

The International Dimension

Migration and Institutions

International factors have had an important effect on the status of East European Gypsies. My task here is to marshal empirical evidence in support of this contention by analyzing three complex issues. In Part I, I discuss Gypsy migration to Western Europe (and to a smaller degree, North America) after the collapse of East European state-socialism. I argue that migration relieves the Roma's marginal conditions only in the economic sense and only in relative terms. Their social exclusion may actually increase because West European governments and societies are often just as inhospitable toward them as are those they leave behind. In Part II, I briefly examine the international Romani movement that emerged prior to but intensified in the 1990s. I contend that the lack of focus, fractiousness, and poor leadership of the Roma's international organizations in many ways mirror the characteristics of their political mobilization in East European states. In Part III, I analyze the activities and track record of non-Gypsy international organizations (IOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in their attempts to publicize the Roma's plight and to improve their conditions. The key argument is that by monitoring and criticizing state minority policies as well as pursuing some important projects, they have been worthy champions of the Gypsies' cause.

PART I: GYPSY INTERSTATE MIGRATION AFTER 1989

Socialist states restricted travel to the West and heavily guarded their borders, thereby effectively preventing most citizens from leaving. Large-scale emigration soon followed the postcommunist East European governments' decision to reestablish full freedom of movement. In November 1992 the European Community's polling organization, Eurobarometer, asked nearly 20,000 people in 18 Central and East European countries the likelihood of their moving to Western Europe to live and work. The response from 7.3% of those surveyed was

"definitely" or "probably," a figure that translated to about 16.7 million people across the region. As it turned out, many stayed, but by 1992 hundreds of thousands of East Europeans (600,000 from the former Yugoslavia alone) migrated to Western Europe.¹ Myron Weiner has suggested that internal ethnic conflicts are often internationalized through migration and refugee flows.² This is precisely what occurred in the Roma's case. They constituted a large proportion of those leaving for Western Europe, thereby making the East European states' "Gypsy problem" into an international issue.

Migration

In the early 1990s tens of thousands of Roma left Eastern Europe, particularly Bulgaria, Romania, and Yugoslavia, to escape discrimination, persecution, and, especially, economic hardship. Many made their way through Hungary and Czechoslovakia to Poland, which, given its geographical proximity, became a major stopover for those trying to reach Germany and, to a lesser extent, other West European states. Of the approximately 450,000 asylum seekers who entered Germany in 1992, 100,000 came through Poland. The influx of tens of thousands of Roma from Romania and Bulgaria who began to arrive in Poland as early as late 1990 was, according to Adam Bartosz, comparable only in its scale to the migration of liberated Gypsy slaves from Moldavia and Wallachia in the 1850s.³ In Warsaw and in numerous Polish towns close to the German border, thousands of Roma camped out under bridges, railway stations, and other public spaces. In 1995, after repeated warnings, Polish police destroyed a Romanian Gypsy settlement under Warsaw's Grota Bridge, forcing its inhabitants to leave. The border town of Zgorzelec had perhaps the largest concentration of Gypsies from the Balkans, waiting for the chance to cross over to Görlitz on the German side. Living conditions in the border areas were abysmal; in some cases

¹ "Public Opinion about the European Community," *Central and Eastern Eurobarometer* no. 3 (Brussels: European Community, February 1993), 37.

² Weiner, Myron. "Peoples and states in a new Ethnic Order?" *Third World Quarterly*, 13:2 (1992): 321-2. See also Aristide Zolberg, "The Next Waves: Migration Theory for a Changing World," *International Migration Review*, 23 (1989): 403-30; F. W. Carter, R. A. French, and J. Salt, "International Migration between East and West in Europe," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 16:3 (July 1993): 467-91; Marco Martiniello and Marc Poncelet, eds., *Migrations et Minorités ethniques dans l'espace Européen* (Brussels: De Boeck-Wesmael, 1993); and John Wrench and John Solomos, eds., *Racism and Migration in Western Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 1993).

³ Adam Bartosz, "The Social and Political Status of the Roma in Poland," *Romua*, no. 40 (January 1994): 22.

Romani women gave birth on the street.⁴ Polish authorities did not know how to handle large numbers of refugees and, in any case, were ill-equipped to care for them. Given the dearth of private charities, the Polish Red Cross had a virtual monopoly on helping the Roma and other refugees. A Red Cross official lamented that the Gypsies were not easy to help because "They want only money, other forms of assistance does not interest them. We have offered them food and clothing which they don't want but we have nothing more to give."⁵

With its high living standards and Europe's most liberal refugee law, Germany acted as a veritable magnet for the vast majority of East European Romani migrants.⁶ German authorities reported that over half of the 35,345 Romanian citizens who reached Germany in 1990 were Roma.⁷ Between January and September 1991 about 91,000 Romanian citizens entered Germany; 81% of them, according to the Gypsy activist Nicolae Gheorghie, were Roma.⁸ The following year 33,600 Romanian Gypsies entered Germany. In 1991 alone, thousands of Roma left Macedonia for the German state of Nord-Rhein-Westphalia.

The postcommunist migration wave affected Yugoslavia more than any other East European state. Large-scale migration had begun prior to the wars that accompanied the breakup of the federation and accelerated after 1991. Moreover, proportionately – and perhaps even in absolute numbers – more Roma left Yugoslavia than any other ethnic group. By late 1991, according to sources in Belgrade, Gypsies were leaving the country "by the thousands daily."⁹ A 1996 fact-finding

⁴ "Romanians, Bulgarians Camping on Polish Border to Cross into Germany," DPA (Warsaw), 20 July 1991; and "Volk ohne Land – Rostock war nur der Auftakt," *Profil* (Vienna), 7 September 1992.

⁵ "In Polen bleibt das Rote Kreuz alleine," *Die Tageszeitung*, 4 December 1993.

⁶ Until it was changed in 1993, the law meant that anyone claiming asylum had to be housed and fed at public expense until their claim was adjudicated. See Hartmut Esser and Hermann Korte, "Federal Republic of Germany," in Thomas Hammar, ed., *European Immigration Policy: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 165-206; and Kay Halbrunner, "Citizenship and Nationhood in Germany," in William Rogers Brubaker, ed., *Immigration and the Politics of Citizenship in Europe and North America* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), 67-80.

⁷ David M. Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1995), 147.

⁸ John Tagliabue, "Romanian Gypsies Search for Safety and Stability in Changing Europe," *New York Times*, 27 November 1991. Between 1990 and 1996 approximately 240,000 people emigrated from Romania, of whom 46.8 percent were 18-40 years old and 52 percent women. See "Nem lanyhul a kivándorlás," *Magyar Nemzet*, 31 January 1997.

⁹ Borba (Belgrade), 19-20 October 1991; cited in Patrick Moore, "The Minorities' Plight amid Civil War," *Report on Eastern Europe* 2:50 (13 December 1991): 32.

mission of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) concluded that few Roma remained in Bosnia-Herzegovina (for instance, 200 of the 5,000–7,000 in Banja Luka, 190 of the 8,000 in Bijeljina), most of them having fled to Western Europe.¹⁰ In 1998–9 many thousands of Roma left the Yugoslav province of Kosovo because they were persecuted by both ethnic Serbs and Albanians.

Most East European Romani migrants preferred Germany as their destination but they attempted to find refuge in other West European states as well, albeit with less success. By the early 1990s there were approximately 15,000 Gypsy asylum seekers in Sweden, although with little chance of being declared bona fide refugees. After a mob attack on the wealthy Romani neighborhood in the central Polish city of Mława in the summer of 1991, more than 1,000 Roma sought refuge in Sweden. Immigration authorities turned them back because according to Swedish law, persons aspiring for political refugee status must prove persecution by the authorities, not by other citizens, in their home country.¹¹ The United Kingdom and Ireland became a destination for East European Roma in the late 1990s. In 1997 over 500 Romanian Gypsies left for Ireland, hoping to take advantage of the country's "good welfare system and stable economy."¹² In the first seven months of the same year almost 1,100 Slovak Roma applied for asylum to British authorities who feared that 3,000 more were on their way.¹³ They were not far off the mark. In August and September 1998 alone, according to the British Home Office, 1,611 Slovak and 460 Czech Roma requested political asylum in the United Kingdom. After a flurry of diplomatic activity, personal pleas from President Václav Havel, and Czech promises to pay more attention to the Roma's conditions, Tony Blair's government agreed not to reimpose visa requirements for Czech citizens. Irish authorities were less understanding and began to require visas from Slovak citizens in October 1998.

Gypsy migration from the former Czechoslovakia shows few signs of tapering off, although destinations have changed. After Slovak Roma turned up in Belgian and Danish immigration offices in early 1999, in

late June 1999 more than 300 of them arrived in Finland asking for political asylum.¹⁴ In July 1999, after the arrival of 1,069 in the first six months of the year, the Helsinki government joined Denmark and Norway and suspended its visa-free agreement with Slovakia. In November, Finland abolished the visa requirement for Slovaks after the number of asylum seekers receded, only to reimpose it again in mid-January 2000 in response to another wave of Gypsies arriving from Slovakia.¹⁵ In early August 2000, less than three weeks after Finland abolished visa requirements for Slovak nationals yet again, 50 Slovak citizens (assumed to be Roma) arrived in Helsinki in search of asylum.¹⁶ Judging by the numbers, Britain continues to seem attractive to Czech Gypsies. In January–May 1999 1,000 Czech Roma sought asylum in Britain, while in December 1999 there were 200 attempts.¹⁷ The saga continues. . . . In September 2000 Belgium reimposed visa requirements on Slovak citizens, lifted just one month earlier, after the renewed influx of asylum seekers.¹⁸

Narrowing opportunities to settle in Western Europe directed a growing number of East European Roma across the Atlantic. On 4 August 1997 the Czech tabloid-style TV station NOVA aired a documentary showing the Roma living what they described "the good life" in Canada – a country with a refugee-friendly reputation across Eastern Europe. Within days the Czech national airline sold all economy-class tickets to Canada through October. Hundreds of Czech Gypsies – who, as Czech citizens, did not need visas – took the trip to apply for political asylum in Montreal, Toronto, and elsewhere. By 21 August all of Toronto's 39 family shelters were full owing to the new arrivals.¹⁹ Two months later, Canada reintroduced visa requirements for Czech citizens. In mid-1998 Donald Kenrick wrote that, owing to the rigorous work of self-help and civil liberties organizations and an unusually responsive government, "The Hungarian Gypsies alone have shown no desire to get up and leave the country."²⁰ Although proportionately and in absolute numbers far fewer Roma chose to emigrate from Hungary than from other East European states, in 1997 300 but in 1998 1,380 Hungarians

¹⁴ FIN/STT News Agency (Helsinki), 28 June 1999; reported in RFE/RL II, 3:126 (29 June 1999).

