in their own right, best represented by the enchanting adaptations of Gypsy folk tales by Menyhért Lakatos and Károly Bari, and the bizarre imagination that Magda Szécsi brings to bear in her stories, accompanied by her own illustrations.

In earlier days, Roma writers were entirely dependent on the many mainstream Hungarian literary journals as platforms for publication, but over the years a range of forums of their own have gradually emerged. The bilingual periodical *Rom Son* pioneered the way in the early 1970s, and another major milestone was reached with the launch of the

first independent newspaper, *Romano Nyevipe*, at the end of 1985. The cultural-social journal *Phralipe* was founded with the express intention of cultivating Roma literature, whilst a succession of journals that set up shop during the 1990s – *Kethano Drom*, *Amaro Drom*, *Lungo Drom*, *Világunk*, *Amari Luma* – have all seen the publication of original literary work as an important strand in their editorial policies. The assistance given by Hungarian Radio's 'Gypsy Half-Hour' programme and Hungarian Television's 'Patrin Magazin' in bringing Roma literature to the attention of wider audiences should also be acknowledged.

Actors and theatre

Mimetic talents and acting abilities have long been important skills for Gypsy survival. An actress of Gypsy origin trod the boards of Hungarian stages as long ago as the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century in the person of Aranka Hegyi who was both the prima donna amongst the singers of the Népszínház (Popular Theatre) and also a superb character-actress. It was only in the 1980s and 90s, however, that Gypsy actors began to appear in greater numbers. Instrumental in this was the lead taken by the College of Dramatic Art, Budapest, in pushing for training of more stage artists from this community. The first to benefit from that was Károly Bari, whose poetry volume *Above the Faces of the Dead* not only won him many admirers but persuaded the College to run a special course on dramaturgy for his sake.

The first of the new generation of Gypsy actors was Judit Jónás, who first attracted attention on a popular TV talent-spotting series called *Ki mit tud?* (What Can You Do?). After graduating from the college, she joined the permanent company of the National Theatre in Pécs, where, even in her early years, she used to appear in special events, gaining particular success with a stage adaptation of Federico García Lorca's *Romancero gitano*, for instance. Another of her acclaimed productions was an evening of Hungarian and Gypsy folk ballads which she presented jointly with a Hungarian actress colleague.

The second actor to graduate from the College was Kálmán Hollai, who was originally noticed in youth productions put on by the Bartók Theatre in Budapest. Natural acting abilities have earned Dezső Szegedi, a member of the National Theatre of Miskolc, the accolade of a Déri Prize, the country's top acting award, for his work in a wide range of genres, from the key roles of the classical verse drama repertoire to modern comedies and musicals, the best known of his interpretations being the role of Tevje in *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Two theatre directors of Roma origin have also distinguished themselves. József Lakatos Lojkó was the first from such a background to complete the theatre direction course at the College of Dramatic Art and went on to make a name directing television productions of *Átok és szerelem* (Curse and Love), a play on a Gypsy subject written by Menyhért Lakatos, and Lorca's folk tragedy *La casa de Bernarda Alba*. Géza Csemer unites skills as a writer as well as director for the stage. With the composer Béla Szakcsi Lakatos, he has been part of by far the most prolific Roma theatrical partnership, with their most popular work,

Piros karaván (Red Caravan), building on the success of its initial staging at Budapest's Operetta Theatre to win further plaudits in a string of foreign productions. Csemer was also the guiding spirit behind the creation of a Gypsy Theatre Company in the mid 1990s, which is not linked to an actual theatre building but might serve as the kernel for a future venture of that kind. He strives to nurture young Gypsy talents systematically, both preparing them for college entry and helping them with their subsequent development. Currently, what is now the College of Dramatic and Film Art has three Roma youngsters amongst its students. Last but not least amongst the initiatives in this field, particular mention should be made of the initial successes that Béla Balogh achieved, before his untimely death, in trying, with funding from the Soros Foundation, to establish a dance theatre company.

Music

“Gypsy music”

So-called Hungarian “Gypsy music” is not the music of the Roma people themselves but the term which is almost universally used for a musical form and style that evolved in Hungary during the early part of the nineteenth century – a misnomer that incidentally fuelled what can only be regarded as the myth that Gypsies are born musicians who brought their profession as music-makers with them on their trek from India.⁷ Closer acquaintance with their actual history suggests that music can only have given a livelihood to very few Roma in Hungary before the nineteenth century. The decisive change – one that was eventually to produce a remarkable measure of recognition and respect for an élite stratum of the community – came with the altered mode of life and need to find new ways of making a livelihood that were forced on the Roma population in the wake of the ousting of the Ottoman Turks from Hungary and Austria's subsequent imposition of the policies dictated by Maria Theresa and Joseph II. The opportunity was presented by the emergence of a new musical genre, the *verbunkos*, or recruiting dance, which coincided with the awakening of a sense of national identity amongst Hungarians. The dynamic behind this has been neatly summarised by Bálint Sárosi: “The coming to power of the gypsies in music was undoubtedly helped by society's contemptuous and condemning attitude towards entertainers. What counted as humiliation and degeneration for those more strictly belonging within the framework of society meant for the gypsies a way of entering society and the best way towards success. By the end of the eighteenth century, with the first successful appearance of the gypsy bands they had really reached the stage where music-making became the highest of gypsy occupations (it used to be the craft of smithery) and the occupation which was most attractive to the gypsies themselves.”⁸

⁷ The most recent of many studies that examine the issue is Gábor Havas: ‘Hagyományos mesterségek’ (‘Traditional occupations’), in: *A magyarországi romák* (The Roma of Hungary). Ed. István Kemény. Budapest: Press Publika, 2000.

⁸ Bálint Sárosi: *Gypsy Music*. Budapest: Corvina Press, 1978, p.60. Despite its stilted English translation, Sárosi's book remains the most complete survey of the various aspects of the professional instrumental tradition of Hungary's Musician Gypsy group.

Whereas late eighteenth-century Hungarian censuses refer to fewer than 1,600 musician Gypsies, those of a century later recorded 17,000. Occupying every step of a social ladder that stretched from lowly, part-time rural musicians to the members of internationally famous bands, these most successful and highly esteemed Gypsies of any era wrote their place in Hungarian history. Gypsy bands were amongst the troops who fought in the country's 1848-49 War of Independence and it was their music, above all, which helped keep a spirit of national resistance alive in the Hungarian population until the rapprochement with Austria in 1867, when the signing of the Compromise established the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary. By the turn of the century, the fashion that the gentry adopted of merry-making whilst in their cups to the lachrymose plaints of Magyar song, or *nóta*, raised the status of this instrumentally based form of “Gypsy” music to a veritable cult. The influence of Gypsy bands also inspired prominent Classical composers across Europe, from Joseph Haydn onwards, to incorporate elements of the *verbunkos* style into their compositions, whilst Musician Gypsies performed in virtually every country on the continent, invariably returning home as fêted celebrities. Not a few non-Gypsy musicians found it helpful to have it rumoured that their brilliance could only be of Gypsy origin, whilst Franz Liszt supposed – wrongly as it transpired – that this “Gypsy” music was in fact the folk music of Hungary. Out of this there emerged a Gypsy “aristocracy” that, although it was eventually to find itself in slow long-term decline, was able to retain a respectable position in society and gain a fair measure of material success right up to the middle of the twentieth century. On Bálint Sárosi's own estimates, there were still 7,000-8,000 Gypsies making a professional living from music even as late as 1968.

By the 1980s, however, the changes that were under way in society were beginning to turn interest in the style cultivated by the Musician Gypsies into a decidedly minority taste in Hungary itself. As a result, many bands strove to obtain work abroad, playing in the restaurants that catered primarily to Hungarian emigrant communities, with Germany and Austria as the preferred goals, though excellent musicians with a bit of luck on their side managed to secure spells in Canada, the USA and even as far afield as Australia. By the mid-Eighties, however, even these opportunities began to dry up altogether, particularly in competition with the trivial costs of using recorded music. With the wave of privatisation of all dining and hotel enterprises after the change in régime in Hungary, nearly all those who were left in the profession found themselves unemployed virtually overnight. Their tragedy was that they had never needed any skills apart from their musical talents. A number were driven by necessity to try their hands as entrepreneurs or other forms of work, but for men who had been accustomed to being looked up to as the aristocrats of Roma society it was deeply humiliating to be reduced to working as unskilled labourers, and indeed many were crushed mentally as a result.

