

Institutionalisation and Emancipation

compiled by the editors

Strive for Justice | Towards an International Representation | The Awakening of the “Romani Movement” – the First World Romani Congress (1971) | The Second Romani World Congress (1978) | Recognition of Genocide and Institutionalisation of Roma-Politics | A Shift to the East | Political Participation on National and Community Level | The Challenge of Cooperation | Future Prospects

➤ *For the most part of the 20th century, the Roma’s emancipatory activities remained largely isolated experiments. In the 1950s and 60s, a growing number of organisations originated, preparing the ground for the “Romani-Movement” of the 1970s. This decade saw the emergence of local and national Roma organisations in large numbers and of a variety of goals, and significant efforts were made towards a political representation of the Roma at an international level. Since 1989, in several Eastern European countries Roma have increasingly been represented in communal and national political bodies.*

GELEM, GELEM

*Gelem, gelem, lungone dromensa
Maladilem baxtale Romensa
A Romale katar tumen aven,
E carensa baxtale dromensa?*

*A Romale, a Čhavale
Vi man sas ek bari familija,
Murdadas la e kali legija
Aven mansa sa lumnijake Roma,*

*Kaj putajile e romane droma
Ake vrijama, ušti Rom akana,
Men khutasa mišto kaj kerasa!
A Romale, a Čhavale*

I’VE TRAVELLED, TRAVELLED

*I’ve travelled, travelled long roads,
And I met happy Roma
O Roma, from where have you come,
With tents on happy roads?*

*O Roma, o fellow Roma
Once I had a great family
The Black Legion murdered them
Now come, all the world’s Roma*

*For the Romani roads have opened
Now is the time, now rise up Roma,
We will rise high if we act!
O Roma, o fellow Roma*

III. I “Gelem, Gelem” was proposed for official Roma anthem at the first World Romani Congress in London, 1971. It is very probably the most frequently recorded Romani song today. (The Romani text is shown as written by Jarko Jovanović during the 1971 Congress, after a traditional melody.)

INTRODUCTION

The first attempts at Roma emancipatory activities originated in Eastern European countries.

At the end of the 19th century, Lazar Naftanaila was the first to try to organise the Romanian Roma in his “Infratirea Neorustica” (Association of The Brotherhood of New Farmers). In Bulgaria, there are meetings recorded for 1905 and 1906, where Romani leaders drew up petitions to the national par-

liament, demanding electoral rights for their people, which had been removed from them.

Beginning in Poland and Romania in the 1930s, the first attempts were made to unite the representative bodies of one country and set up national organisations. Such endeavours, however, more often than not, failed due to internal rivalries and claims of leadership.

In Soviet Russia, with the assistance of the state, in 1925 a voluntary

society became the “All-Russian Union of Gypsies”, led by Andrei Taranov, member of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), and Ivan Rom-Lebedev. The dissolution of the union in 1928 did not affect the multitude of cultural, social, and educational activities which had emerged by then and which continued until a general change in state policies in the late 1930s.

In the Western European countries, there were no similar activities at all before World War II.

THE ROMA’S EMANCIPATORY ACTIVITIES IN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES

Although the Roma of Eastern Europe, especially Yugoslavia, were to play a crucial role in the emancipatory activities on an international level, they mainly originated in Western Europe. This is mainly due to the fact that the very establishment and development of Roma organisations in communist countries was not possible without the approval and active support of the state and party structures.

The “United General Cultural Organisation of Gypsy Minorities ‘Ekhipe’” (“Ekhipe”: Romani for “unity”) in Bulgaria headed by Shakir Pashov, a well-known Roma activist and long time functionary of the Bulgarian Communist Party, was created on March 6, 1945. “Ekhipe” set up many local branches and the “Romano Esi” (“Voice of the Roma”) newspaper was published

(later renamed “Nevo Drom” – New Road – together with the “Roma Central Gypsy Musical Theatre”). Towards the end of the 1940s the policy changed radically, and Shakir Pashov was expelled from the Bulgarian Communist Party and sent to the Belene concentration camp, the Roma press and theatre ceased to exist and the local branches of the Roma organisations became part of the “Fatherland Front” (a mass public organisation dominated by the Bulgarian Communist Party). In 1957 an attempt was made to revive the organised movement of Roma; nevertheless, this was quickly stopped and Roma were placed entirely under the auspices of the Fatherland Front who also published the “New Life Gypsy” newspaper (until 1988). [III. 3]