¹⁵ RFE/RL II, 4:10 (14 January 2000).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4:149 (4 August 2000).

¹⁷ *Praha* (Prague), 18 May 1999; CTK (Prague), 25 May 1999; and RFE/RL II 4:9 (13 January 2000).

¹⁸ See RFE/RL II, 4:170 (4 September 2000) and 5:10 (16 January 2001).

¹⁹ See, for instance, Jan Sliva, "Gypsies Plan to Emigrate for a Better Life in Canada," AP (Prague), 15 August 1997; and RFE/RL II, 1:101 (22 August 1997).

²⁰ Donald Kenrick, "How Many Roads," *Index on Censorship*, 27:4 (July/August 1998): 59.

¹⁰ See Katrin Reemstra's report in the OSCE's *CPRSJ (Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues) Newsletter*, 2:6 (December 1996): 7–9.

¹¹ AP (Stockholm), 28 July 1991; Reuter (Warsaw), 4 August 1991; and David McQuaid, "The Growing Assertiveness of Minorities," *Report on Eastern Europe*, 2:50 (13 December 1991): 23.

¹² Nicolae Gheorghie cited by Mediafax (Bucharest), 26 August 1997; and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Newsline, Part II (henceforth: RFE/RL II), 1:105 (28 August 1997).

¹³ *Transitions*, 4:5 (October 1997): 9; and "Gypsy Asylum-Seekers Flood into Britain," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 21 October 1997.

applied for political asylum in Canada, the vast majority of them Roma.²¹ In the summer of 2000, a group of 50 Hungarian Gypsies arrived in France to seek political asylum. Their leader said they did not feel safe in Hungary because of their origins, but a number of Romani groups and leaders – including Flórián Farkas (of the National Gypsy Self-Government) and Aladár Kotai (the head of the local self-government in the city of Ózd) – strongly denied any political persecution of the Roma in Hungary and insisted that the 50 Roma left for economic reasons.²²

Though there have been a few cases of Czech town officials (in Mariánské Hory and Ostrava) offering to help pay for airline tickets for Gypsies who wanted to leave, this was by no means the norm.²³ In fact, high-ranking government officials in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and elsewhere have repeatedly appealed to the Roma to stay.²⁴ Thus one should not take Kenrick seriously when he writes (in 1998!) that “What we are now seeing in eastern Europe is not so much genocide as ethnic cleansing, an attempt in many countries to persuade Gypsies to emigrate *en masse*.”²⁵ He refers to a few extremist Romanian and Polish politicians and organizations; but these, like the skinheads, enjoy modest popular support and less political power. Moreover, Kenrick also neglects to mention that in numerous cases Gypsies have actually asked authorities to help them emigrate by subsidizing their airfare.²⁶ In 1998, for instance, 200 Czech Romani families demanded that Vladimír Mlynar, the Prague government’s minister in charge of ethnic affairs, help them leave for the United States. Mlynar

²¹ See “Kosáné: Nem lesz tömeges kivándorlás,” *Népszabadság*, 9 January 1999; and “Nem kaptak menekélyjogot a magyar romák Kanadában,” *Népszabadság*, 22 January 1999; and “Bizonytalan helyzetben a Kanadában rekedt romák,” *Népszabadság*, 22 March 1999.

²² RFE/RL II, 1:141 (25 July 2000); 4:143 (27 July 2000); Pál Szarka, “Politikai akcióit gyaní a Fidesz,” *Magyar Nemzet*, 27 July 2000; RFE/RL II, 4:151 (8 August 2000), 4:165 (29 August 2000). More recently, Roma from Hungary tried their luck in the Netherlands, though Canada remains a favored destination. See RFE/RL II, 4:244 (19 December 2000); and Éva Erdei, “A mohácsi romák Kanadába tartanak,” *Magyar Hírlap*, 29 September 2000.

²³ “Gypsies Eyeing Canada as Haven,” *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 13 August 1997; and Jan Sliva, “Gypsies Plan to Emigrate for a Better Life in Canada,” AP (Prague), 15 August 1997.

²⁴ See, for instance, CTK (Prague), 14 August 1997; RFE/RL II 1:96 (15 August 1997); 3:128 (1 July 1999).

²⁵ Donald Kenrick, “How Many Roads,” *Index on Censorship*, 27:4 (July–August 1998): 60.

²⁶ See, for instance, “Helping Romanies Emigrate Is No Solution,” CTK (New York), 24 February 1998.

refused, saying he could not assist Czech nationals in leaving their country.²⁷

It is important to note that by the late 1990s there were few instances of institutionalized political persecution of the Roma in Eastern Europe. Most of them remain mired in poverty, there is widespread societal discrimination against them, and many local officials, the police, and aid administrators share anti-Gypsy prejudices. But, as Gheorghe Raducanu, a Romanian Gypsy leader and a former member of parliament, noted as early as 1993, “There are very few Roma who must flee from Romania because of political persecution. The majority only want to make money quickly and have no right to asylum.”²⁸ Several Romani leaders from across the region have echoed Raducanu’s words, noting that mass unemployment and economic marginality rather than fear of skinhead attacks or political reasons drive the Roma to apply for political asylum.²⁹ Further evidence supporting their argument is that since the spring of 2000, hundreds of Slovak Roma have also petitioned for asylum in the Czech Republic even though the latter is supposed to have the most anti-Gypsy climate in Europe (but, not coincidentally, higher living standards than Slovakia).³⁰

An often neglected question is, Which Roma are leaving Eastern Europe? The politicians and Gypsy activists I interviewed agree that the majority of Roma migrants are relatively well-to-do, middle-class Gypsies who can afford the substantial costs of travel to Western Europe and North America.³¹ Karel Holomek, perhaps the most respected Czech Gypsy leader, has written the following:

²⁷ “Romanies Demand Departure for USA,” CTK (Prague), 21 February 1998.

²⁸ “First im Himmel sicher,” *Der Spiegel*, 19 July 1993.

²⁹ See, for instance, János Kozák, vice president of the National Gypsy Self-Government in Hungary (*Népszabadság*, 9 January 1999); Gejza Adam, chairman of the Slovak Romany Civic Initiative (AP [Helsinki], 29 June 1999; RFE/RL II, 3:127 [30 June 1999]); and interview with Adam Andrasz, vice president of the Highest Council of Roma in Poland (Tarnów, 9 August 1999).

³⁰ See RFE/RL II, 4:124 (27 June 2000); 4:126 (29 June 2000); 4:127 (30 June 2000); and 4:207 (25 October 2000).

³¹ See interviews with David Murphy of the Nova Škola Foundation (Prague), 23 August 1999; Marta Miklušáková, Head of the Secretariat of the Council for Human Rights (Prague), 26 August 1999; Milena Hüschmannová, Professor of Romistics at Charles University (Prague 27 August 1999); Karel Holomek (Brno, 1 September 1999); Agnes Horváthová, Head of Secretariat, Slovak Helsinki Commission (Bratislava, 8 September 1999); and ethnographers Elena Marushakova and Vesselin Popov (Sofia, 13 November 1999). William Zimmerman has shown in a different context – that of Yugoslav guest-workers – that the best-positioned people tend to leave. See Zimmerman, *Open Borders, Nonalignment, and the Political Evolution of Yugoslavia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

The tragedy is that those most vulnerable and living in the worst conditions are not able to apply for a visa due to their financial position and the fact that they are ill-prepared to take such a giant step. Unfortunately these are the Roma who need asylum the most.³²

In fact, Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov claim that many Bulgarians seeking asylum in Canada and the United States are not Roma at all. They are ethnic Bulgarians who are often instructed by U.S. NGOs and immigration lawyers to pose as Roma and testify that the reason why they cannot speak Romani is because speaking the language was forbidden in the communist era.³³ The two Bulgarian scholars contend that the reason why they have been unable to convince foreign officials and NGOs about the "mistaken identity" of asylum seekers is because NGOs and immigration lawyers have a vested interest in this issue. I, too, have some experience in this matter. In 1998, the Princeton-based Political Asylum Research and Documentation Service (PARDS) asked for my opinion about the case of a supposedly Romani woman from Romania applying for asylum in the United States. PARDS' director suggested that if I supported the woman's claims of persecution, there might be many more such requests and for my assessments I would be handsomely remunerated. After I concluded, based on a review of the evidence provided by PARDS, that the claims were spurious, PARDS refused to pay me and never contacted me again.

Romani asylum seekers in Western Europe and North America are often intimately familiar with immigration procedures because they are helped by Gypsy publications, travel agencies, and NGOs. The March 1999 issue of a Budapest-based Romani magazine published an article entitled "Step by Step: From Asylum Application to Canadian Citizenship" to guide the prospective refugee through the maze of Canadian immigration bureaucracy and to provide practical advice, such as how to obtain welfare payments.³⁴ Pál Csáky, the Slovak Deputy Prime Minister in charge of ethnic affairs, who has been accused by opposition parties of "failing to stop the recent exodus" of Roma, and Czech Foreign Minister Jan Kavan have suggested that Romani migration from their countries is well-organized.³⁵ In February 2000 Csáky's office started to investigate several Slovak travel agencies that print instructions on how Roma should behave once they reached a country, where

³² Karel Holomek, "The Mass Asylum of Romany in the Ostrava Area," *Newsletter of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly - Roma Section*, no. 3 (May 1998): 12.

³³ Interview with Marushiakova and Popov (Sofia, 13 November 1999).

³⁴ "Lépésről lépésre: A menedéklajog kérelemtől a kanadai állampolgárságig," *Aniara Drom*, 9:3 (March 1999): 10-11.