Once they had drawn on whatever savings they had managed to put aside in better times, the plight of these musicians became truly desperate. The younger ones amongst them have tried, as a last resort, to seek long-term engagements playing abroad and even

opportunities to emigrate permanently. In the last few years, in fact, it is Musician Gypsies who have made up the bulk of the Roma leaving Hungary. Their destinations are still mainly those cities around the world which support a sizeable colony of more elderly Hungarian émigrés who still nostalgically indulge themselves in their favourite *nóta* repertoire, but even that audience is naturally thinning with the passage of time. Those musicians who stay at home find at best occasional jobs playing in their formerly dependable haunts: restaurants, hotel lounge bars, night clubs and the like. In response to the crisis, the cream amongst them decided to put a brave face on it and band together as the ‘Budapest Gypsy Orchestra 100’ – a unique, 100-strong ensemble which has toured the world, from Paris to Sydney, with notable success.

That leads on to the subject of Gypsy musicians who choose to switch from that entertainment background to become distinguished players of mainstream classical music. Probably the best-known of these are the virtuoso cimbalom player, Aladár Rácz, who taught Stravinsky to play the instrument and inspired him to write various compositions for it in the 1910s, and pianist György Cziffra, whose interpretations of Liszt and Chopin had many admirers not just in France, where he made his home after 1956, but throughout the world. Violinist László Kótté and cellist Ede Banda are among others who are well known particularly to the Hungarian public. Nowadays there is a rising generation of young artists coming from families that for generations made their living as professional musicians in the *verbunkos*-based style but have grown up in an almost exclusively classical music tradition. Whilst personal inclinations clearly have an important part in this, in some cases the parents, concerned at the precipitate decline in the appeal of “Gypsy” music, have refused to allow children who were determined to make careers as musicians to take up that genre. The outcome is an increasingly impressive number of young Roma musicians who have been trained to the highest standards and now enjoy a social status quite different from that of their parents. Such is the influx of these highly talented youngsters into the classical music world that most of the students who are now gaining instruction on certain instruments at the Budapest Academy of Music are from a Roma background. That said, it has to be pointed out that Hungary has long been turning out more trained classical musicians than the country can absorb, so that those who are unable to win positions here in symphony orchestras or as teachers – and those opportunities are increasingly rare – have to bank on their chances of making a career abroad.

Outside the fields of traditional “Gypsy” music and classical music, there are other talented individual Roma musicians who have oriented to changing musical and social tastes by cultivating other genres. Jazz has exerted a strong pull, perhaps particularly after the example set by the double-bassist Aladár Pege, who trained as a classical musician at the Budapest Academy and still teaches there, but gained a wide following in Europe as an outstanding modern jazz improviser during the late 1960s and 1970s. Other widely known jazz musicians include pianist-composer Béla Szakcsi Lakatos, saxophonist Tony Lakatos, and guitarists Gyula Babos and Ferenc Snétberger. Roma musicians are

also starting to make their marks in pop music too, a prime example being the rap group *Fekete Vonat* (‘Black Train’), who have been one of the sensations of Hungary’s youth scene in recent years.

Roma folk music

Long-standing confusion over the true origins and status of the instrumental *verbunkos*-based “Gypsy” style, referred to at the beginning of this section, was linked to almost total ignorance, outside the Roma community, that a Roma traditional music even existed. Stylistically this tradition has nothing to do with the “Gypsy” genre, being essentially vocal, albeit utilising – at least in the dance song genre – a wide range of vocal effects that are imitative of instrumental sounds (so-called “mouth bass”), as well as finger clicks, hand claps, and other percussive effects drawn from kitchen utensils, such as pairs of spoons or a water jug.

As far as most Hungarians are concerned, acquaintance with this original Roma music dates back no further than the 1980s, by which time it reached them in an already partly reshaped form, which itself was a response to the shrinking number of predominantly Vlach Roma communities that still preserved the traditional music as part of their everyday lives. Though it was still strongly rooted in the conventions of the old song repertoire, this electrified version, developed by the group *Kalyi Jag* (‘Black Fire’), won a big following both inside and outside the Roma community which has continued to the present day. The success of *Kalyi Jag*’s fusion of traditional song forms and style with elements of pop music has spurred the formation of a succession of other groups, such as *Ando Drom* (‘On the Road’), *Rományi Rotá* (‘Gypsy Wheel’), *Ternipe* (‘Youth’) and *Amaro Szuno* (‘Our Dream’), to mention just a few of those who have made names for themselves not just in Hungary but also further afield.

For many of these self-taught artists, generally from the Vlach Roma community, this recognition and success have a special savour, since the Musician Roma of the instrumental “Gypsy music” were never willing to regard them as true musicians in their own right. And indeed, they typically find that they cannot live from their music but must also pursue activities as entrepreneurs and traders, though the still growing interest in their music is prompting ever more of them to choose this as a livelihood.

Visual arts

The production and exhibition of works by Roma artists in Hungary essentially goes back some three decades, though its antecedents can be traced further back. Vince Horváth, a Gypsy musician living in Nyíregyháza, from childhood on whittled wood and during a spell as a World War I prisoner-of-war in Italy constructed a violin and viola as well as carving hunting-crops for landowners then, on returning home, took up instrument repairs as a hobby. After he decided in 1937 to try his hand at sculpture, he eventually found a

base for his work amongst the woodcarvers at the Folk Arts Studio in his home town and achieved broader recognition with the state award of the title of Master Folk-artist in 1972 and acclaimed contributions to exhibitions of Hungarian Naive Art at the Hungarian National Gallery.

More widely, the late 1960s and early 70s was the period when fellow Gypsy artists, whether untrained amateurs and driven by an urge to self-expression or painters, sculptors and graphic artists who pursued the *métier* professionally, began to emerge. Why Hungary, as compared with other countries, should suddenly produce an exceptionally large crop of Roma artists can almost certainly be ascribed to the liberative influence of the country's first Roma painter, János Balázs, and his part-naive but much more significantly expressive-visionary canvases. Balázs lived a hermit-like existence on "Gypsy Hill" in Salgótarján, eking out a subsistence in the age of the machine from rather basic "gatherer" activities, and yet acquired a self-taught erudition of extraordinary sophistication. By his own example, Balázs was able to inspire in other Gypsies the idea that it is possible to rise to eminence even without schooling if one has the insight and creative fantasy to be able to organise one's experiences into a self-sufficient view of the world. The first Roma artist to graduate from art college and make a living from his creative work was Tamás Péli, who attended a skilled craft school for fine and applied arts in Budapest before going on to study art at the Royal Academy in Amsterdam. Returning to Budapest in 1973, Péli became a mentor and source of encouragement for a string of younger Roma painters who were similarly drawn to modern art trends as a vocation.

Part of the stimulus for youngsters to become involved with art was the growing interest that the surrounding society was beginning to take in Roma art, which created a favourable climate for the emergence of a Roma artistic élite and, through them, an arena for articulating and arguing over the merits of different approaches. They very quickly built up contacts with Roma artists working in other creative fields, so that in recent decades it has become commonplace for an evening of readings by Roma poets, for example, to include a showing of works by Roma artists, or the opening of an exhibition by a Roma painter to feature readings of Roma poetry and an appearance by a group of Roma musicians.

A 1979 exhibition of works by self-taught Gypsy creative artists mounted at the István Pataky Cultural Centre in the Kőbánya (Xth) district of Budapest included works from a dozen individuals. A decade later, in 1989, a total of 17 such artists showed their works at a 2nd National Exhibition of Self-Taught Gypsy Artists at the Ethnographic Museum in the capital, whilst the 3rd National Exhibition of 2000, held again at the Pataky Cultural Centre, displayed works from 24 artists, naive and professional, self-taught and college-trained alike, though it may be added that well over 30 Roma artists are currently active in Hungary.