In Hungary, the “Magyar Ciganyok Művelődési Szovetseg” (Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Association) headed by Maria Laszlo was founded in 1957. She tried to expand her activity and turn it into a national minority organisation, however it only existed

STRIVE FOR JUSTICE

After 1945, when most governments did not accept responsibility for the crimes committed during the Nazi time and felt no need to deal with the consequences, the Roma did not have a strong enough lobby. Only individual non-Roma organisations stood up for the once again marginalised minority. Their work for justice and equality, however, did not bring forth significant achievements.

The denial of basic rights, such as in the case of Germany, where the Roma (that is to say mainly Sinti) were ignored in the reparation process, as well as ongoing discrimination brought about the founding of new organisations.

Starting in the 1950s, different Sinti associations were founded in Germany, whose primary aim was to help survivors of the Nazi persecution assert their right to retribution and support trials against their former torturers. Later on, they expanded their activities to the fight for civil rights and social equality for the Sinti.

A milestone in the history of Roma emancipation was the foundation of the “Verband rassisch verfolgter nicht-Juden” (Association of racially persecuted non-Jews) by Oskar and Vinzenz Rose in 1956. Out of this association evolved the “Verband Deutscher Sinti” (Association of German Sinti) in 1972, whose local and regional organisations eventually merged to form the “Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma” (Central Council of Ger-

man Sinti and Roma) in 1982. Although not unchallenged in its claim to represent all Sinti and Roma living in Germany, this organisation effectively tackled the issues of reparation and official recognition of Sinti and Roma and became one of the most influential representative bodies of Roma in Europe.

Already in 1968, the unsolved issue of nationality and the uncertain status of residence for immigrant Roma had led to the founding of the International Gypsy Rights Commission in Hamburg. However, in 1969 the envisioned creation of a united German representation failed due to conflicting claims of leadership by Roma delegates as well as differences in opinion on the competences of a trans-regional and trans-Roma-group committee.

TOWARDS AN INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION

As in the case of Germany, attempts were made in France to unite all the Roma groups living in the country within one common representation. France moreover functioned as a starting point for endeavours to move the initiated process of self-organisation to an international level.

In 1960, Ionel Rotaru founded the “Communauté Mondiale Gitane” (World Gypsy Community, CMG) in Pa-

ris. From the CMG, which was dissolved by the French government in 1965, the “Comité International Tzigane” (CIT) evolved. Headed by Vanko Rouda, the committee started out to transcend existing borders among Roma resulting from national, religious, and group differences. The CIT, which worked closely together with the Romani Evangelical Church founded in 1952 by Clement Le Cossec, made contact with foreign organisations like the “Gypsy Council” in Great Britain (founded 1966) and the “Nordic Roma Council” in Sweden (founded 1973).

The CIT’s declared aim was to stop forced assimilation and improve the Roma’s legal and social conditions worldwide. For this purpose, it used modern strategies: public relations, media campaigns, demonstrations and lobbying which intended to make governments and society change their ways of thinking and help the Roma achieve a higher level of equality. The CIT, renamed “Komiteto Lumniako Romano” (in French “Comité International Rom”, CIR) in 1971, also issued a periodical, “La Voix Mondiale Tsigane”. In 1971,

for two years. The “Ciganyszövetseg” (Gypsy Council) headed by Menyhert Lakatos was created in 1974, and in 1985 was succeeded by “Országos Ciganytanács” (National Gypsy Council) headed by Jozsef Daroczi. The new Roma organisation was mainly an active factor in the cultural sphere.

In Czechoslovakia Roma organisations existed for a short time. The “Zväz Ciganov-Romov” (Union of Gypsy-Roma) headed by Anton Facuna was created in 1968 in Slovakia, and the following year the similar “Svaz Cikanu-Romu” (Union of Gypsy – Roma) was founded in the Czech Socialist Republic. The two organisations became one under the “People’s Front” (a mass public organisation dominated by the Communist Party). The Roma organisations created a network of local branches and attempted to carry out activities in the sphere of employment, in improving housing conditions and the education of Roma children, in resolving the problems of Roma women and in the field of promotion

of Roma culture. However they existed only for several years and were disbanded in the early 1970s.