³⁵ "Ki áll a romák kivándorlása hátterében?" *Napi Magyarországnak*, 4 August 1999; interview with Miklušáková (Prague, 26 August 1999); and "SDL halts privatisation parade," *Slovak Spectator*, 6-12 September 1999.

they could seek asylum, and how to secure the financial help extended to asylum seekers.³⁶

The Roma's Situation in Their New Countries

Gypsies arriving in West European states soon discover that while their living standards might improve even if social assistance is their only source of income, public attitudes and policies toward them are rarely more charitable than in Eastern Europe. The socioeconomic traumas of German reunification, the large number of foreigners (most of them guest workers or their descendants) already in the country, the massive influx of East European, Asian, and African asylum seekers, and the resettlement of ethnic Germans from the former communist states created a tense social situation in Germany in the early 1990s.

No other immigrant group attracted as much criticism as the Roma. Local politicians and citizens had charged that many of the newly arriving Roma were aggressively begging on the streets, often grabbing people and refusing to let go, while groups of Gypsies attacked and robbed pedestrians who were unwilling to part with their cash voluntarily.³⁷ According to residents of Rostock, a northeastern German harbor city where neo-Nazis torched a building housing Romani asylum seekers in August 1992, the Gypsies "left garbage on the streets, stole from stores, and threatened shopkeepers."³⁸ Others noted that though Rostock had long been home to a Vietnamese community, "they were no problem." "Our only problem was the Gypsies," said one middle-age man, adding "Go look around, then ask yourself, what would you do if you lived here?"³⁹ Hermann Heinemann, the social minister of Nord-Rhein-Westphalia, noted that the Roma were "poisoning the atmosphere through their misbehavior."⁴⁰ He expressed the frustration of many Germans who viewed the Gypsies as the antithesis of their most prized values like stability, order, and cleanliness.

In the early 1990s, tensions resulted in hundreds of atrocities against immigrants, which included several murders, the burning of buildings housing refugees, and many assaults and other crimes.⁴¹ In 1992, perhaps

³⁶ RFE/RL II, 4:23 (2 February 2000); and "Slovak Deputy Premier Says He Has Evidence of Organized 'Asylum Tourism,'" BBC Monitoring (Bratislava, 7 November 2000).

³⁷ See, for instance, Michael Wall, "Germans Trying to Cope with Gypsy Migrants," NCA (Bonn), 1 August 1991.

³⁸ Marc Fisher, "Germany to Deport Gypsies," *Washington Post*, 18 September 1992.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Patricia Hudson, "Gypsy Migration and the Problems of Integration," NCA (Munich), 11 September 1992.

⁴¹ See Jürgen Fijalkowski, "Aggressive Nationalism and Immigration in Germany," in Richard Caplan and John Feffer, eds., *Europe's New Nationalisms: States and Minorities in Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996): 138-50.

the worst year of violence, 2,285 extremist acts were committed in Germany, claiming 17 lives (9 Germans and 8 foreigners).⁴² Tragic as these incidents were, they did not signify Germany's descent into the racist abyss as some academics, journalists, and human rights activists suggested.⁴³ Though the cover notes of a scholarly book published in 1995 even declared that "Neo-fascism, for so long confined to the political wilderness, appears to be moving into the political mainstream across Europe," such bombastic overkill has hardly added to the editors' reputation.⁴⁴ Clearly, neo-fascism has not entered mainstream politics anywhere in Europe. (Right-wingers, conservatives, and nationalists should not be confused with fascists.) It bears remembering that in the early 1990s – the period when right-wing radicalism was at its height in Germany – there were an estimated 6,400 militants prone to violence, most of them skinheads, in a population of 80 million people.⁴⁵ By 1999 their number had decreased to about 5,000.⁴⁶ Neo-nazis in Europe, as in the United States, constitute a peripheral social group and a marginal political force despised by mainstream society.

The German government did not sit idly by while skinheads and neo-Nazi terrorized marginal groups. Authorities had arrested and prosecuted many skinheads.⁴⁷ Aside from rigorous police response to extremist activities, the government instituted seven legal bans on right-wing extremist groups in 1993 alone. In addition, as a gesture of goodwill to the Roma the Bonn government opened a Gypsy cultural center in Heidelberg in 1997. The vast majority of Germans also abhorred the actions of extremists; numerous spontaneous pro-refugee demonstrations at times mobilized as many as 300,000 people.⁴⁸

⁴² "Rightwing Radicalism in Germany," *Focus on Germany*, March 1993, 1–2.

⁴³ In the 1990s a number of publications created the impression that nationalism, racism, and ultraright extremism was about to take over Eastern Europe and Germany. See, for instance, Joseph Held, ed., *Democracy and Right-Wing Politics in Eastern Europe in the 1990s* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1993); Paul Hockenros, *Free to Hate: The Rise of the Right in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Paul Latawski, ed., *Contemporary Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995); and Aleksandar Pavkovic, Halyna Koschatsky, and Adam Czarnota, eds., *Nationalism and Postcommunism* (Brookfield, VT: Dartmouth, 1995).

⁴⁴ Luciano Cheles, Ronnie Ferguson, and Michalina Vaughan, eds., *The Far Right in Western & Eastern Europe* (London: Longman, 1995, 2nd edition).

⁴⁵ "Rightwing Radicalism in Germany," 3–4.

⁴⁶ *The Economist*, 20 March 1999, 56. For more recent accounts of their activities, see Alan Cowell, "Neo-Nazis Carving Out Fiefs in Eastern Germany," *New York Times*, 8 February 1998; and "Fighting Racism," *The Economist*, 5 August 2000, 50.

⁴⁷ "Germany to Deport Gypsies," *Washington Post*, 18 September 1992.

⁴⁸ See, for instance, "And They Still Come," *The Economist*, 14 November 1992, 58.

German authorities and German society, owing to the all-too-fresh memories of the Holocaust, have received the lion's share of international criticism for their alleged anti-Roma policies and racist attitudes. Gypsy organizations in Germany maintained that the country had a "historical responsibility" to welcome the Roma; and one of their most radical leaders, Rudko Kawczynski, warned that East European Roma face *Kristallnacht in jedem kleinen Dorf* (approximately, "pogroms in every little village") and "we are one step before a new holocaust of Roma in Europe. All the signs are clear."⁴⁹ International organizations subjected other West European societies to far less censure even though their attitudes toward the Gypsies were as objectionable as those of the heavily criticized Germans and East Europeans. Romanian President Ion Iliescu noted in a 1995 interview that

none of them (the Roma) are expelled (from Germany) for being a Gypsy, or a Romanian citizen, but for having infringed the law. They come back to Romania and are likely to have the same attitude toward the law: Why is it that, for the same deeds, in Romania they are considered victims of ethnic persecution, and in France, Germany or elsewhere they are considered mere criminals?⁵⁰

There are many examples of what international organizations consider anti-Gypsy discrimination across Western Europe where pedestrians are occasionally warned by signs in shop windows that read "Beware of the Thieving Gypsies."⁵¹ The mayor's office in the Paris suburb of Nanterre announced plans in 1993 to "transfer" several hundred Gypsies – owing to their "antisocial behavior" – from its jurisdiction to Neuville-sur-Ain, 300 miles away. Neuville's residents, joined by their mayor, organized themselves into armed brigades and proclaimed themselves prepared to do anything to stop the Roma from coming to town.⁵² In 1985 the French cabinet established the National Council for Regional Languages and Cultures whose 37 members include a Romani representative. By the late 1990s, however, the regional languages program had come under intensifying attacks from nationalists fearful of "France's Balkanization" and the "exorbitant rights" given to

⁴⁹ "Kristallnacht in jedem Dorf" (Dorothea Hahn's interview with Kawczynski), *Die Tageszeitung*, 29 August 1992; and Maura Griffin Solovar, "Against the Odds: The Politics of Disunity" (interview with Kawczynski), *Transition*, 1:4 (29 March 1995): 10.

⁵⁰ Cited in Justin Burke, "An Anti-Gypsy Fervor Sweeps East Europe," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 31 August 1995.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² See Bernard Fromentin, "Un Voyage a la Campagne pour les Roumains de Nanterre," *Liberation*, 4 March 1993; IRR: *European Race Audit*, Bulletin 3, April 1993; and Betty Alts and Sylvia Folts, *Weeping Violin: The Gypsy Tragedy in Europe* (Kirksville, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1996), 90.

minorities.⁵³ The British parliament revoked the 1968 Caravan Sites Act pertaining to "persons of nomadic habit of life, whatever their race or origin," which had opened local council sites to caravans. The backers of the 1994 decision, justified by the Roma's unruly behavior, argued that Gypsies should pay for their own camping grounds. This ruling put the owners of some 4,000 Romani caravans in a precarious position.⁵⁴ In 1997 city officials in Florence, Italy, ordered hundreds of Roma from the Balkans to leave several unauthorized settlements because of unacceptable living conditions and violation of health standards.

For nearly 50 years (1926–72), Swiss authorities abducted hundreds of Romani children from their families and supplied them with new identities in order to provide them with "civilized" upbringing. Pro Juventate, the country's largest charity for children that ran the program, agreed to make compensatory payments to the victims after 1975.⁵⁵ In the north Italian province of South Tyrol a local councillor created an uproar in October 1993 when he said all Gypsies living there should be gassed.⁵⁶ In February 1995, a pipe bomb planted by unidentified perpetrators under a sign that read *Roma zurück nach Indien* (Roma back to India) killed four Gypsies intent on removing it in the Austrian province of Burgenland. But attacks on the Roma occurred in virtually every country where they sought to find refuge, including Denmark, Holland, and Sweden.

Social attitudes toward the Roma are hardly more charitable in the West than in the East. In 1991 59% of Germans and 50% of Spaniards admitted that of all ethnic groups, they liked the Roma the least.⁵⁷ A 1993 nationwide survey revealed that two-thirds of Britons do not want to live near Gypsies (again, by far the highest percentage of "dislikes"

⁵³ See William Safran, "The French State and Ethnic Minority Cultures: Policy Dimensions and Problems," in Joseph J. Rudolph, Jr. and Robert J. Thompson, eds., *Ethnoterritorial Politics, Policy, and the Western World* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1989), 115–58; and "Our Lingo By Jingo," *The Economist*, 3 July 1999, 40–1.