The body of work that is collectively given the label "naive art" in fact comprises two rather distinct approaches. Both draw on the artist's innate powers of visualising an

internal world, but whilst the one adopts an essentially static and harmonious approach to objectifying that world, the other spontaneously seeks expression in a more dynamic approach, with forms and coloration being shaped by emotional and conceptual instincts rather than any striving for fidelity to nature or anatomical accuracy. The most noteworthy of this latter group of native Roma creative talents was undoubtedly János Balázs. The bizarre symbolic worlds his paintings are crammed with the figures of people, animals, monsters, exotic plants and fruits, either bonded together in a strange gravitational field or else soaring and tumbling as they are caught up in the cataclysmic vortex of some mysterious force. Balázs relives human history as a struggle between good and evil, as a personal problem so to speak, his works becoming fields of agonising conflict, evocations of unresolvable contradictions and passions. On its own terms, Balázs' art stands unique amongst the output of the country's unschooled native artists and has also gained recognition as one of the greatest such talents from an international perspective.

Of the Roma folk artists who came to prominence in the 1970s, mention should be made of Balázs András Balogh, Jolán Oláh and Teréz Orsós, whilst Gyöngyi Rác (née Kalányos) made a mark at the above-mentioned 2nd National Exhibition with her original figurative approach and imaginative handling of colour, which she has also applied in very large-scale compositions. László Kosztics is a wood-carver who portrays traditional Gypsy customs and crafts, as well as carving subjects that refer to a Roma folk sense of religious piety and others relating to episodes in Hungarian and Roma history. Pál Kún is another artist who began working in the 1990s, his paintings being divided between those which portray traditional Gypsy crafts and a series of compositions that capture aspects of the history and migrations of his people. Dávid Beer (Károly Beri) has progressed from an expressive, stylised realism to create an autonomous spiritual artistic world based on an extremely pared-down, decorative-expressive mode of representation. His landscapes are not depictions of an external reality but vistas seen within the mind, and that same expression of an inner spiritual content informs his still-life canvases of plants and flowers.

Alongside the above-mentioned group are a number of Roma artists who are likewise driven to create by a personal vision but are better categorised as adopting modes of expression closer to those of professionally schooled artists. The landscapes and fantastic images in the paintings of Márta Bada and Gábor Dilinkó deploy *plein air* techniques to express those personal visions, whilst József Fenyvesi finds his outlet in stylised portraits. Magda Szécsi's exceptionally vivid imagination and story-telling gifts are original talents that have given her significance as both a writer and graphic artist, with the latter earning her the recognition of a Noémi Ferenczy Prize, Hungary's major award for female artists. Besides her own works, she has also produced illustrations for volumes of poetry by Baudelaire and Attila József and for *The Song of Solomon*.

The most significant figure amongst Hungary's college-trained artists is the previously mentioned Tamás Péli. Taking Renaissance and later Baroque painting traditions as his point of departure, he has fashioned a highly individual figurative language which

elevates his concern with the fate of Gypsies to a mythical-symbolic dimension. Péli first gave monumental form to his notion of the historical path of the Gypsies as a people in a 44 square-metre composition, *Születés* (Birth), completed in 1983. Péli's example was a stimulus for a whole wave of similarly Renaissance- and Baroque-inspired works by other Roma artists. Outstanding amongst his pupils is István Szentandrassy, whose pictures are extraordinarily suggestive presentations of dramatic existential and emotional states. Highlights of his work include a series of paintings based on Lorca's *Romancero gitano* ballad cycle and a large-scale composition entitled *Triptichon*. Towards the end of the 1980s a steady trickle of younger Roma artists who had systematically prepared themselves for professional life started to become active, amongst them Ödön Gyügyi, József Ferkovics, Zoltán Oláh, Zsolt Vári and Zoltán Túró.

The first international exhibition of Roma art was one curated by Sandra Jayat at the Paris Conciergerie in 1985, which was followed by a second at the Ethnographical Museum, Budapest. It is evident from these two events that the body of work produced by Hungarian Roma artists, though it looks back barely a generation and is still at an early stage in its evolution, occupies a major place within the output of Roma art more widely, which makes it all the more unfortunate that the way and means have not yet been found to establish a gallery devoted to Roma in the country.

Summary

The last thirty years have seen far wider and deeper changes in the culture of Hungary's Roma community than in all the previous centuries put together. It has been a period not merely of the community's rediscovery of their traditional culture but also creating an increasingly impressive corpus of new works that have direct connections with, and integrate into, the mainstreams of European culture and art. This has been achieved by an élite group of Roma intellectuals, with Roma visual artists in the vanguard. The significance of this reconstitution of culture is conveyed very aptly and graphically by the following words from Tamás Péli, Hungary's first professionally trained Roma artist: "What occurs to me, in fact, is that for all that Gypsies have lived here in Hungary for 700 years, they are only now being born. Until a people possesses an intellectual élite, small as that may be, to give it an existence, write its history, notate its songs, paint its stories, forge messages and carry these out into the world of culture, fix them for eternity – until that happens, and this is the case with every other people, it cannot take up its place as a fully-fledged equal in the community of peoples."

9. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY INITIATIVES

As soon as the first democratically elected Hungarian Parliament and government to follow the 1989-90 change in régime set about their work, they were confronted with issues concerning the country's ethnic minorities that had been deliberately brushed aside for decades – not least a pressing need for action on the unaddressed problems of the Roma population. In summarising what has taken place in the sphere of government since then, it is convenient to split the decade into two main phases, with 1990-95 being a period of totally re-thinking the *legislative and institutional* framework for dealing with the issues and enacting the necessary new and amended legislation, whilst the period since 1995 has seen the emergence of the first *government programmes* that seek to improve the position of the Roma community. State intervention on such matters could not be put off because the change in régime brought fundamental alterations to the economic position of Hungarian society as a whole. Wholesale reshaping of the economy, with the privatisation of large swathes of previously state-owned enterprises, brought mass unemployment and a sharp widening of social inequalities in its wake. As modernisation gathered pace during the 1990s, the Roma community, who make up 5% of Hungary's total population of 10 million, came out at the very bottom of a pile of 2 million poor who lost out in the transformed world of the new economy. In the process, the country's reserves of social solidarity have been severely depleted, intolerance and indifference to the plight of others have grown. Renascent extreme right-wing or neo-fascistic political groupings, attracting a growing base of support not least through the overt or tacit support that they have been accorded by legitimate political movements, see Hungary's Roma population as a primary target for their vituperations and for regular displays of thuggery by their organised gangs. Fearful of the consequences of allowing passions to run higher, political leaders have eventually been forced to recognise that unless the state intervenes actively to facilitate integration of the Roma community into the rest of society there is no chance of tackling the situation.

Legislation and new institutions

An Office for National and Ethnic Minorities (ONEM), with responsibilities covering the entire country, was one of the first new institutions to be created in 1990. Its primary task has been one of drafting, justifying and coordinating policy proposals on issues relating to minority communities for action by the government of the day, but alongside that it also has a duty to keep the situation of minority communities under constant review, prepare assessments of that situation, and maintain contacts with their representatives. Since the mid-Nineties the Office has taken on a leading role in working out short- and medium-

term programmes of assistance for the Roma population and is currently in the midst of producing a long-term strategic paper. The Office's appointment in 1998 of a deputy-director with specific responsibilities for coordinating all Roma-related matters was seen on all sides as a significant step forward; on the other hand, a reorganisation in the same year which saw ONEM's line of reporting transferred from the Office of the Prime Minister to the Ministry of Justice was widely condemned. Roma community representatives in particular judged that this would weaken ONEM's ability to maintain an impartial position on contentious issues, expressing deep concern about the notion that an institution with a duty to protect the interests of the Roma community, amongst others, might sit happily alongside the branches of government concerned with running the country's prison service and other organs of the judicial system.

No one doubts the necessity for ONEM's activities, but its present position in the government and state administrative apparatus is seen as a constraint which essentially compromises its independence of action. There is a need to strengthen the scope of the coordinatory role for Roma-related affairs that the Office is designated to carry out within the sphere and structures of government and state responsibilities; however that role cannot be discharged properly unless ONEM is given far more effective powers. As long as the Office continues, as at present, to be effectively excluded from exercising real authority – useful a scapegoat as it may be when responsibility for contentious issues needs to be shifted, and whatever juggling of management posts might take place – no further progress can be envisaged in providing an effective control on how government utilises the budget process to handle the problems over which the Office has purview. It would represent a big step forward if the handling of Roma issues were to become an integral part of the government structure and not a matter that is dealt with at several removes. That, of course, requires a political decision, but it is evident that were a single office to be created at cabinet level to participate directly in the work of government, that would both serve as a powerful signal that the importance of the problem had been recognised and also provide an effective means of addressing it.