The situation in Yugoslavia is a specific case. The “Rom Association”, created in 1969, built up branches and other Roma associations throughout the country. In the 1970s, over 60 Roma organisations existed, with their number constantly increasing. In 1986 they united in a Union of Roma Associations in Yugoslavia.

In fact, in the other countries of Eastern Europe there was no organised Romani movement. In Poland and Romania several local Roma associations, whose activities were limited to the cultural sphere, arose in the 70s (organising schools and groups for Roma music and dances, participation in feasts and festivals, etc). Similar activities took place on a large scale in the tens of Roma musical and dance ensembles in the Soviet Union, and there were sporadic examples even in Albania.

III. 2 (provided by Elena Marushiakova / Veselin Popov)

the CIR formally organised the First World Romani Congress. By 1972,

twenty-three international organisations in twenty-one countries, including

Canada and Australia, had been linked through the CIR.

THE AWAKENING OF THE “ROMANI MOVEMENT” – THE FIRST WORLD ROMANI CONGRESS (1971)

The launching of the later so-called “Romani Movement” triggered a radical change in the behaviour of Roma societies in dealing with political and social realities: for the longest time, the Roma’s destiny had been defined from “outside” by the majority populations. Their behavioural pattern throughout the centuries corresponded to that of a so-called “exit society”, as it was characterised by avoidance of conflicts and escape from unfavourable conditions.

Towards the early 1970s, a small but proper Roma elite had formed in Eastern and Western Europe, which for the first time voiced Roma issues in public and showed opposition against the

Roma’s prescribed social and economic status. [III. 2]

The striving for equality and social recognition to a great degree resulted from a change in the way the Roma dealt with their own identity. Assimilation to the majority population and self denial were replaced by clear public support and acceptance of Roma culture. Integration no longer was to depend on the loss of cultural identity. The Roma demanded to be recognised and respected by society as Roma. Along with political demands, there was the attempt to describe the history and culture of the Roma from the inside and make this accessible to Non-Roma.

The formation of the World Romani Congress in 1971 constitutes the breakthrough of the new political movement. Its first conference in London with participants from 14 states was an expression of the need for “international

unity”, the fight against social marginalisation and a common striving for a positive future.

Based on the existence of a so-called “Romani Nation”, the song “Gelem, Gelem” was proposed as the official Romani anthem and a common flag was created. The motto “Opre Roma!” became the political credo of the Romani Movement and its fight for social justice and equality. The choice of the terms “Rom” and “Romani” as official designations was to do away with old prejudices and help create new self confidence. Slobodan Beberski was elected Honorary president, Dr. Jan Čibula from Czechoslovakia (Vice-)President, and Grattan Puxon, Head of the British Gypsy Council, General Secretary, and commissions were established which dealt with war crimes, social and educational conditions, as well as the language and culture of the Roma. [IIIs. 1, 4, 5]

THE SECOND WORLD ROMANI CONGRESS (1978)

The London Congress triggered and strengthened emancipatory activities worldwide, which resulted in the for-

mation of other politically active Roma organisations within and outside Europe. Consequently, the Second Romani World Congress, which took place in Geneva in April 1978, already had the participation of no less than 50 Roma organisations from all over Europe, the

United States, India and Pakistan. An important step for the future was the formation of the International Romani Union (IRU) in 1977, joining regional and national representatives. In the following years and decades, the IRU managed to make governments pay closer



III. 3
Shakir Pashov (centre) among participants at a conference of the All-Gypsies' Organisation against Fascism and Racism and for the Promotion of the Cultural Development of the Gypsy Minority in Bulgaria, March 12-13, 1949.

(from the archives of Studii Romani, Sofia, Bulgaria)



III. 4
Participants at the first World Romani Congress, held in London 1971, singing the anthem "Gelem, gelem" (with words by Jarko Jovanović, white coat). Jan Čibula (far left) later became the first President of the International Romani Union and Grattan Puxon (far right) played a key role in setting up the second congress. Walsall, 1971. Behind (l and r) are Ladislav Demeter, Vanko Rouda and Juan de Dios Ramirez.