⁵⁴ "Casting Out the Outcasts," *Geographical Magazine* (London), March 1993, 14–18; and Thomas A. Acton, "Unity in Diversity," *Cigány Népszíri Társulmányok*, 2 (Budapest: Mikszáth Kiadó, 1994), 80.

⁵⁵ See Mariella Mehr, *Kind der Landstrasse: Ein Hilfswerk, ein Theater, und die Folgen* (Bern: Zytlogge Verlag, 1987). For a brief account, see Caroline Moorehead, "The 'Stealing' of the Gypsy Children," *Times* (London), 17 March 1988. In the late 1980s a television documentary entitled *Kinder der Landstrasse* (Children of the Open Road) was made about this program which was widely broadcast in Europe and North America.

⁵⁶ R. Senthilathan, "Persecution Dogs Gypsies in Europe," *India Abroad*, 17 March 1995, 43.

⁵⁷ "Who Hates Whom?" *The European*, 27–30 September 1991.

in the poll).⁵⁸ In the United States as well, the Roma fare worst in the eyes of their fellow citizens. A 1989 study gauging the social standing of 57 ethnic groups found the Gypsies dead last, far behind the "Wisians," a fictitious entity inserted in the poll as a control population.⁵⁹ Moreover, there is little solidarity even between various Romani groups on the sub-elite level. Gypsy immigrants received little sympathy from Roma long settled in Germany (called Sinti) who, according to a Romani leader, "want nothing to do with their poor brothers from the east."⁶⁰ In Britain, too, Thomas Acton discovered that "English Romanichal Gypsies still often find it difficult to empathize with those [Roma] from other countries."⁶¹

At the same time, the material conditions of most East European Roma seeking asylum in Western Europe and North America undoubtedly improve. The German government did not allow asylum seekers to work but extended them a monthly cash payment of DM 700 (in 1993). This amount was far higher than the average monthly income in most East European states, and much of it could be saved given that Germany also provided applicants with food and housing. Six years later, Slovak Roma waiting for asylum hearings in Finland received monthly stipends equal to 11,300 Slovak crowns – that is, over four times the Slovak minimal wage and about 2,000 crowns more than the average salary.⁶² No wonder that the Roma do not want to return to Eastern Europe. A Gypsy woman whose four-year-old son was born in Hamburg expressed the sentiment of many: "I don't want to go back to Montenegro. Germany is nice. People are kind here."⁶³

Repatriation

In 1992, having experienced the arrival of millions of migrants in the previous years, the German Minister of Interior, Rudolf Seiters, reached

⁵⁸ William E. Schmidt, "British Poll Says Gypsies Face the Most Bias," *New York Times*, 25 October 1993.

⁵⁹ See Tom W. Smith, "What Do Americans Think about Jews?" Working Papers on Contemporary Anti-Semitism (American Jewish Committee, 1991); and "Gypsies Most Discriminated-Against Ethnic Population in America," *New York Times*, 8 January 1992.

⁶⁰ See Karen Breslau, "The Romani Enigma," *Newsweek*, 1 March 1993.

⁶¹ Acton, "Unity in Diversity," 86.

⁶² See RFE/RL II, 3: 148 (2 August 1999); and "Csáky szélmalomharca," *Napi Magyarországi*, 16 August 1999.

⁶³ AFP (Dachau), 1 July 1993. For analyses of the Roma's situation in post-World War II Germany see Tilman Zülch, ed., *In Ausschauzeit vergast, bis heute verfolgt: Zur Situation der Roma (Zigeuner) in Deutschland und Europa* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1979); Louise Rinser, *Wer wirft den Stein? Zigeuner sein in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Weibrecht, 1985); and Reimer Gronemeyer, *Eigenstimm und Hilfe: Zigeuner und Sozialpolitik heutiger Leistungsgesellschaften* (Giessen: Focus, 1993).

an agreement with his Romanian colleague for the repatriation of some 30,000 Romanian citizens staying illegally in Germany. The concord took effect on 1 November 1992. The Bonn government gave DM 30 million (about US\$20 million) to Romania in order to build housing and start training and social programs for those repatriated, an estimated three-quarters of whom were Gypsies.⁶⁴ Germany's decision unleashed a barrage of criticism from the international media warning of the resurgence of (in some newspapers' view, state-supported) extremism and racism in Germany.⁶⁵ Three salient points were usually absent from these reports, however. First, Germany did not deport the Roma because of their ethnicity but because they were illegally there. In the 1990s Germany also deported Bosnians, Vietnamese, and others.⁶⁶ Second, since World War II and especially since 1989, Germany has been the destination of a disproportionately large number of refugees. Third, Germany was only one of the numerous countries that deported illegal residents along with Denmark, France, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, and other West European states.⁶⁷

"Germany has decided to deport Romanian Gypsies asking for asylum because the neo-Nazis don't want them," read the first sentence of a *New York Times* article by Andrei Codrescu, a Romanian-American commentator.⁶⁸ *Times* editors must have soon felt qualms about printing this attack on Germany. An editorial four days later disapproved of the deci-

⁶⁴ Fredrik Folkeryd and Ingvar Svanberg, *Gypsies (Roma) in the Post-Totalitarian States* (Stockholm: Olof Palme International Center, 1995), 27-8. Under this agreement approximately 115,000 Romanian citizens were returned to Germany between late 1992 and early 1999. Although neither German nor Romanian authorities maintained statistics pertaining to their ethnicity, it is widely assumed that the great majority of them were Gypsies.

⁶⁵ See, for instance the 28 September 1992 issues of *Die Welt*, *Express* (Cologne), *Leipziger Zeitung*, *Rhein-Neckar Zeitung* (Heidelberg), *Stuttgarter Zeitung*; as well as "Blaming the Victims in Germany," *The Washington Post*, 20 September 1993; *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Munich), 25 September 1993; and *Il Giornale* (Milan), 27 September 1993.

⁶⁶ See, for instance, "Germany's Vietnamese Gangsters," *Jane's Foreign Report*, no. 2407, 11 July 1996; and "Germany Determined to Return Bosnian Refugees," AFP (Bonn), 4 September 1996 reported in Open Media Research Institute Daily Digest, Part II (henceforth: OMRI DD II), no. 171 (4 September 1996); and "Germany's Forced Return of Bosnians," *The Forced Migration Monitor*, no. 19 (September 1997): 1-2.

⁶⁷ See, for instance, "Gypsies Deported by Sweden," *Reuter* (Warsaw), 4 August 1991; Paul Webster, "France Kicks Out Romanian Gypsies," *The Guardian*, 30 December 1993; DPA (Munich), 8 July 1993; "Immigrant Hunger Strikers Weaken in Paris," *International Herald Tribune*, 10-11 August 1996; "Switzerland and Federal Yugoslavia Agree on Return of Kosovar Refugees," OMRI DD II, no. 193, 4 October 1996; and Moyette Marrett, "Gypsies Beg for an End to Centuries of Bigotry," *The European*, 14-17 October 1993.

⁶⁸ Codrescu, "Gypsy Tragedy, German Amnesia," *New York Times*, 23 September 1992.

sion to repatriate the Gypsies but noted the unfairness of accusing Germany of recidivist Nazi behavior. The editors pointed out that "No other European government shelters as many refugees, and none contributes as much to Eastern Europe's financial needs."⁶⁹ Between 1989 and 1992 Germany received 1 million newcomers annually in addition to the 5 million foreigners who were settled there by 1989. This number is at least ten times higher than the corresponding figure for any other state. In the early 1990s over 60% of Europe's asylum seekers chose Germany as their destination.⁷⁰ As an article in the British weekly *The Economist* noted, "Germany is now paying a price few other countries would have accepted for not providing itself with better citizenship and immigration laws in the calmer years before unification."⁷¹ Even for a prosperous state, taking care of so many immigrants constituted a major economic burden, particularly because in the early 1990s Germany faced serious economic problems.

According to Germany's liberal guarantee of asylum to the politically persecuted, all applicants had a right to individual hearings. Although approximately 95% of asylum applications were eventually rejected, the heavy backlog ensured that many remained in the country for years and, until 1992, hardly anyone was deported. During this time, the constitution required the state to care for them. Amidst the vocal condemnation of human rights organizations, the German parliament adopted a new law in 1993 that made it more difficult for nonpolitical refugees to stay in the country for years.⁷² According to the law, asylum seekers can be turned back at the border if they enter Germany from countries the government considers "safe" (such as Poland or the Czech Republic). In order to bring illegal immigration under control, in May 1993 Germany concluded an agreement with Poland to help Warsaw cope with immigrants after Germany's new asylum law was to take effect two months later. The treaty included a DM 120 million (US\$76 million) payment from Bonn to Warsaw to help the latter care for refugees and improve border security.⁷³

Although several commentators wrote about Germany's racist and discriminatory policies against Romani immigrants, they ordinarily neglected to mention that the Bonn government demanded the re-

⁶⁹ "Gypsies and Germans, Wronged," *New York Times*, 27 September 1992.
⁷⁰ Mark Simon, "Déjà Vu: The Rising Right in Germany," *Jewish Monthly*, 106:10 (June/July 1992): 11.

⁷¹ "Blaming the Victims," *The Economist*, 5 June 1993, 47.

⁷² Stephen Kinzer, "Right Groups Attack German Plan on Refugees," *New York Times*, 7 February 1993.

⁷³ "Poland Plans Negotiations on Refugees with Other Neighbors," NCA (Bonn), 8 May 1993.

patriation of other illegal residents as well. Germany absorbed 320,000 refugees from Bosnia in the early 1990s, nearly as many as the rest of Western Europe combined (the runner-up was Sweden with 122,000, but other large West European nations provided refuge for only a tiny fraction of Germany's intake: France 15,000, Britain 13,000, Italy 8,000, Spain 2,500).⁷⁴ After the war, the German government insisted that those who could safely return to Bosnia should do so. The city of Berlin alone spent an estimated DM 500 million (US\$325 million) a year on housing and feeding the refugees.⁷⁵

It should also be pointed out that German authorities provided repatriated Roma with a variety of cash payments and assistance programs. In 1990 Johannes Rau, the minister-president of Nord-Rhein-Westphalia, offered DM 8,000 for every Rom from the former Yugoslavia (especially Macedonia) who recently settled in the state and were willing to go back. There were few takers.⁷⁶ To sweeten the deal, in 1991 the German government began constructing 70 single-family homes for the Roma in Shuto Orizari, in order to lure them back home. Moreover, it has financed several social and economic programs designed to assist the Macedonian Gypsies, spending approximately DM 30–5 million.⁷⁷ The German government's DM 30 million payment to help returning citizens soon became controversial among the repatriated Romanian Gypsies who wanted control of the funds. In 1994 Roma in the city of Oradea took legal action against Bishop László Tőkés, accusing him of not handing out the DM 15,000 German aid allocated to the Free and Democratic Community of Gypsies there.⁷⁸ Tőkés said that Germany had asked for payment to be halted because Romani leaders used monies for entirely different purposes than they were intended for.