The central piece of legislation concerning Hungary's minorities to be introduced after the change in régime was *Law LXXVII/1993*, the National and Ethnic Minority Rights Act, which was passed with backing from 96% of parliamentary representatives at the time. For the country's Gypsies the particular importance of the Act lay in its giving them legal recognition as a minority for the first time in their history. Uniquely in Europe, *the Act provides a declaration of rights that pertain equally to individual members of any recognised minority and to the minority collectively*. The significance of this lies in the provisions that it makes and upholds for minorities to form their own organisations, establish self-governments and even contemplate autonomous administration of specific territorial areas under certain circumstances. The law resolves the question of affiliation to a given minority by leaving this to the individual's own discretion – a principle which guarantees the possibility of avowing (as well as opting not to avow) one's ethnic identity, but

one which has been the cause of no small number of problems in the years that have passed since the Act came into force. The most prominent of those problems is what has been called the "cuckoo in the nest" phenomenon that was observed during the most recent (1998) round of local elections for minority self-government representatives: a series of now notorious cases where individuals gained mandates to serve in minority self-governments when they demonstrably had no links whatsoever to the minority in question. It is precisely to avoid such flagrant abuses of the system that minority organisations have been pressing for years for the elections to minority self-governments to be held on a different day from the mainstream local self-government elections and for eligibility to stand as a candidate to be tied to membership of a recognised minority organisation. A contributory problem is that present electoral law does not restrict voting for candidates standing for places in a given minority's self-government body to members of that minority but allows the entire electorate to cast a vote, so that the majority community's choices can decisively influence, and even override, the wishes of the minority community itself as to its own preferred candidates.

Mention should also be made of the provisions that the Act contains for programming by the public service broadcasting media, for the use of recognised minority languages, the possibility of establishing cultural institutions, basic rights in regard to upbringing and education, the rights of minorities to parliamentary representation, and also the functions of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Minority Rights. For all the positive features, however, one cannot overlook some glaring defects, foremost amongst which is a general absence of sanctions which can be applied in cases that contravene the letter and intentions of the Act. Thus, it is all very well to specify rights to parliamentary representation or prohibited modes of behaviour if no legal consequences ensue for failure to achieve the former or for breach of the latter, and those deficiencies are not plugged by other legislation. Another particularly vexed issue for the Roma community is paragraph §45(2) of the Act, which, without going into any detail, admits the possibility of separate educational facilities. A malicious interpretation of this article might take it as justifying segregation in educational establishments, which is clearly undesirable. Thirdly, the Act gives no guarantees over the funding necessary for minority self-governments to function effectively. The vagaries of having to seek financing from multiple sources (grants from the local municipality self-government and outside bodies) to top up the limited state funding that is offered is a major hindrance to any long-term planning. As a result, minority self-governments often struggle under serious financial constraints and find they have little option but to become subservient bodies to the municipalities. In this context, it has to be noted that the Roma population differs from the other national and ethnic communities in having no homeland outside Hungary to which they might turn for moral and financial support.

The stinginess of the present levels of financial provision for minority self-governments is endangering their ability to discharge the duties enjoined by the Act and take

advantage of the provisions that are offered under the Act. From the tone of debates over the Act that are currently under way there is a prospect that useful modifications will be introduced. It seems likely that a compromise proposal will allow minorities to achieve direct representation within Parliament, but as yet agreement has not been reached over the precise form that this should take. Thinking with regard to the disputed paragraph §45(2) likewise appears to be moving in a favourable direction; however, there are no signs at all of a serious attempt to come to grips with the funding issue or remedying the Act's lack of teeth.

A number of other legislative measures with a direct impact on the situation of Hungary's Roma population have reached the statute book in recent years. A 1996 modification to the Public Education Act (Law LXXIX/1993), for example, sets out the provisions under which national and local minority self-governments are permitted to establish and maintain state-funded educational institutions of their own. Ministry of Education Order 32/1997 provides guidelines for nursery care and school education of national and ethnic minorities, seeing its principal task as one of laying down ground rules by which children are educated in line with expectations appropriate to their age-group and individual stage of development whilst being given the chance to gain an acquaintance with, and acquire proficiency in, the language and culture of the minority to which they belong, and receive and develop their cultural heritage. The Order describes in detail the acceptable forms of education and what requirements these entail; however, due to the complexity of the regulations, self-governments and schools in many places are still far from clear about the full range of options that are open to them, all too often confuse the various forms of education, and even more often fail in their duty to seek the views and consent of parents in the process.

The Act establishing the office of Parliamentary Commissioner for National and Ethnic Minority Rights (Law LIX/1993) has also proved extremely important for the Roma community. The duties of this ombudsman-type post, which are also laid down in Hungary's constitution, are to investigate, or prompt investigation of, all abuses of constitutionally guaranteed rights that are brought to the Commissioner's attention and to instigate general or specific measures to remedy those abuses. Events of subsequent years and the reports produced by the Commissioner have underlined just how crucial it was to create the office and how indispensable a part of the state machinery it is, although the powers invested in the post to terminate abuses that have come to light are strictly limited. All too often the Commissioner's recommendations and initiatives do not achieve their intended aim, nor have his attempts to utilise the power of publicity always had the desired effect when members of the Roma community are the victims of abuse. In that light, it is absolutely necessary to expand and strengthen the powers that are available to him.

Government Resolution 1121/1995 (December 7th) ordered that a Public Foundation for Hungarian Gypsies be set up, with the intended aim of reducing the inequalities with which the Roma population is contending.

Medium-term Package of Measures

Government Resolution 1120/1995 (December 7th) was the first significant government measure to be brought in since the change in régime which expressly sought ways of tackling the by then increasingly dire plight of the Hungarian Roma population. As a first step towards this, it established a *Coordinating Council for Gypsy Affairs* to harmonise the efforts of government ministries and other bodies with a national sphere of authority in tackling the Roma community's problems and assisting the process of integrating that community within the wider society. Amongst the Council's designated tasks was that of working out medium- and long-term programmes for reducing the current inequalities. Closely linked to that was Government Resolution 1125/1995 (December 12th), which recognised the urgency with which the state must address those problems and set out priorities for the specific areas on which ministerial departments should work to develop programmes of action.

These two resolutions were the immediate precursors to the publication of a "medium-term package" – officially entitled Government Resolution 1093/1997 (July 29th) – which represented a first stab at assessing and defining what was required to achieve social integration of Hungary's Gypsy population. The measures foreseen for implementation in 1997-98 were set out in Part 1 of the Resolution. In *education*, for example, the package recognised the urgent needs: to expand and boost the effectiveness both of support with tuition fees and child protection schemes for families with restricted financial means; to curb moves towards segregation in schools; and to put more weight behind regional programmes designed to nurture gifted youngsters (e.g. the Gandhi High School and College in Pécs) through expansion of the network and the foundation of higher institutes for the more gifted Roma students. On *employment* the main goals set by the package were the removal of slum areas of Gypsy habitations; the instigation of new employment programmes and expansion of those that were proving to function well; the integration of Roma students into mainstream vocational training; and the introduction of programmes to boost expertise in crop cultivation and livestock breeding. In the *social sphere* the creation of a framework that would allow higher power to intervene in handling crisis situations was envisaged. With regard to *regional programmes*, a complex package of measures was set out to address the critical situation in areas of settlement where a significant segment of the inhabitants, including Gypsies, are subject to cumulative deprivation. On *anti-discrimination measures* a need was seen to assess what further legislation might be required, whilst it was also judged important to incorporate some briefing on the Roma and their culture into police training courses. Finally, in respect to *mass communications* media, a PR campaign was highlighted as necessary to improving prospects for the Roma community. Part 2 of the package set out guidelines for the areas that were to be addressed at a later date. This referred, for instance, to promoting higher education and cultural institutions, the role minority self-governments can play in surmounting unem-

ployment, the expansion of screening programmes as a key to improving the health status of the Roma population, the provision of civil rights bureaux to provide assistance in handling conflicts, and the adoption by the public service broadcast media of a more balanced approach to their presentation of the Roma community.