(from Acton / Klímová 2001, p. 159)

attention to Roma issues and push Roma lobbying with and within the international community. In 1979 the IRU was accepted into the economic and social councils of the UN as a private organisation.

The international recognition of the Romani movement gained new impulses, with support from India. Indian politicians worked to establish and intensify cultural contacts between the Roma and their country of origin. In the

course of an international Roma festival that took place in Chandigarh, the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi received a Roma delegation, assuring the Roma of India's support in the presence of the United Nations.

RECOGNITION OF GENOCIDE AND INSTITUTIONALISATION OF ROMA POLITICS

The Third World Romani Congress was held in Göttingen in 1981. In light of ongoing violations of civil rights, 300 delegates from 22 countries demanded that the Helsinki File be applied to Roma people. Another emphasis of the discussion which was worked on under the patronage of the "Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker" (Society for the Protection of Endangered Peoples) was the fate of the Roma during the time of National Socialism. The German government was asked to recognise the Roma genocide and work out an appropriate solution to the problem of reparation. In the course of a reception of representatives of the Central Council of Ger-

man Sinti and Roma with Chancellor Schmidt (and also later with opposition leader Kohl), this official recognition of the genocide was achieved in 1982. Furthermore, foundations for reparation and financing of the Sinti and Roma organisations were laid.

This success had positive effects on the self-confidence of the entire movement. Additionally, in the period of time between the third and fourth (held in Warsaw in 1990) congresses an improvement of the Roma's social conditions and the conservation of their national and minority rights was achieved in several countries. At meetings with representatives of different institutions of the UN, UNESCO, the European Council, and the EC, Roma issues were discussed by international committees. In this way, the kind of conditions needed for the successful work of Roma

organisations could be established. In 1986, the International Romani Union became a member of UNICEF.

Both the so-called "Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe" as part of the Council of Europe, and the Human Rights Committee of the European Parliament repeatedly dealt with the situation of the Roma. After the IRU had been accepted into the OSCE in 1990, Permanent Office of Contact for Sinti and Roma was established in Warsaw as part of the Conference in 1994.

In the wake of the Fifth World Romani Congress held in Prague in the year 2000, reforms had to be carried out within the IRU and new structures were established. What followed was the foundation of a Roma Parliament, which from then on was to define the direction of internal and international IRU politics. Along with the parliament, which is

THE LEADING ROLE OF YUGOSLAV ROMA ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

The vivid Yugoslav Romani Movement quickly came to the fore on the international scene. The delegation of Yugoslavia took an active part in the First World Congress of Roma held in London in 1971. Representatives from 8 countries – and participants from some more – attended, among them 2 from Eastern Europe (Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia). Slobodan Berberski was elected Honorary President of the Congress and the International Romani Union (then known by the name of RIC) was founded at its base, with Berberski as first President of this international Romani organisation. According to the documentation of the congress one of the main tasks of the newly established organisation was to spread the example of Yugoslavia as a state with an exemplary role in its attitude towards Roma. Even the flag of the Roma adopted at the Congress existed in two variants – one the “official” one, known to the public as the blue-green flag with the Old Indian “chakra” in the centre, and the other, for Eastern Europe also including a red star.

Yugoslav official support for the international Romani Movement was constant and took various forms. In 1974 the First World Festival of Gypsy Culture took place at Chandigarh, India

and a Roma delegation at the festival (chiefly representatives from Yugoslavia) was received by Prime Minister Indira Ghandi. The meeting was arranged via the channels of the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs via the Non-Aligned Movement (at the time Yugoslavia and India were leading members of the Non-Aligned movement).

During the first stages of the development of the international Romani Movement the policy of Yugoslavia was an important factor in its support. The Yugoslav delegation at the first three congresses were supported by the state and were the largest, which was the reason why there always were Yugoslav Roma in leading positions in the leading bodies of the IRU. At the second congress in 1978 in Geneva the IRU voted a new leadership – Dr Jan Čibula (an emigrant from Czechoslovakia) was elected President and Shaip Yusuf (Yugoslavia) Secretary General. At the third congress of the IRU in 1981 Sait Balic was elected President (at the time a member of the Central Committee of the Union of Yugoslav Communists), and Rajko Djuric (Yugoslavia) Secretary General. The final of Yugoslav influence on the international Romani Movement was the fourth congress of the IRU in Warsaw in 1990, when Rajko Djuric was elected President.