PART II: THE INTERNATIONAL ROMANI MOVEMENT

Romani migration and the situation of the Gypsies in their countries of destination have been major concerns to the international Romani movement. The Roma in Germany and in the Romanian principalities made several minor attempts to mobilize their communities as early as the nineteenth century. Although they were unsuccessful, they demonstrated the will of a number of Romani leaders to work toward uniting diverse

⁷⁴ *The Economist*, 28 September 1996, 63–4.

⁷⁵ Alan Freeman, "Germany Expelling 320,000," *Globe and Mail*, 2 October 1996.

⁷⁶ Helmut Breuer, "Rau will Roma heinschicken aber sie wollen nicht zurück," *Die Welt*, 28 November 1990.

⁷⁷ Interview with Faik Abdi (Skopje, 11 March 1994).

⁷⁸ Hungarian Radio (Budapest), 26 March 1994, 11 GMT. For the larger context, see *New York Times*, 26 September 1993.

Gypsy groups. Since World War II, international Romani mobilization efforts have intensified and have achieved several noteworthy successes.

A Romani Homeland?

The notion of establishing specific geographical realm for the Gypsies has been a recurring theme of Romani nationalism. Similarly to the Zionist demand of setting aside a territory where Jews could live in peace, Gypsy nationalists have time and again lobbied for a safe haven that could become "Romanestan," the Romani homeland. Members of the Kwick dynasty, the "Romani royals" of Poland, declared their intentions of establishing a Gypsy state as early as the 1930s.⁷⁹ King Gregory suggested that the state would be located on the banks of the Ganges river in India, the original homeland. In the plans of another member of the family, Joseph Kwick, Romanestan would have been located in southern Africa. Nearly three decades later Gypsy leaders in France, some of them descendants of the Kwicks, "drew up elaborate nationalistic plans for the Roma, including the creation of an autonomous territory within France and a homeland in Somalia."⁸⁰

The most recent indication that the "Romanestan" idea is not dead dates from 1993. Emboldened by the slow reaction of the international community to the Roma's predicament in the Balkans, in March 1993 the leadership of the Party for the Total Emancipation of the Roma (PTEMR), then the most important Gypsy organization in Macedonia, sent a letter to the United Nations urging "the establishment of a Romani nation and a state, to be called 'Romanistan'."⁸¹ When I asked him about it, PTEMR chairman Faik Abdi told me that the letter should be considered a desperate attempt to call international attention to the Roma's plight rather than a serious proposal.⁸²

As Thomas Acton writes, "Romanestan" – a Gypsy Israel – was never a genuine political possibility even had it attracted the support of more than a few intellectuals.⁸³ Given the international community's lack of political will, the resistance of individual states to giving up a part of their territory for the Roma, the lack of Gypsy political and economic resources, and divisions within the world Romani community

⁷⁹ See Jan F. Hancock, "The East European Roots of Romani Nationalism," in David Crowe and John Kolsti, eds., *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1991), 142, 144.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁸¹ Zoltan Barany, "The Roma in Macedonia: Ethnic Politics and the Marginal Condition in a Balkan State," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 18:3 (July 1995): 523.

⁸² Interview with Abdi (Skopje, 11 March 1994).

⁸³ Acton, "Unity in Diversity," 85.

pertaining to the desirability of a separate homeland, the idea has never been seriously considered on either the national or the supranational level.

The IRU and Other International Gypsy Organizations

Although the Roma made a few attempts to establish a pan-European organization as early as the 1930s, they met with scant success until the founding of the International Romani Union (IRU). The emergence of the IRU signified a milestone in the evolution of Romani nationalism. A successor of the International Gypsy Committee that was established in 1965, the IRU, adopted its name in 1978. Over 70 Romani organizations in some 28 countries have been officially members of IRU. Gypsy leaders have convened five World Romani Congresses in London (1971), Geneva (1978), Göttingen (1981), Serock, near Warsaw (1990), and Prague (2000).⁸⁴ These gatherings accomplished a number of objectives; these included establishing the "national" emblem (a red, sixteen-spoked wagon wheel in a horizontally divided field of blue and green) and anthem of the Roma, condemning anti-Gypsy discrimination, and demanding repatriation payments for Holocaust victims, as well as electing members of leadership bodies (such as the Secretariat and the standing commissions on social affairs, war crimes, education, language standardization, etc.).

These congresses have rarely been the serious affairs one might expect. Adam Bartosz, a Polish ethnographer and the founding director of the Gypsy Museum in the southern Polish city of Tarnów, was one of the key organizers of the 1990 meeting. He told me that there was a small group of activists (Marcel Courtiade, Sait Balić, Rajko Djurić, Ian Hancock) who worked hard on issues and to get people to sit in meetings and make decisions. Most of the approximately 200 participants, however, treated meetings as just another get-together and excuse to drink, dance, and have a good time. Those present represented no one (twenty different individuals claimed to lead "the biggest Romanian Gypsy organization"), but, Bartosz says, virtually all those who took part wanted to be elected to some position, which is why Courtiade had to create so many commissions.⁸⁵ Several observers and activists contended that, as a result of factional disputes and clashing personalities, the IRU came out of the 1990 gathering considerably enfeebled. Indeed, one of

⁸⁴ For a brief history of Romany international organizations, see Ian F. Hancock, "The East European Roots of Romani Nationalism," *Nationality Papers*, 19:3 (Fall 1991): 261-5; Franz Remmel, *Die Roma Rumaniens*, 131-6; and Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, 249-71. For reports on the Fourth World Romany Congress, see *The Chicago Tribune*, 13 April 1990; and *The Economist*, 21 April 1990.

⁸⁵ Interviews with Adam Bartosz (Tarnów, 9-10 August 1999).

the high-profile participants, Ion Cioabă, noted after the Warsaw meeting that "today the IRU functions weakly."⁸⁶ The 2000 IRU World Congress was convened in the Czech capital, after a decade of decline - marked by continuous infighting and frequent charges and countercharges of corruption and bribery by rival leaders. Of the hundreds of "delegates" gathering at the Congress, few were democratically elected. The fact that those present hardly represented "the World's Roma" is obvious when considering that no participant came from Hungary, for instance.⁸⁷ Participants approved a resolution that the Roma around the world must be recognized as a separate nation, demanded compensation for survivors of the *Porajmos*, and elected Emil Šćuka, a Czech Rom, as the new IRU Chairman.⁸⁸

The IRU has some important achievements to its credit. In 1979 the United Nations Council for Social and Economic Questions extended observer status to the Roma.⁸⁹ Since then, the IRU has gained representation in several organizations of the United Nations (e.g., UNICEF, UNESCO), and has sent a representative to Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, since 1995 OSCE) meetings dealing with minorities. The IRU has played a role as a pressure group monitoring the Roma's conditions and participating in international conferences and seminars pertaining to them. It has vocally protested Germany's decision to return Gypsy migrants, promoted the standardization of the Romani language, and appealed to the young generation of Roma to improve their education.⁹⁰ In recent years the IRU, like many other Romani organizations, has focused on obtaining compensation for the Gypsy Holocaust victims from Germany and from Swiss banks, an endeavor that has been frustrated by repeated charges of embezzlement.⁹¹ Participants at a January 1999 IRU meeting proposed to establish a Gypsy university in Paris with this money. With Šćuka and General Secretary Kristo Kiučukov, a Bulgarian Rom, at the helm, the new IRU leadership

⁸⁶ Remmel, *Die Roma Rumaniens*, 135.

⁸⁷ "Are They a Nation?" *The Economist*, 25 November 2000, 61.

⁸⁸ See the reports in RFE/RL II, 4:141 (25 July 2000); and 4:144 (28 July 2000).

⁸⁹ The application was presented by the actor Yul Brynner, an Honorary President of the second World Romani Congress, whose mother was a Romanian Gypsy. See "Romanies Apply for U.N. Affiliation," *Reuter* (New York), 1 June 1978.

⁹⁰ See Rajko Djurić's speech at the May 1994 international conference in Smolenice, Slovakia in *Roma People in Slovakia and in Europe* (Bratislava: Information and Documentation Centre on the Council of Europe, 1995), 26-8; and Andrzej Mirga and Nicolae Gheorghie, *The Roma in the Twenty-First Century: A Policy Paper* (Princeton: PER, 1997), 18.

⁹¹ See "Gypsies Not Getting Holocaust Funds," AP (Cornetu, Romania), 13 July 2000; RFE-II, 4:152 (9 August 2000); and interviews with *Porajmos* researcher and activist, Michelle Kelso (Austin, 22 February and 4 May 2000).

has campaigned for international recognition of the Roma as "a nation without a state" and some, thus far undefined, position in the European Union to be used for more effective advocacy of the Gypsies' rights.⁹²

Like most Romani organizations on the national level, the International Romani Union has failed to improve the lives of ordinary Roma. Although it has done some useful work with refugees in Germany, the IRU has been unable to propose and devise, let alone implement, programs to alleviate Romani marginality.⁹³ It has not succeeded in bringing together the plethora of Gypsy communities or engaging in any useful endeavor on the grass roots level. Nor has the IRU been immune to the problems besetting local Romani organizations. Infighting within the organization's elite – generally precipitated by petty jealousies and power struggles – has been a serious weakness. In 1994, for instance, then IRU President Rajko Djurić accused two senior IRU officials of embezzling US\$1,000,000 of the organization's funds precipitating the IRU's organizational enfeeblement.⁹⁴

In a 1999 public letter of resignation, Ian Hancock, a former vice president of the IRU and an individual who has spent his entire adult life working for the Romani cause, notes that

over the past nine years, individuals have been dismissed from the Union without proper procedure, sometimes in the face of unproved and unprovable charges of massive theft, and others have been appointed to leading positions on the whim of the President. . . .⁹⁵

Hancock contends that an individual in New York "was sold the IRU presidency for several thousand dollars" in 1991, and a "staff member of the Voice of America was privately offered the position of UN Representative for the Romani Union!"⁹⁶ Furthermore, Hancock writes the following:

The fact that some of the current executive members allegedly have criminal associations and are involved in law suits against them, also does much to shake my confidence in the integrity and credibility of the leadership of the International Romani Union.⁹⁷

⁹² RFE/RL II, 4:205 (23 October 2000); and "Nemzetet alapítaná a roma," *Népszabadság*, 29 January 2001.