The new government which took office in 1998 deemed it necessary to review the package. Government Resolution 1047/1999 (May 5th), which emerged from that review, essentially retained the goals that had been laid down in 1997 but assigned top priority to the areas of education and culture. The aims, as they now stand, with regard to *education* are to develop the content of the curriculum at the primary level (this is in addition to ensuring more regular nursery school attendance through reduced absenteeism), and to counteract the high drop-out rates at the secondary and higher levels by providing more student halls of residence and scholarships. In the *cultural area* action is to be concentrated on developing a network of institutions to provide adult education opportunities, with training of experts to run such courses and production of course materials. As far as employment is concerned, the priorities are helping the long-term unemployed and the young who are trying to enter the job market, organising programmes of public works and community service, and developing a social programme for the agricultural sector. In the case of the *anti-discrimination programmes* greater emphasis is now placed on ensuring that existing legislation is properly utilised, whilst the *communications strategy* should focus on explaining to the public at large why a programme tailored to the Roma community is needed at all.

The new government also felt that successful implementation of this package of measures called for changes in the body that would be responsible for overseeing it, and accordingly Government Resolution 1048/1999 (May 5th) abolished the Coordinating Council for Gypsy Affairs, replacing it with an Interministerial Committee for Gypsy Affairs. This brings some distinct gains inasmuch as the new forum has greater power to appoint subcommittees, representatives of Roma social organisations now have rights to be consulted and, by invitation, may attend at least four of the Committee's sessions annually, whilst the Parliamentary Commissioner for Minority Rights and the Director of the Gandhi Public Foundation have standing invitations to all of the Committee's deliberations.

Long-term Strategic Programme⁹

It has become evident to all political leaders from the experiences of recent years that Hungary's system of protections of minority rights, acceptable as it may be in principle, is not sufficient by itself to address all the problems of the country's Roma population. In

⁹ As this programme was still at the discussion stage when the present Report was being going to press, the following comments are based on the contents of an address given by Dr. Gabriella Varjú, Deputy Director for Roma Affairs at the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities (ONEM), to a public hearing held by the Council of Europe's Expert Committee on Gypsy Affairs in Budapest on October 31st, 2000.

other words, the state will have to introduce additional measures, but it is also accepted that the only hope of bringing about useful change is through consistent implementation of a properly worked out, forward-looking, long-term strategy. An assessment of the various short- and medium-term programmes that have been put in place makes it clear that gratifying as their results may have been so far, they have done nothing to improve the fundamental life prospects of those in the Roma community in general; indeed, if anything, those prospects have gone on deteriorating. It is usual to ascribe that to the long-standing awfulness of the conditions in which they have lived and Hungary's scant economic resources, but representatives of the community and independent experts alike are of the opinion that failures on the part of government to think its Roma policies through, as well as deficiencies in the policies themselves, are at least as much to blame, and this has only been compounded by the repercussions of new general regulations in a number of areas – child protection, social policy, family tax allowances – that do not specifically take the Roma community into account and have had the effect of placing them at an even greater disadvantage than they were even a few years ago. There is also much debate about how the financial resources that are nominally earmarked for spending on the Roma population are actually utilised for that purpose. The government budget for the year 2000 set aside HUF 4,850 million for programmes outlined in the Medium-term Package and HUF 2,200 million for other minorities-related spending – that is, over HUF 7 billion in total. The problem is that this total spending has been spread across the individual budget frameworks within which each government department works, and there are no mechanisms in place that allow any check to be made – especially by bodies that represent the Roma community – on how much departmental spending is then actually channelled towards that community. Such lack of transparency is compromising the chances of successfully implementing programmes, precisely when transparency has to be a prerequisite of any long-term strategy.

After consideration of the shortcomings and defects in implementation of programmes to date, current thinking on the long-term strategy sees the primary goal as one of achieving *social and economic integration* of Hungary's Roma community whilst still *retaining its identity*. Its other explicit goals are *job creation* and assisting the Roma population to *assume roles as equals in mainstream society and political life*.

By laying down basic principles, the programme seeks to provide benchmarks for bringing a change for the better in the currently insupportable situation of the Roma community. As now envisaged, these will include the needs for social solidarity and an expression of society's willingness to accept responsibility; for partnership, with active contribution from the side of the Roma community; for subsidiarity and decentralisation, with local problems being resolved at the local level; and for the preservation and nurturing of the values of Roma culture. Other basic principles that are envisaged include any necessary further reinforcement of legal frameworks to stamp on unfair discrimination, the needs for greater public awareness and transparency, and acceptance that any effective

approach to the issue must be complex and multidimensional. Budget provision for larger amounts of earmarked funding is seen as a prerequisite both to implement the programme properly and to ensure continuity of finance. Major aspects of the planning process must be the definition of appropriate monitoring mechanisms and their systematic application. Two broad areas are seen as having the highest priority for bringing about real improvement in the living conditions of the Roma community: better education and better employment prospects to boost the abilities of families to stand on their own feet. One interesting element in the emerging programme is the idea of horizontal priorities that span all the various areas of action, such as overcoming tendencies for the Roma to be excluded from mainstream social and political processes and helping them to assume active roles in those processes.

It is envisaged that the completed long-term strategy will be released for public discussion, with all interested parties being given a chance to comment in the hope that this will allow possible weakness or defects to be eliminated. Some Roma representative bodies are already voicing concerns that this is just another package that will be long on generalities and basic principles but too short on punch to achieve real improvement of a grave situation. It is likely, then, that the strategy will come under heavy fire before it is accepted. Nevertheless, there is common agreement that the state must take the lead in shouldering responsibility for tackling the problems, with involvement of both the Roma and non-Roma public, since the powers to alter the current living conditions of Hungary's Roma community are all invested in the state; but it is also the view that solid support from the European Union will be indispensable to achieving lasting change for the better.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

1) The state should undertake to pay social security contributions on behalf of every long-term unemployed person who is engaged onto a firm's payroll.

2) Firms should be permitted to engage long-term unemployed persons onto the payroll at rates 20 per cent below the statutory minimum wage for the first year.

3) The introduction of the foregoing two regulations should also be extended to cover all 17- or 18-year-old youngsters with no skills qualifications and no education beyond the eighth grade of general (primary) school who have failed to find employment.

4) The state should urge all communities with a sizeable Roma population to employ Roma nursery teachers and assistants in their nursery schools, and it should also undertake to pay social security contributions for each such person who is employed.

5) The state should make similar undertakings in respect of posts at educational counselling and family guidance centres.

6) The state should expand the contractual and cooperational framework within which the Autonomy Fund is permitted to operate.

7) Funding from employment, regional support and regional development budgets that is utilised for job creation schemes should be targeted at communities where the unemployment rate is running above a pre-determined high level.

8) A programme should be instigated for comprehensive regeneration of the 64 small settlements designated by the Ministry of Public Welfare in 1994 as carrying the highest indices of social deprivation, as it is unreasonable to delay this until the favourable conditions that pertained to Gilvánfalva arise in each and every location. The programme itself needs to be extended to address the issues of unemployment, creation of jobs for the better-educated, reviving civic society and church activities, and securing a dramatic improvement in the ratio of children who remain in education beyond the primary stage.

9) In line with proposals put forward in 1994 by István Kemény, Gábor Havas and Gábor Kertesi, it would be expedient to furnish financial support for further education of all children from families where neither of the parents has obtained a higher qualification than finishing the 8 grades of general (primary) school, at least one of the parents is unemployed, and at least one child is continuing education at the secondary or higher level. Such support should be variable according to scholastic results and place of residence, in line with the criteria for social deprivation developed by the Ministry of Public Welfare in 1993.

10) For a four-year period a single retrospective payment should be made to general schools for each child meeting the above-outlined criteria who gains entry to any secondary school institution which awards a school-leaving certificate (*érettségi*), and to secondary schools for each such child who gains entry to an institution of higher education. Such a scheme would provide adequate financial security and incentives for teaching staff to invest long-term efforts to ensuring its success.