III. 5 (provided by Elena Marushiakova / Veselin Popov)

the union’s decisive agency, a new executive organ was established in the form of a committee. Former IRU President Dr. Emil Ščuka was elected President of this committee made up of 15 members. The sixth and so far last World Romani Congress was held in Lanciano, Italy, in 2004, where a new President, Stanislaw Stankiewicz, was elected. [Ills. 6, 7]

Yet, the very fact that their problems are being institutionalised often does not meet with the Roma’s agreement. So far, success in the realisation of Roma demands has not only been impaired by resistance from the various governments, but the Roma themselves differ greatly in opinion and standpoint. There are still serious internal discus-

sions on their minority status. Whereas some organisations support the recognition of the Roma as a “non-territorial” nation or “trans-national” minority, others claim the recognition of the Roma as a national or ethnic minority. In light of future progress, a status combining national and trans-national membership needs to be found.

A SHIFT TO THE EAST

In Western Europe, numerous independent organisations emerged from 1970 onwards, funded by paying members and sometimes subsidised by national authorities. The wealth of these associations was, and still is, focused on human rights, cultural or educational issues. In France and Great Britain, respectively, the interest was mainly centred on the problems faced by the travelling Roma population, such as hostility from the majority population, the lack of proper caravan sites, and education problems. To the present day, many achievements were made by organisations in Great

Britain, France, Germany, Scandinavia and other countries. For instance, autochthonous Roma were declared a national minority with special rights in Austria (1993), in Finland (1995), and in Germany. Mainly due to the comparatively small number of Roma in most western countries, the promotion of political representation was not at the top of the activist’s lists.

On the initiatives by the Hamburg-based “Roma & Cinti Union” (founded 1980), EUROM and, shortly after, the Roma National Congress (RNC) were founded. This latter organisation, today in addition to the IRU the second major international Roma organisation, focused its activities on the recognition of the Roma as a European

minority and the passing of a “Roma Charter” by international organisations, which would officially lay down Roma rights.

In Central and Eastern Europe, apart from the above cited and individual activities, the process of Roma emancipation was delayed for some twenty years. Ignited by the political changes after 1989, and fuelled by the urgent needs of a population under enormous economic pressure, regional and trans-regional unions formed in all Eastern European countries with significant Roma minorities. Yet the beginnings of this social, political and cultural process of renewal proved to be difficult, as there were major tensions among the Roma due to cultural and social hetero-



III. 6

Emil Ščuka (left), elected IRU Secretary General at the Fourth World Romani Congress and President at the fifth congress, talks to Estref Abduramanoski, the President of Australian Roma Union. Prague, July 2000.

(from Acton / Klímová 2001, p. 192)



III. 7

Lyobov Demetrova, Russian Roma Union, sings Romani anthem to open the Fifth World Romani Congress in Prague.

(from Acton / Klímová 2001, p. 171)

geneity, and gaps between democratic principles and traditional authorities as well as between political and personal ambitions. Moreover, there was great political opposition to Roma self-organisation.

The 1990s saw the rapid emergence of NGOs concerned with human rights monitoring, housing development, legal consultation, educational promotion, health improvement, social

help, media lobbying, training of mediators, press reporting etc. Funded by foreign, mostly US-based foundations and trusts, and run almost exclusively by non-Roma, this “Gypsy industry”, as it has been called sarcastically, proved and still proves to be problematic in several respects. The overall adequacy and efficiency of the many efforts has been questioned repeatedly. For instance, the engagement of influential international

organisations like the “Open Society Institute”, and the founding of legal advocacy agencies, most notably the “European Roma Rights Centre” (ERRC) in Budapest, helped raise the issues of Eastern European Roma to a national and international level. On the other hand, almost without exception it did not create job opportunities for Roma, despite the various trainee-programmes allegedly designed for this purpose.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION ON NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY LEVEL

The breakdown of the communist regimes did not only enable the Roma to carry out lobbying activities in their own countries and abroad. It also offered the possibility to participate in national politics. They approached sympathetic political parties to be included on electoral nominee lists, or founded their own parties, which in turn formed alliances with larger parties of similar ideological orientation. In this way, Roma candidates in Romania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary managed to enter parliament. In 2004, both the Hungarian politician and anthropologist, Livia Járó-

ka (of the conservative party FIDESZ-MPSZ), and the communication expert and journalist, Viktória Mohácsi (of the liberal SZDSZ), became Members of the European Parliament. The first MEP of Roma roots had been Juan de Dios Ramirez-Heredia, in 1986 founder and since President of the Spanish Unión Romaní, who held a seat in the European Parliament for a short period in 1999.