⁹³ Interview with Nicoleta Bițu (Bucharest, 23 May 1996).

⁹⁴ See Zoltan Barany, "Living on the Edge: The East European Roma in Postcommunist Politics and Societies," *Slavic Review*, 53:2 (Summer 1994): 341–2; and interview with Liviu Plaks (Bucharest, 27 May 1996).

⁹⁵ Hancock's letter is available on the internet at

<http://www.romnews.com/hancock.html>. All citations are from this document.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

The IRU was organized during the communist period, and many of its leaders resided in East European states (especially Yugoslavia). They were heavily influenced by the excessively centralized and intolerant politics in their countries. Some Gypsy activists therefore felt that the IRU's demise would have been a blessing in disguise for it had not adapted itself to the changes in the political climate and could not appropriately react to the Gypsies' deteriorating socioeconomic conditions and international migration after 1989. The IRU, in Hancock's words, "has become an anachronism, a dinosaur,"⁹⁸ and it seems ill-equipped to meet the challenges of the international political and socioeconomic environment of the new millennium.

To preempt the organizational vacuum that would have been created by the IRU's expected demise in the early 1990s, Gypsy activists in the United States established a breakaway organization, the International Roma Federation (IRF), in 1993. The IRF was registered with the UN and claimed to have representatives in 20 countries, but its international character is largely fiction. Furthermore, some IRF leaders' commitment to the Romani cause, their preparation for becoming constructive participants of the international Gypsy movement, and the motivation behind their endeavors are suspect. When in 1993 I suggested the name of a well-known and reputable Romani activist as prospective IRF treasurer, the IRF official at the other end of the line countered with "You should know that I cannot put a Gypsy near money!"⁹⁹

Democratization in Eastern Europe encouraged Romani organizational activities on the supranational level. In August 1992, Gypsy leaders from 22 Romani organizations in 10 countries established the European Roma Parliament (EUROM) in Budapest to fight discrimination and to promote Romani culture. The planning for EUROM had begun in 1990 at a meeting organized by the Rom and Sinti Union in Germany.¹⁰⁰ "There are 15 million Roma in European countries and sticking together is the only answer to their problems," said Aladár Horváth, a Gypsy representative in the Hungarian legislature and one of the organizers of the meeting.¹⁰¹ Thus far EUROM has not been able to break out of the mold of ever more organizations called to life with much enthusiasm that fail to deliver on their early promise. According to Romani leaders, one of the motivating forces behind EUROM was

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* ⁹⁹ Telephone interview – transcript in files (13 November 1993).

¹⁰⁰ Jean-Pierre Légeois, *Roma. Gypsies, Travellers* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Press, 1994), 260.

¹⁰¹ *The Independent*, 29 August 1992; and "Roma als überzeugt Europäer," *Die Presse*, 7 September 1992.

Council of Europe Deputy Secretary General Peter Leuprecht's commitment to Gypsy representation in the Council if Roma could form a legitimate all-European organization.¹⁰² In August 1997 Florin Cioabă – son and heir of Ion – announced at a meeting commemorating the Holocaust held in Auschwitz that Gypsy representatives from six European states decided to set up a Parliament of European Roma.¹⁰³ They were apparently unaware of EUROM's existence. The ineffectuality of these efforts suggests that although on the national level Romani interest representation has developed considerably, it is extremely difficult to generate a European representative body from the multicolored cavalcade of national organizations. According to Nicolae Gheorghe, a drastic change in this state of affairs should not be expected until East European states become members of the European Union (EU). In the meantime, he suggests, the main task is the legitimization of local Romani groups.¹⁰⁴

Funding is another serious problem that international Romani organizations have faced. While national governments finance many Gypsy organizations in their countries, they rarely subsidize international Romani groups, which generally rely on money provided by foundations and international organizations. Although some Romani leaders have discussed proposals such as the establishment of self-sustaining micro-communities, the fact is that none of the existing Romani organizations, institutions, or programs could survive without outside subsidies.¹⁰⁵ Several NGO executives I interviewed – all on the condition of anonymity – noted that many Gypsy activists expect them to fund their proposed projects but are reluctant to acknowledge the *gadje* as equals in the preparation and implementation of programs. More importantly, “The Roma don't like it when foundations give money for studies *about* them; they want to control the funds themselves but will mismanage it and use it for unintended purposes,” contended one of my interviewees.

Some national Gypsy organizations, particularly the Roma National Congress (RNC) based in Germany, have also acquired a more international profile in recent years. RNC has been especially active in monitoring the situation of Gypsy migrants in Germany, directing European organizations' attention to their plight, and calling for a specially protected minority status of the Roma in Europe. The RNC has been instru-

¹⁰² OMRI DD II, no. 14 (19 January 1996).

¹⁰³ Mediatfax (Auschwitz/Oświęcim), 6 August 1997; reported in RFE/RL II, 1:91 (8 August 1997).

¹⁰⁴ “A roma képviselőt máshol is gond” (Interview with Gheorghe), *Népszabadság*, 18 April 1998.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with PER President Allen Kassof (Princeton, 16–17 April 1997).

mental in promoting Romani rights. It also successfully campaigned for the establishment of the European Roma Rights Center.

Leadership

Over the last 15 years a handful of highly educated and multilingual Romani leaders have emerged from Eastern Europe – among them Gheorghe (Romania), Andrzej Mirga (Poland), and Klára Orgovánová (Slovakia) – who have made names for themselves in the international Gypsy movement through their insights, knowledge, and dedication as well as their able leadership of NGOs and other organizations. Gheorghe, the best known among them, enjoys a well-deserved and long-standing reputation as an indefatigable and imaginative Gypsy leader with whom IO and NGO executives can “do business.” In the contemporary world no international meeting on Romani issues is complete without “star performers” like them. Not everyone is pleased with the new type of Gypsy activists. Romani politicians frequently charge that people like Gheorghe and Mirga have become, in effect, diplomats who no longer understand the problems of Gypsy communities. Flórián Farkas, Roman Kwiatkowski, and Florin Cioabă, among others, whose criticism might well be rooted in envy, accuse “international” Gypsy leaders of distancing themselves from the reality of everyday Romani experience.¹⁰⁶

The objectives of Romani leaders are fundamentally similar – increasing the Gypsies' political clout and alleviating their socioeconomic marginality – but their leadership styles can be very different. The constructive and more or less objective demeanor of scholar-activists like Mirga clashes strongly with the militant and aggressive deportment of someone like Rudko Kawczynski, the one-time head of the Roma National Congress and former director of the Budapest-based Regional Roma Participation Program. In other words, the Romani movement, too, has its Martin Luther Kings and Malcolm Xs.

Meetings, seminars, and lectures at times degenerate into personal attacks and nasty innuendo. In 1998 I gave an invited lecture on East European state–Roma relations at the Central European University in Budapest. I tried to explain why the region's governments did not do more for the Gypsies by pointing to their other priorities and limited resources, that policies assisting the Roma were often political liabilities owing to societal prejudices, the deficiencies of Gypsy organizations, and so on. In the question–answer period and during the reception that followed, different audience members suggested that (a) I represented right-wing extremism, (b) I was a bleeding-heart liberal who should live next

¹⁰⁶ Interviews with Farkas (Budapest, 4 August 1999); Kwiatkowski (Oświęcim, 19 August 1999); and Cioabă (Sibiu, 27 October 1999).

door to the Roma for a while "to understand who they really are," and (c) after years of studying the Gypsies and ethnic politics I should know that assisting them was an entirely lost cause and thus unworthy of discussion.

But I got off relatively easily. The Project on Ethnic Relations, an American NGO active in Romani affairs, organized a conference on the East European Gypsies held in Stupava (near Bratislava) in the spring of 1992. In addition to many Gypsy and non-Gypsy activists and politicians from the region, the organizers invited some Western scholars, among them Jennifer Hochschild and Donald Horowitz, eminent American students of racial and ethnic politics, to share their perspectives with the participants. As Horowitz was about to expand on how other marginal ethnic groups in the world shared the negative societal image of the Roma, Kawczynski interrupted him:

Roma are sitting, *gadje* are speaking. They are telling us what to do, which language to speak. They want to teach us how to speak our own language. What are they *doing* here? . . . Ten miles from here Gypsies are starving. This is not a concern of the *gadje*, it is our problem. They don't want to help us. They want to quell us, or else expel us or maybe to kill us.¹⁰⁷

More recently, Kawczynski directed his tirades against Jean-Pierre Liégeois, a French scholar who has been studying the Roma for decades and has served as an expert on them for various European organizations. Liégeois, Kawczynski wrote,

must share in the blame for the current situation of Roma and Sinti in Western Europe. Millions of ecu [Euros] has passed through the bank accounts of his organizations over the many years of his work "for the Roma." The question of who has profited most from his work, the Roma or Liégeois himself, may be answered by ascertaining how many Roma even know who Liégeois is. After 20 years, with the exception of a few experts and linguists, none!¹⁰⁸

In a published rebuttal, Liégeois flatly disproves Kawczynski's allegations. Liégeois' Gypsy Research Center has, for most of its existence, had an annual budget under 1,000 ecus.¹⁰⁹ Though he may not be well known among the Roma, says Liégeois, neither is Kawczynski, who should be well known because he is a politician, not a scholar. Actually, most ordinary Gypsies in Eastern Europe are unaware of the existence of their

¹⁰⁷ Cited from Isabel Fonseca, *Bury Me Standing: The Gypsies and Their Journey* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 298. For a carefully edited report on the conference see *Romanies in Central and Eastern Europe: Illusions and Reality* (Princeton: PER, 1992).