11) Training in communication skills, with help from foreign experts and civil rights activists, needs to be organised for public servants in rural areas who come into contact with the Roma population, along with local Roma leaders and the Roma residents.

Examples of appropriate groups include agronomists, Roma villagers and agricultural experts with experience of developing countries; district nurses, patients' rights activists, physicians and Roma patients; or village notaries, human rights lawyers, members of minority self-governments and delegates from European civil rights bodies.

12) Universities and high schools should introduce courses that teach the sociology and anthropology relevant to socially disadvantaged groups in general, and Gypsies in particular, coupled to courses in the Romani language. After accreditation of the courses, all students graduating with credits gained on that course and the associated language exam should receive a state-paid salary supplement if they take up a post in any settlement defined as run-down by the Ministry of Public Welfare's 1993 criteria of social deprivation.

13) Mobile services offering advice and encouragement on careers and further education opportunities should be established in Hungary's 20 university towns, with performance-related finance for the services.

14) A permanent improvement in the health of the Roma community will only be attainable through a dramatically positive change in their living conditions, however this does not absolve the government from taking all measures that are called for on health grounds alone.

15) Instigation of a major research project to ascertain the detailed health status of the Roma population, with the aim of using the findings to develop targeted preventive programmes, will brook no further delay.

16) Every possible means must be applied to reducing the gulf that currently separates health care institutions and their workers from Roma patients and promoting constructive dialogue between the two sides.

17) Public subsidies for prescription medicines need to be given real force so that the needy are not deprived of treatment.

18) More attention needs to be given to ensuring that the Roma population take full advantage of all advisable medical screening or check-up schemes.

19) A genuine programme needs to be instigated to clear Roma slum areas and thereby remove exposure to environmental hazards.

20) Roma women need to be helped to defer child-bearing until they are older, should they wish, in order to reduce the incidence of premature births and perinatal mortality.

21) Standards of child nutrition need to be improved.

22) Funding is required to allow vulnerable and poor Roma families to have free access to non-obligatory but advisable vaccinations and vitamins.

23) An anti-smoking campaign needs to be instigated in the Roma community.

24) Determined efforts are required to change institutional working practices in order to uncover and take a firm stand against discrimination in health care delivery.

25) Larger health care institutions need to make provision for communicating medical advice to Gypsies who are not native Magyar speakers.

26) The means should be found to ensure that Gypsies unable to afford the costs of medication do not abandon courses of treatment prematurely (especially for tuberculosis).

27) A unified Anti-Discrimination Act is required, both to pull together the scattered provisions that are to be found in current legislation and to provide comprehensive cover

against all foreseeable acts of discrimination. Such a law should define precisely what acts can be regarded as discriminatory under the Labour and Civil Codes, and in the field of state administration and other areas, fully taking account of the requirements of international legal conventions to which Hungary is a signatory and also the experiences of other countries which now have decades of accumulated practice in operating such codes.

28) To assist those who believe they have suffered discrimination, Hungary ought to set up an office with powers to investigate such claims, institute legal proceedings to seek redress, and offer legal representation, as necessary. The state, in fact, has a duty to ensure that society functions without discrimination and to intervene actively against all infringements of that principle. At present, through the police, the public prosecution service and judiciary, the Hungarian state makes such provisions under the Criminal Code, but there is no state organ to represent claimants in other areas, e.g. under the Civil Code. As a temporary expedient, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Minority Rights might be empowered by a change in regulations to instigate legal proceedings and undertake representation on behalf of claimants. A further significant advance would be achieved by acting on the General Ombudsman's proposal that Hungary should introduce a public defender service.

29) There is need for a new Ombudsman-type post with powers similar to those of existing Ombudsmen to oversee the work of the police, public prosecution service, judiciary and other organs of law and order.

30) The image of Hungary's Roma population presented in the mass media is inextricably a function of the extent to which they sustain and legitimate public expression of anti-Gypsy sentiments. The government must be active in constantly promoting the clear message that any expressions of overt or implicit anti-Gypsy sentiment in public discourse are unacceptable.

31) To give more weight to minority media organisations and to achieve better balance in the picture of the Roma community presented by the majority media organisations, it is absolutely necessary to provide support for initiatives that will facilitate the emergence of greater numbers of trained Roma journalists working in Roma and majority media alike. Government funding for training of Roma journalists would be one way of assisting this process.

32) Experience shows that Hungary's Roma population are often not gaining access to even the most basic information that bears on their day-to-day lives. The institutions of the majority society, which mostly have explicit duties to keep the general public properly informed, have a particular responsibility in this respect. These institutions need to take a more positive lead in ensuring effective dissemination of information to Roma communities, both to encourage them to make fuller use of government and other provisions to which they are entitled and also to reduce the mistrust that these communities often have towards institutions of the majority society.

33) Various surveys have demonstrated that the current system of minority self-governance is failing to meet fully its designed role of representing and acting a channel of information for the Roma communities in the formulation of local policy. It would both strengthen the system and serve the information needs of Roma communities if the government were to take on the tasks of organising training programmes for, and ensuring a steady flow of information to, minority self-governments.

34) Financial backers for the minority media need to work out ways of securing longer-term support and, just as important, a scheme should be introduced that gives minority media a greater incentive to expand their audiences. The ORTT must take more vigorous steps to check that minority programming promised by radio and television stations is actually broadcast and also support market research to gauge the extent to which such programming matches the wishes of its target audience. A good case can be made for launching an investigation into whether the ORTT is making effective use of its powers of sanction against programming that lends itself to spreading views which are conducive to ethnic hatred or which affront the entitlement of minority groups to be treated with respect.

APPENDICES

I. LEGISLATION

The principal regulations that pertain to Hungary's minorities, including Gypsies, or contain declarations forbidding discrimination

- Law XX/1949: the Constitution of the Republic of Hungary
- Law II/1952: Code of Civil Procedure
- Law IV/1952: Marriage, Family and Guardianship Act
- Law IV/1957: General Regulations for Administrative Procedures
- Law IV/1959: Civil Code
- Law I/1973: Criminal Proceedings Act
- Law IV/1978: Criminal Code
- Law LXIV/1990: Election of Local Government Representatives and Mayors Act
- Law LXXV/1990: Local Self-Governments Act
- Law IV/1991: Promotion of Employment and Unemployment Benefits Act
- Law XXII/1992: Labour Code
- Law LXIII/1992: Personal Data Protection and Freedom of Information of Public Interest Act
- Law LXXVII/1993: National and Ethnic Minority Rights Act
- Law LXXIX/1993: Public Education Act
- Law LIX/1993: Parliamentary Commissioner for National and Ethnic Minority Rights Act
- Law I/1996: Radio and Television Broadcasting Act
- Law LXXV/1996: Inspection of the Workplace Act
- Law XXXI/1997: Child Protection and the Control of Fostering Act
- Law C/1997: Electoral Proceedings Act
- Law CLIV: Health Act
- Law XXVI/1998: Rights of the Handicapped and Their Guarantees of Equal Opportunity Act
- Law XXXIV/1999: Promulgation of the Council of Europe's Framework Agreement on the Protection of National Minorities, signed at Strasbourg, February 1st, 1999
- Law XL/1999: Promulgation of the European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages, signed at Strasbourg, November 5th, 1992
- Gov. Order 34/1990 (July 30th) concerning an Office for National and Ethnic Minorities.
- Presidential Order 1/1995 (Sept. 28th) concerning Establishment of an Award for Minorities
- Gov. Order 20/1995 (March 3rd) concerning Certain Aspects of the Budgets, Management and Financial Allocations of Minority Self-Governing Councils
- Gov. Order 116/1995 (September 28th) concerning Minorities Day
- Gov. Resolution 1120/1995 (December 7th) on the Establishment of a Coordinating Council for Gypsy Affairs

- Gov. Resolution 1121/1995 (December 7th) on the Establishment of a Public Foundation for Hungarian Gypsies
- Gov. Order 130/1995 (26th October) concerning Publication of a National Curriculum
- Ministry of Education Order 32/1997 concerning Guidelines for Nursery Care and School Education of National and Ethnic Minorities
- Gov. Resolution 1093/1997 (July 29th) concerning Improvement of the Living Conditions of the Gypsy Population
- Gov. Resolution 1166/1998 (December 30th) concerning Guidelines for Employment Policy in 1999
- Gov. Resolution 1047/1999 (May 5th) concerning a Medium-term Package of Measures Aimed at Improving the Living Conditions and Social Status of the Gypsy Population
- Gov. Resolution 1048/1999 (May 5th) on the Establishment of an Interministerial Committee for Gypsy Affairs
- Parliamentary Declaration 1/1998 (December 16th) marking the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Signing of the United Nations Organisation's Declaration of Universal Human Rights