In Czechoslovakia, for example, in March 1990 representatives of the Roma intelligentsia registered the “Roma Obcanska Iniciativa” (Roma Civic Initiative, ROI) with the Ministry of the Interior, a Roma political party with a nationwide basis. Its leader, Emil Ščuka, later became President of the International Roma Union. In June 1990, the ROI ran in the parliamentary elections in coa-

lition with the Civic Forum and Public Against Violence, respective political movements that played a crucial role in bringing down the communist regime. The ROI obtained four seats in the Czech National Parliament, and one mandate in Slovakia’s National Council.

The ROI decided to run as an independent political party in the 1992 parliamentary elections. However, it received only 0.53% of votes. The increasing number of conflicts between the Roma and members of the majority population in the mid-90s indirectly led to the establishment of a new Roma political entity called Roma Intelligentsia for Coexistence in the Slovak Republic (RIS). Since 1998, Roma politicians have tried to unite Roma political parties in Slovakia, but there were only unsuccessful negotiations.

HUNGARY: LOCAL AND NATIONAL STRUCTURES OF SUPPORT

As an institutional framework by the state, the National and Ethnic Minorities Office (NEKH) was established in 1990 to develop and oversee minority policies in Hungary.

The Minorities Act of 1993 expanded minority rights and established Hungary's unique Minority Self-Government (MSG) system, which allows minorities to form their own elected bodies to work in partnership with both local and national governments. The MSG system for the Roma and other minorities was established in 1995. The approximately 1,000 communal Roma self-governments receive a state support of € 2,700 each. The communities are obliged to provide a local infrastructure for the Roma organisations. In this context, however, the communities often explain that they can only act within their "range of possibilities". Another major problem with the MSG system has been the fact that until recently anyone could vote for representatives to minority councils; thus, it has been estimated that fewer than ten per cent of those who voted

for Roma councils were Roma themselves. After a modification of the law in June 2005, in order to have the right to vote, the voters have to be registered as Roma by the Roma organisations. But there are only an estimated third of the Roma who are willing to openly identify themselves as such, and, as many organisations argue, even fewer of them will register for elections.

In 2002 the government established a new Roma Office under the Office of the Prime Minister, to coordinate Roma policies across the government. Consequently, specific Roma topics can be discussed at the highest political level. Many of NEKH's responsibilities related to the social integration of the Roma and coordination on sectoral policies have been transferred to the new Roma Office. Responsibility for Roma culture and minority rights remains with NEKH. In addition, a Parliamentary Commissioner for Ethnic and National Minorities (Minorities Ombudsman) was established. This institution is monitoring the implementation of minority rights, investigating complaints, and pursuing remediation for the infringements of the rights of national and ethnic minorities.

III. 8

The municipal elections of 1998 were more successful. The Roma were featured mostly on candidates' lists of the ROI and the RIS, and ran as independent candidates, but they also appeared on candidates' lists of other

parties. 254 Roma candidates ran for deputies' posts and seven candidates ran for mayoral positions. In the end, a total of 56 Roma were elected as deputies and six Roma candidates became mayors. Merging attempts have conti-

nued without major results. They failed to agree on a common strategy for the national elections in 2002, which accordingly, like all the elections after 1990, did not result in parliament seats for Roma.

THE CHALLENGE OF COOPERATION

Generally speaking, in view of the high percentage of Roma in Central and Eastern European countries, their political influence is still very small. The reason for this situation can be seen not only in ignorance and missing financial support on the part of the non-Roma, but also in the substantial heterogeneity of the Roma population throughout Europe.