¹⁰⁸ Kawczynski, "The Politics of Romani Politics," *Transitions*, 4:4 (September 1997): 27-8.

¹⁰⁹ "Letters," *Transitions*, 4:6 (November 1997): 4.

own supranational organizations, let alone their leaders. Other than a few Romani intellectuals and activists, the hundreds of Gypsies throughout the region I asked about these organizations claimed never to have heard of them.

Building Romani Identity

Many Roma may well have been affected, albeit indirectly, by the efforts of Gypsy organizations to strengthen Romani identity. International Romani organizations publicized the Roma's plight and kept it on the agenda of a variety of IOs and NGOs and, through and with them, have had a positive impact on state policies toward the Roma. The IRU and other Romani IOs have also played an important role in the strengthening Gypsy identity in the last two decades. Aside from generally advancing the Roma's cause, they also promoted specific issues with some success. One of these has been raising the Gypsies' consciousness about Romani history in general and the *Porajmos* in particular. A variety of Romani organizations have arranged dozens of events in the last decade to commemorate the extermination of their forebears. In June 1993 some 300 Roma staged a protest at the Dachau concentration camp, where thousands of Gypsies perished to call attention to their plight.¹¹⁰ On 3 August 1994 over 3,000 Roma from Central and Eastern Europe gathered at the site of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp marking the 50th anniversary of the Nazi slaughter of the camp's remaining Gypsies.¹¹¹ Romani leaders have successfully lobbied for a memorial for Gypsy Holocaust victims in Berlin, similar to that honoring Jewish victims.¹¹²

Romani organizations have relentlessly reproached Germany for not explicitly owning up to its culpability. This campaign has contributed to a growing awareness among Germans and others of the Roma and their predicament. In 1982 Helmut Schmidt's social democratic government officially recognized the Nazi annihilation of the Roma as genocide, a crime against humanity.¹¹³ Ten years later President Richard von Weizsäcker made a strong plea for tolerance in connection with the arriving Gypsy immigrants and, in the following year, held talks with the

¹¹⁰ Valerie Leroux, "Gypsies Flock to Camp Where Nazis Murdered Their Forebears," AFP (Dachau, Germany), 1 July 1993.

¹¹¹ *o Drom: Magazine for and about the Roma and Sinti in Europe* (Special issue in English), September 1994, 34.

¹¹² "German Gypsies Demand Berlin Holocaust Memorial," *Austrian-American Statesman*, 31 July 1999.

¹¹³ Lutz R. Reuter, "Ethnic-Cultural Minorities in Germany," in Russell F. Farnen, *Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Identity: Cross National and Comparative Perspectives* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1994), 227.

representatives of Holocaust survivors and Germany's Romani and Sinti communities.¹¹⁴ In May 1994 the Bundestag (the German parliament) observed a minute of silence in memory of the Roma and Sinti murdered in Nazi death camps.¹¹⁵ This was the first time an official commemoration ceremony in Germany was dedicated to the Roma. German sources – along with American foundations and the Polish Ministry of Culture – have also been funding a center for the study and documentation of the Roma during World War II, to be housed in the Brzezinka section of the Auschwitz concentration camp. In March 1997 German President Roman Herzog acknowledged Germany's responsibility for the mass extermination of the Roma when he opened an exhibition commemorating the Romani Holocaust in the new Gypsy cultural center in Heidelberg. Although many Roma have yet to receive the reparation payments offered to other Holocaust victims, the growing recognition by German politicians of this injustice perhaps will lead to rectifying the situation in the foreseeable future.

Romani leaders have long realized that through centuries of strong external influences, the Romani language has undergone extensive mutation into dialects so different from each other that they are no longer mutually comprehensible. Thus, Spanish Gypsies, for instance, can no longer communicate with their brethren in Macedonia. Since 1989 a small but growing number of Roma have been rediscovering their linguistic heritage and have become fluent in the language. This phenomenon has increasingly turned the attention of Gypsy leaders and linguists (some of them non-Roma) to the standardization of the Romani language in order to foster communication between Romani communities throughout the world. This process has proved extremely difficult, however, not only for technical reasons but also because activists have found it virtually impossible to get Gypsies to agree which dialect of the Romani language should be accepted as the dominant one.¹¹⁶ The many conferences and meetings focusing on language issues have generated limited progress on standardization.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ "And Still They Come," *The Economist*, 14 November 1992, 58; and "Gypsy Auschwitz Survivors Meet German President," *Reuter* (Bonn), 28 January 1993.

¹¹⁵ "German Parliament Commemorates Romani Victims," *Keshano Drom*, 2:2 (June 1994): 37.

¹¹⁶ Interview with Elena Marushiakova (Sofia, 9 March 1995). See also Fraser, *The Gypsies*, 319.

¹¹⁷ See Ágnes Diósi, *Száz Mária zsebkendője* (Budapest: Kozmosz, 1990), 19; *International Herald Tribune*, 28 August 1990; and Yaron Matras, ed., *Romani in Contact* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995). For an extensive report on the 1993 Budapest conference, see *Keshano Drom*, 1:2–3 (May–June 1993): 5–13.

There is an increasingly vibrant international Romani movement that has been quite effective in publicizing the Gypsies' situation in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Considering that two decades ago the world's Romani community enjoyed neither worldwide attention nor any sort of representation, the accomplishments of Romani and other activists are indeed substantial.

PART III: INTERNATIONAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

During the communist period, Western supranational bodies could not get credible information on the status of ethnic minorities in socialist states owing to the paucity of dependable data and limitations on information flow outside of the Soviet Bloc. Especially since 1989, IOs and NGOs have become important in influencing East European policies toward the Roma and other marginal groups. There are two reasons for this. First, after 1989, when reliable information began to surface about the region's minorities, IOs started to display more interest in them due to their international migration, their difficult situation, and unacceptable state policies toward them. Second, during the communist period there was little incentive for East European states to respond to international criticisms of their minority policies because the IOs and NGOs had minimal leverage vis-à-vis the region's states. After 1989, this state of affairs changed drastically. European Union and NATO membership is a key foreign policy goal of most East European states. These organizations have made it clear that only states whose minority policies equal or at least approach the standards of Western democracies will be admitted to membership. In other words, multinational institutions now can successfully pressure East European governments because they can grant or withhold membership and associate membership privileges as well as financing for a variety of projects and programs.

International Organizations

The Council of Europe (CE) and the OSCE (CSCE until 1995) have been the most active supranational organizations active in Romani affairs. The CE has adopted guidelines, conventions, and resolutions pertaining to the Roma since 1969. An important one is the CE Parliamentary Assembly's Recommendation 1203 of 1993, which proposed a broad program of measures needed to improve the situation of European Roma. In the 1990s, together with the OSCE and other international bodies, it has established standards for government policy, created a mechanism for increasing the political visibility of issues related to the

Gypsies, discussed the various facets of the Roma's predicament, and sponsored research into Romani issues.

In the last decade the Council of Europe and the OSCE have organized innumerable conferences, seminars, and hearings to examine and call attention to the Gypsies' problems and to urge member states to stop discriminatory practices against them and introduce equal opportunity programs for them. The CE's Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities, which is ratified by member states and requires them to submit annual reports on human rights and minority affairs, has played a major role in raising political awareness of the need for more progressive policies.¹¹⁸ The final documents of several large-scale CSCE/OSCE meetings specifically recognized the problems of the Gypsies, designated them as a special and threatened minority, and committed the organization and its member states to encourage research and study of their difficulties and to take measures to remedy them.¹¹⁹ Together with the OSCE, the CE has organized dozens of fact-finding missions to East Europe to study the Gypsies' conditions.¹²⁰

In September 1994 the CE and the CSCE organized a joint four-day seminar on the problems of the European Roma in Warsaw. The objective of the 259 participants who represented 34 states and 71 NGOs and IOs was to come up with specific proposals and suggest workable programs to alleviate Gypsy marginality. This was the first time when government officials were publicly challenged to respond to allegations concerning the treatment of the Romani minority.¹²¹ At the meeting the CSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Max van der Stoep, and the Council of Europe's Peter Leuprecht stressed their organizations' concern over anti-Roma violence. One of the offshoots of this meeting was the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues (CPRSI), established by the CSCE and headquartered in Warsaw.

The CPRSI operates within the framework of the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. It is one of the first organizational manifestations of the growing recognition of the Gypsy problem's magnitude by a major supranational organization. The CPRSI organizes conferences – often in collaboration with the CE – publishes a regular newsletter, and serves as a clearing house of information about

¹¹⁸ See, for instance, Nicolae Gheorghe and Jennifer Tanaka, *Public Policies Concerning Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Region*, Background paper 4 (Warsaw: OSCE, 1998).

¹¹⁹ See Document of the Copenhagen Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE (Copenhagen, 1990), Paragraph 40; and Report of the CSCE Meeting of Experts on National Minorities (Geneva, 1991), Article VI.

¹²¹ See Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*.
¹²² Romnews (information service of the Roma National Congress) (Warsaw), no. 17, 27 September 1994.

the Gypsies' situation across Europe. In 1996, nearly two years after the CPRSI was established, I visited its offices in Warsaw. There were no Roma on staff, none of the people in the office had any background in Gypsy affairs, and they did not check or confirm the validity of any information they received and subsequently distributed.¹²² Since 1998, when the OSCE established the office of Roma and Sinti Adviser and appointed Nicolae Gheorghe to the position, CPRSI has become more dynamic.

The Coordinator of Activities on Roma/Gypsies of the Council of Europe's Population and Migration Division has also become a fixture at Roma-related conferences. The CE also set up its own Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies, which met for the first time in Strasbourg in March 1996.¹²³ The group has about a dozen members with two-year mandates, seven of whom are nominated by their governments but are supposedly independent of them. Additional members are financed by their organizations. Although the Specialist Group's role is not clearly defined, it is to concentrate on human rights violations, women's rights, the situation of Romani refugees, and aiding the Council's larger objective, which is to help develop policies pertaining to European Roma. The first project of this group was a mission to examine the conditions of the Roma in Bosnia.