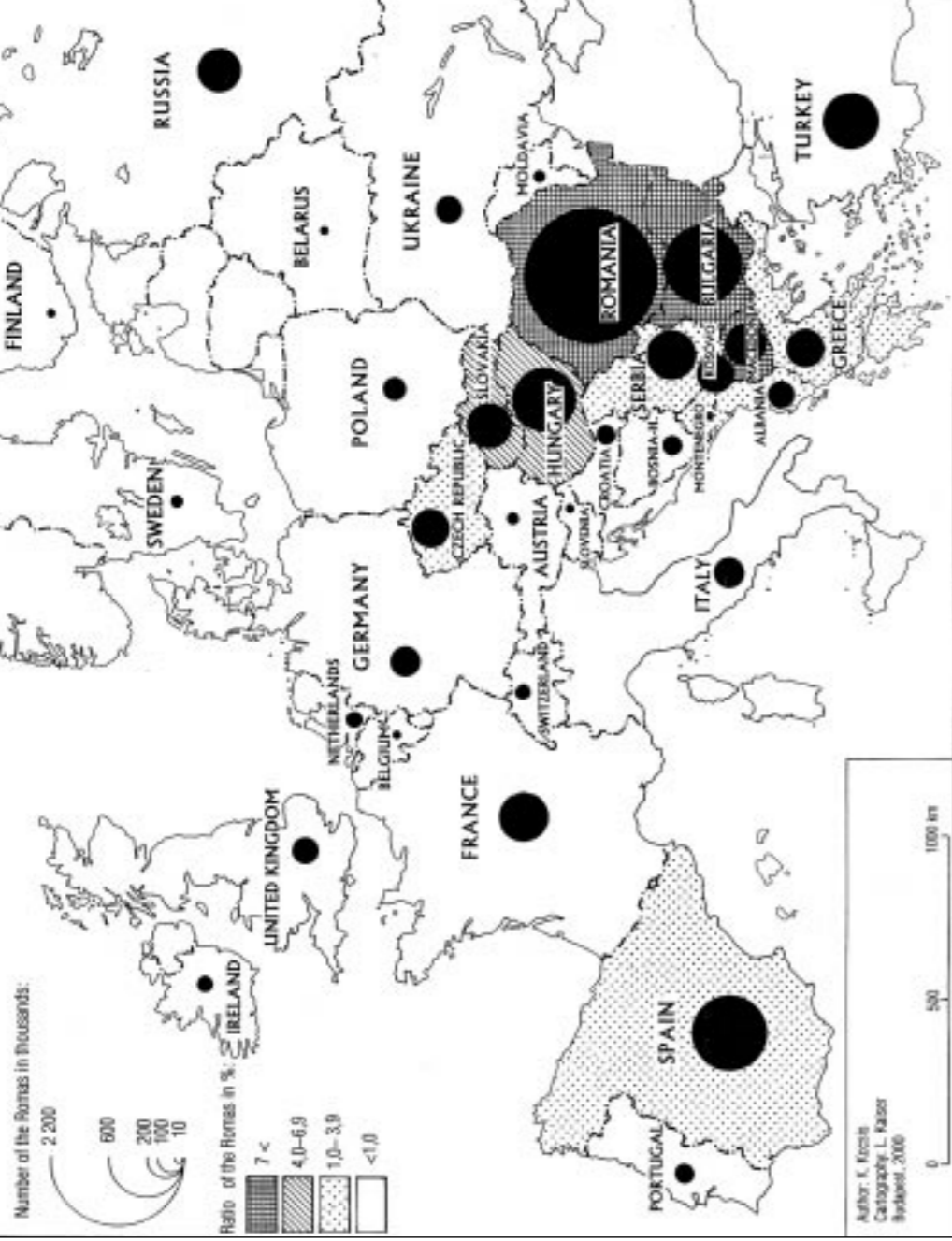
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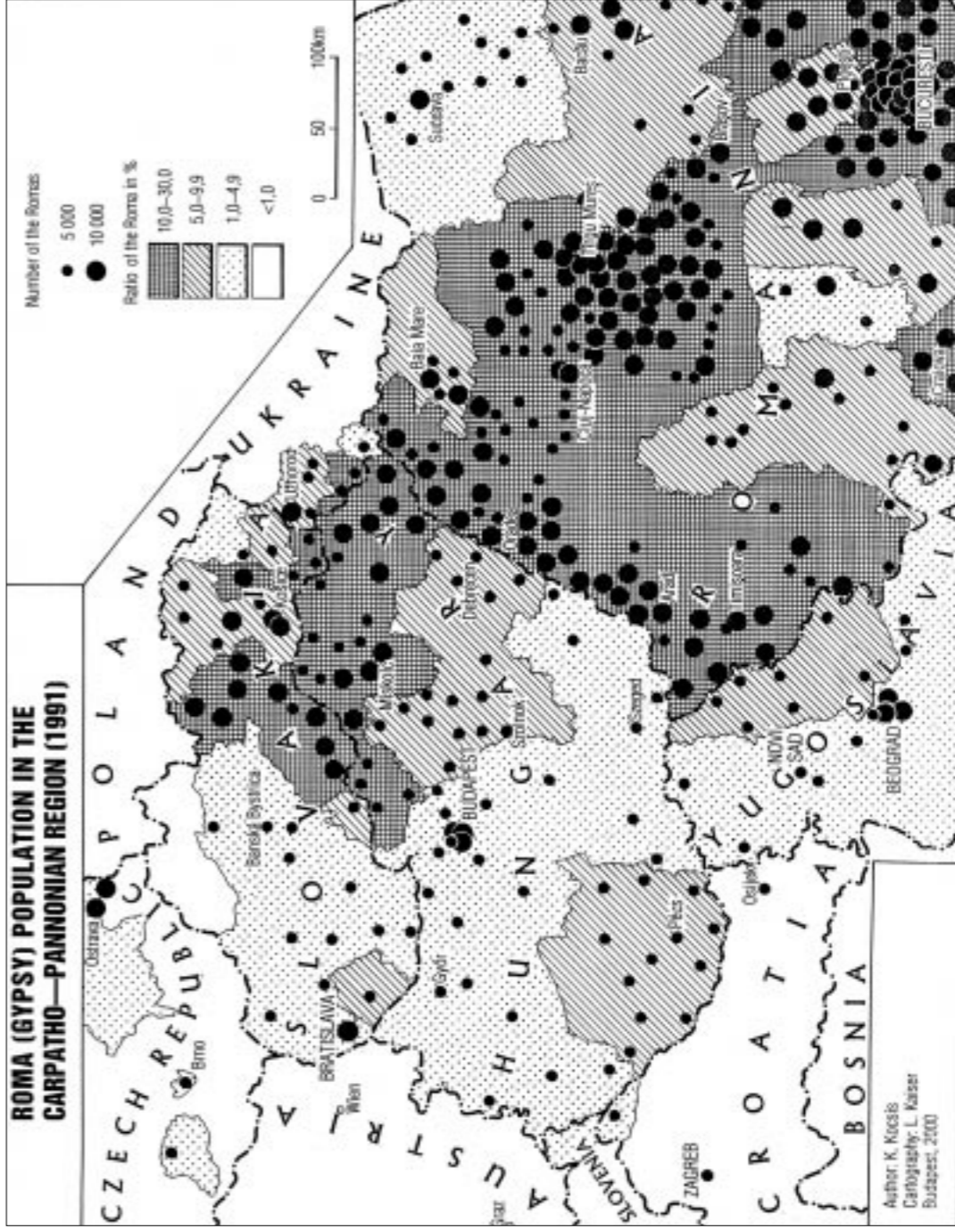
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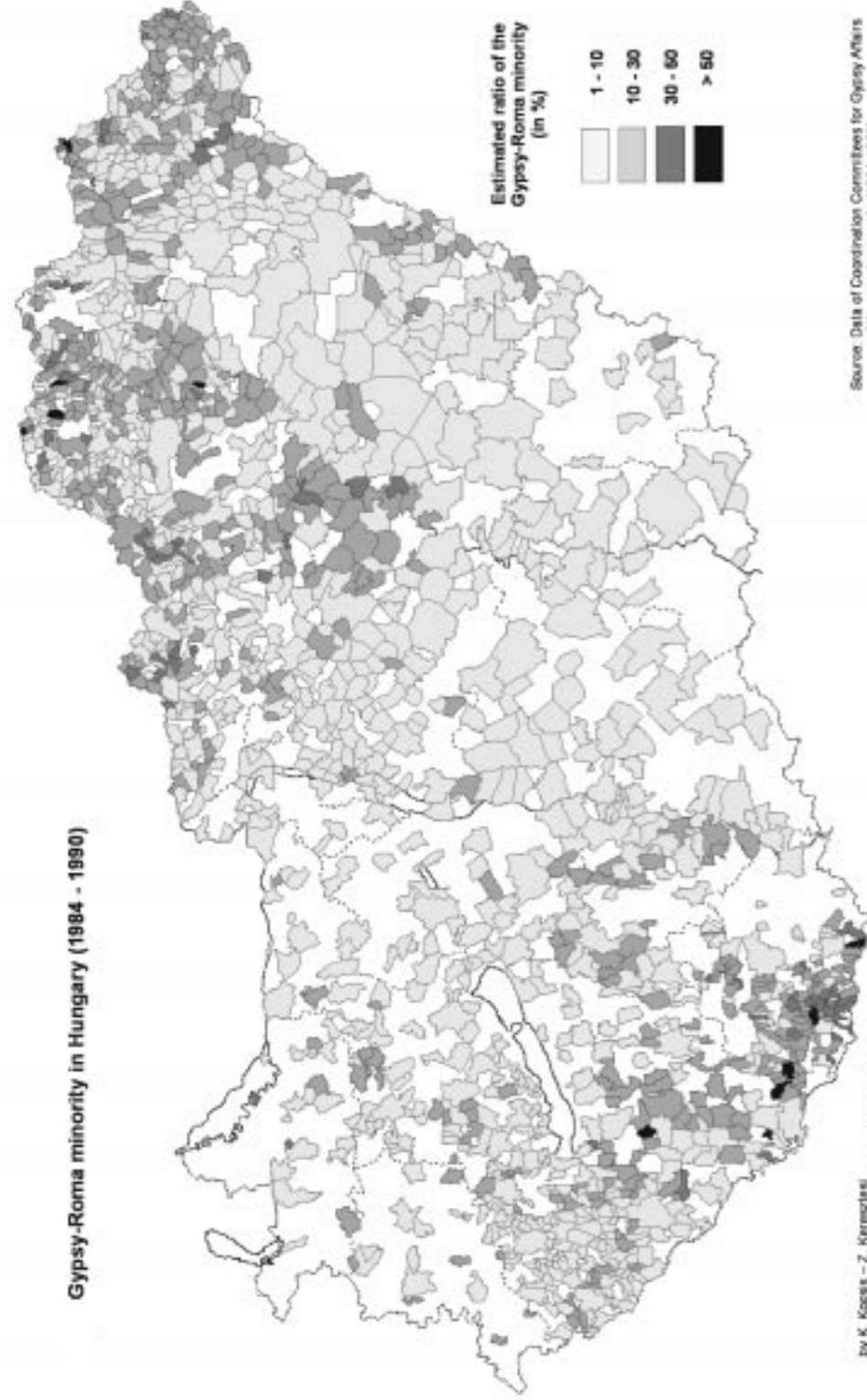
ROMA (GYPSY) POPULATION IN EUROPE (1991)