Many groupings differ considerably in terms of housing, language (some speak Romani, others do not, those who do, speak different dialectal variants of Romani, etc.), and the level of marginalisation, assimilation and integration. These factors influence the "romanipen" ("Roma-being") – the fulfilment and the maintenance of the specific culture of the Roma, and accordingly, self-esteem and social standing within the Roma society. Members of "traditional", "real"

Roma groups often would not cooperate with members of "assimilated" groups, which are mostly considered inferior.

Other tensions within the Romani Movement result from the heterogeneity of their leading persons. This group consists of people who are highly respected among the Roma but often, due to their lack of formal education, poorly equipped to handle modern structures of administration. Recently, there has been a growing number of young, educated people who are taking on political responsibility. The contrast between traditional and modern democratic leadership has caused a dramatic increase in Romani organisations and has triggered competition for the right of representation.

Despite the differences between individual organisations, alliances could be established in some countries in order to ensure an at least partly united form of action. The resolution of internal conflicts was fundamental, especially because the individual organisations

in Eastern and South-Eastern European countries hardly differed from each other in their demands (recognition of the Roma as an ethnic and national minority, financial support of independent cultural centres, presence in the media and corresponding representation on political committees).

In Western Europe, so-called "autochthonous" (well-established) and "allochthonous" (newly-arrived) Roma are politically played off against each other due to their different legal status. In Austria, for example, the Roma who have been living in the country for one century or more are recognised as a minority, the allochthonous Roma, on the other hand, are not recognised as such, irrespective of whether they have Austrian nationality or not. Accordingly they may not enjoy the rights and support for ethnic groups. As a consequence, most Roma organisations in Austria – as in many other countries – focus on intra-group issues, and cooperation between

NO NEED FOR PATERNALISM

The founding of the “Euro-Roma” organisation in Bulgaria marks an outstanding event in the development of Roma emancipation. In 1998, 3,386 delegates from 205 communal Roma organisations gathered in Sofia with the aim of consolidating the Roma community, regardless of which grouping they belong to. Funded by Roma – mostly Kalderaš – exclusively, “Euro-Roma” started out to prove that Roma do not need sponsoring by the state or (inter)national

NGOs. The initiative led to a considerable success of various local Roma parties in the 1999 communal elections. Although the pressure of the established parties continued to increase – with Roma-leaders imprisoned or driven to exile – in the following years, the 2003 communal elections brought even greater success, with 164 Roma elected as members of different municipality councils. Besides this, a considerable number of Roma were elected as mayors of many villages that are inhabited predominantly by Roma.

III. 9 (see Marushiakova / Popov 2005, pp. 433-455)

them is limited. There are but a few exceptions, for instance the Hamburg-

based Roma National Congress (RNC) or “Romano Centro” in Vienna, who of-

fer legal, social and educational support for newly arrived Roma as well.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Thanks to the founding of Roma organisations, worldwide lobbying, cooperation with international organisations and the institutionalisation of their issues, the Roma today are in a position to influence political processes on a communal, national and international level.

Over the past years, various departments of the Council of Europe and European Union have been dealing with Roma issues. Their numerous recommendations, however, have not yet been turned into many significant actions. After all, there are two recent developments, which, judging from their very design and first results, may well pro-

ve a major step in the process of Roma emancipation.

In 2004, the “European Roma and Travellers Forum” (ERTF) was founded in Strasbourg. As a pan-European association, the forum aims at bringing together international and national Roma organisations and linking them with the European Commission, the Council of Europe, OSCE and other international bodies and organisations. At the first meeting of the ERTF in December 2005, Rudko Kawczynski, leader of the Roma National Congress, was elected President. The Forum registered its national bodies, which in turn are responsible for registering the various organisations that participate and have a vote in the Forum’s assembly in Strasbourg. In 2005, following a conference in Hungary

in 2003, an initiative of nine Eastern European governments (Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Serbia, Romania, Slovak Republic, and Montenegro) together with international institutions (among others the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the World Bank), international NGOs (like the Open Society Institute) and international Roma organisations declared the years until 2015 the “Decade of Roma Inclusion”. An evaluation of the results of this initiative will only be possible in the years to come, yet the mere fact that the Roma Decade involves several Eastern European states at government level as well as Roma organisations marks an outstanding event in the history of Roma self-organisation and emancipation.

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