ROMA (GYPSY) POPULATION IN THE CARPATHO-PANNONIAN REGION (1991)



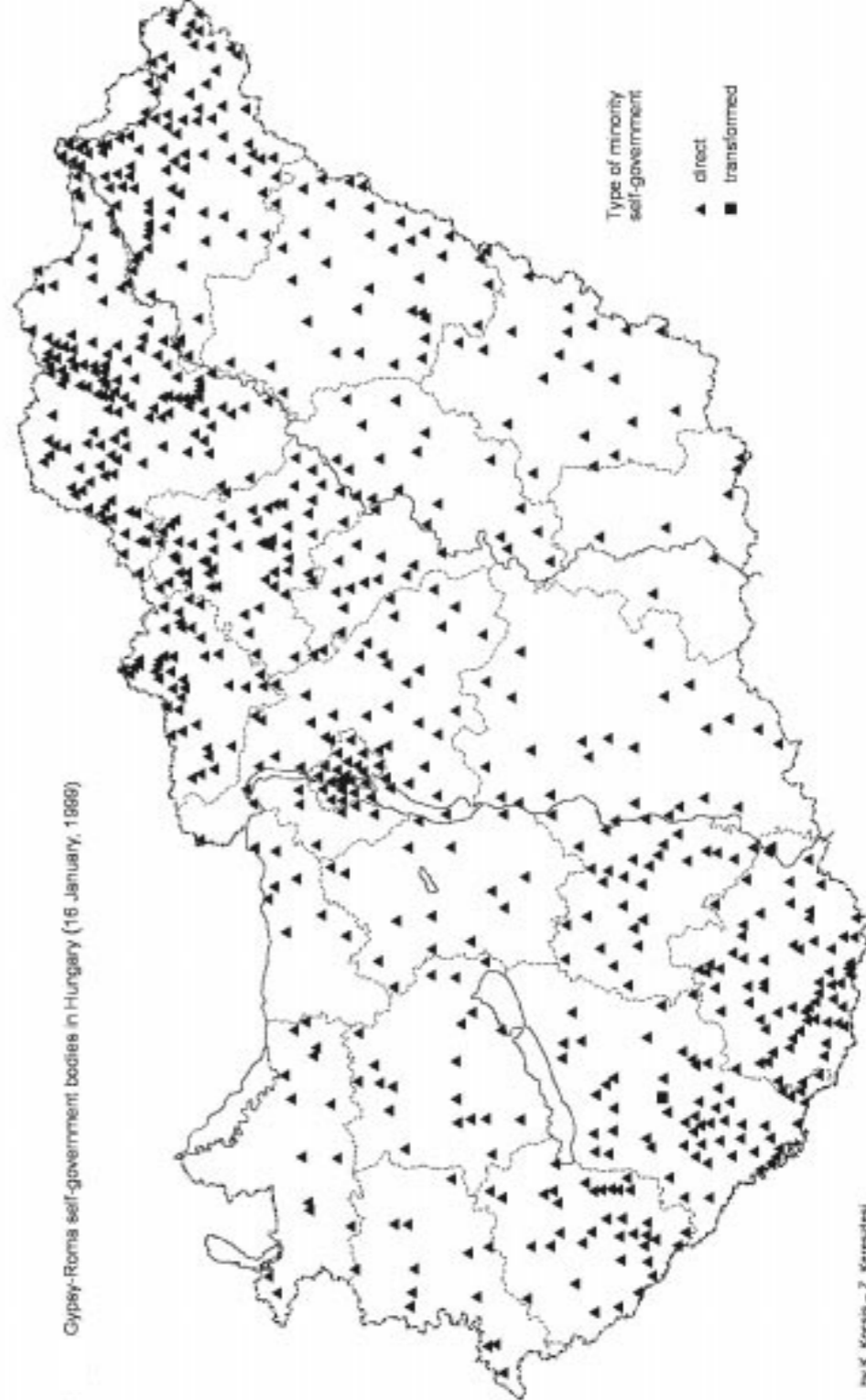
Gypsy-Roma minority in Hungary (1984 - 1990)



By K. Kocsis - Z. Keresztési
Geographical Research Institute, HAS, Budapest, 1999

Source: Data of Coordination Committees for Gypsy Affairs
of the county councils (1984-1990)

Gypsy-Roma self-government bodies in Hungary (16 January, 1999)



By K. Kocsis - Z. Keresztési
Geographical Research Institute, HAS, Budapest, 1999

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