Two contending positions have developed in the Specialist Group. The first, represented by András Biró and Cătălin Zamfir, favors concentrating on concrete social and economic problems. The second, supported by Andrzej Mirga and Nicolae Gheorghe, considers it dangerous to tackle these long-term difficulties first because they might serve as an excuse for governments to do little about deficiencies in the political and human rights arenas. Romani members of the group have also focused on defining and institutionalizing a new official status for the Gypsies as a European nationality that would allow their unbridled movement across the Continent.¹²⁴ Although its intentions are admirable, some participants of the Specialist Group, like Zamfir, contend that its practical effect on the Roma has been minimal.¹²⁵

Occasionally the CE and other IOs have praised new legal instruments or improved policies of East European member states. For instance, the CE has commended Hungary's Law on Minorities as a model for all of Europe, the OSCE applauded the Bulgarian government's efforts to

¹²² Interview with Elizabeth Winship of CPRSI/OSCE (Warsaw, 30 July 1996).

¹²³ See *Newsletter: Activities on Roma/Gypsies* (Council of Europe), no. 5 (25 April 1996); and interviews with Nicoleta Bîcu (Bucharest, 23 May 1996) and Livia Plaks (Bucharest, 27 May 1996).

¹²⁴ Interview with Cătălin Zamfir, the official Romanian expert of the Specialist Group (Bucharest, 1 June 1996).

¹²⁵ Interview with Zamfir (Bucharest, 8 November 1999).

integrate Romani communities and organizations, and both organizations welcomed the new Slovak minority language law.¹²⁶ The condemnation of member states has been far more frequent, however. The CE and the OSCE, for instance, have strongly criticized former Slovak Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar for his tirades against the Roma; they have also denounced racism in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania, and Slovakia. These are but a few examples of the countless criticisms, denunciations, and censures of East European states for their discriminatory policies and practices by IOs.¹²⁷

Perhaps no other issue received more international publicity than the Czech citizenship law (discussed in more detail in the next chapter) widely considered to discriminate against the Roma owing to its stipulations such as that an applicant have a five-year record free of criminal convictions, permanent residence, and knowledge of the Czech language.¹²⁸ From 1993 on, the Czech Republic received censure from the UN, the CE, the OSCE, and other supranational institutions and NGOs for its citizenship law. These organizations were especially concerned because they believed that the Czech legislation might set a precedent for other countries, like Croatia and Macedonia, preparing new citizenship laws.¹²⁹

The European Parliament, the EU's legislative arm, has also put the East European Roma on its agenda on a number of occasions in the last decade, confirming that their situation was an important part of accession criteria.¹³⁰ In 1997 the European Commission (the EU's executive body) proposed a broad, long-term program, Agenda 2000, which stresses the need for improving the East European Roma's conditions. This program is based on a country-by-country approach, it requires annual government reports, and it emphasizes effective monitoring of the

¹²⁶ BTA (Sofia), 18 May 1999; RFE/RL II, 3:98 (20 May 1999); 3:134 (13 July 1999); CTK (Bratislava), 19 July 1999; and RFE/RL II, 3:139 (20 July 1999).

¹²⁷ See, for instance, "CSCE Report on Roma in Czech Republic," NCA (Prague), 27 April 1993; Henry Kamm, "In New Eastern Europe, and Old Anti-Gypsy Bias," *New York Times*, 17 November 1993; "Gypsy Seminar Recommends Rights Mediator," CTK (Warsaw), 23 September 1993; "Tenyfeltárás a kisebbségért," *Új Magyarorszag*, 17 February 1995; OMRI DD II, no. 237 (7 December 1995); RFE/RL II, no. 4 (4 April 1997); "Czech Republic: Update on Issues Affecting Roma," Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board (Ottawa: 20 August 1998), 13; and RFE/RL II, 4:215 (6 November 2000).

¹²⁸ See, for instance, Jane Perlez, "Czechs Use Laws to Exclude Gypsies from Gaining Citizenship and Voting," *New York Times*, 27 December 1995.

¹²⁹ See, for instance, *ibid.*; OMRI DD II, no. 250 (28 December 1995); and RFE/RL II, 1:123 (23 September 1997).

¹³⁰ See, for instance, OMRI DD II, no. 134 (12 July 1996); and *State Policies Toward Romani Communities in Candidate Countries to the EU: Government and Romani Participation in Policy-Making* (Princeton: PER, 1999).

implementation of national strategies. Every state that wants to join the EU has to accept the basic principles of Agenda 2000. At the same time, this program also provides incentives to East European governments to change their policies by funding programs for minorities (until 1997 these EU funds went primarily to NGOs).

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights turned its attention to the Roma for the first time in 1977. In 1992 the same body adopted Resolution 1992/65 entitled "On the Protection of the Roma (Gypsies)" asserting that the UN could not remain indifferent to the fate of any people facing racial discrimination and urging member states to implement measures to improve the Roma's conditions and eliminate anti-Gypsy discrimination. Officials of the United Nations and especially the UN High Commissioner for Refugees have strongly criticized East European states for their Romani policies. Key UN agencies, such as the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR), have singled out Romania a number of times for the situation of the Roma there. A report released by the CESCR in May 1994 noted that Gypsies in Romania faced major obstacles in obtaining jobs, though it neglected to mention most Roma's lack of employment qualifications.¹³¹ Similarly, in 1998 another UN committee criticized the Hungarian government because of the "disproportionately high number of Roma" in Hungarian prisons.¹³² Other UN agencies, particularly the UNICEF and the UNESCO, have taken steps to encourage and at least partially finance pragmatic programs – such as business courses and university scholarships – for Roma in several East European states. In Bulgaria, for instance, UNESCO has funded a broad project called "Let's bring the children back to school," which has assisted hundreds of Gypsy children completing their basic education.¹³³

The International Organizations' Effect on State Policy

The Council of Europe and other supranational bodies have reiterated time and again that acceptable minority policy was a condition of membership in the organization and that improvement in the Roma's situation was a precondition of accession to the European Union, the international organization East European states are most keen to join.¹³⁴ The EU has repeatedly informed governments applying for membership

¹³¹ "UN Body Hits Romania over Gypsy Discrimination," NCA (Geneva), 25 May 1994.

¹³² "Aránytalanul sok roma van a magyar börtönökben," *Népszabadság*, 21 November 1998.

¹³³ "Reaching Out to Minorities," *Transitions*, 1:13 (28 July 1995): 59; and interview with Kalina Bozeva (Sofia), 18 March 1995.

¹³⁴ See, for instance, *Új Magyarorszag*, 7 September 1993; *Cigány Hírlap-Romano Zurnal*, 28 May 1996; *Roundtable Discussion of Government Policies on the Roma in Romania* (Princeton: PER, 1999), 7.

that an important part of membership criteria is how they deal with minority affairs (and within that broader concept, with the Roma). In fact, the Roma are specifically mentioned in the EU's country-by-country criteria for Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia.

The EU itself has strongly condemned specific East European policies, such as recurring Romanian police abuses against and Czech handling of the Roma.¹³⁵ In the fall of 1998 Rals Dreyer, acting head of the EU mission in the Czech Republic, contended that "Romanian rights have become one of the most important issues of EU accession negotiations."¹³⁶ Although NATO has not been directly concerned with minority issues, one reason Slovakia could not join the first wave of enlargement in 1999 was its undemocratic policies toward ethnic minorities, including the Roma. In addition, legislators of some Western states have also held hearings about and lamented the situation of the Roma in Eastern Europe.

The United States withheld the granting of Most Favored Nation status to Romania until 1992, partly owing to its objectionable minority policies. In April 1994 the Subcommittee on International Security, International Organizations, and Human Rights of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the U.S. House of Representatives held a hearing concerning the human rights abuses of the Roma.¹³⁷ The U.S. State Department's annual reports on human rights have repeatedly criticized East European governments policies toward the Roma.¹³⁸ According to a confidential source, Bulgarian President Petar Stoyanov received a letter from the State Department warning him that President Bill Clinton's scheduled November 1999 visit to Sofia might be jeopardized should the government fail to reach an agreement concerning a broad package of pro-Roma measures with Gypsy organizations.

There is no doubt that the main reason behind the changes in the Czech citizenship law in 1996 and in 1999 was the extensive criticism of IOS. Zdeněk Matějka, the former head of the OSCE's Prague office, contended that until 1996 the Czech government's biggest problem in terms of international relations had been the situation of and its policies

¹³⁵ See, for instance, *Jurnalul national*, 15 July 1996; the joint statement of Roma Federation and Romani CRISS (Bucharest, 18 July 1996); Reuter (Prague), 27 May 1998; and RFE/RL II, 2:100 (27 May 1998).

¹³⁶ "Slovaks v Czechs on Gypsies," *The Economist*, 7 November 1998, 52.

¹³⁷ See *Human Rights Abuses of the Roma* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994).

¹³⁸ See, for instance, OMRI DD, no. 28 (8 February 1996); no. 48 (7 March 1996); Paul Goble, "Post-Communist States Diverge on Human Rights," RFE/RL II End Note, 2:21 (2 February 1998).

toward the Roma.¹³⁹ Clearly, East European politicians are increasingly aware of the pressure from the EU and other organizations. Dozens of politicians and experts from Warsaw to Sofia have openly or implicitly admitted to me that they considered international pressures the most important motivating force behind the changes in their countries' policies toward the Roma.¹⁴⁰ As a high-ranking Hungarian government official told me, "we fully recognize that the EU will not accept Hungary as a full member when 5% of the country's population is not integrated and socioeconomically miles behind the rest of the population."¹⁴¹

Non-Romani Foundations and NGOs

I have already discussed the work of NGOs directed by the East European Gypsies in the previous chapter. The focus in this section, then, is on independent non-Romani foundations and NGOs.

Amnesty International (AI) has publicized the violations of the Roma's rights in Eastern Europe and elsewhere for decades, but its activities have intensified since 1989. Although no one debates the merits of and the motivation behind AI's undertakings, at times its reports have been one-sided, have neglected improvements in minority policies, and have made unfair generalizations. In 1993 AI officials said that "political torture and murder are officially tolerated in at least ten countries," including Romania and Bulgaria, a statement most people familiar with these states considered astonishing.¹⁴² In 1998, eighteen months after the elections that brought President Emil Constantinescu and a coalition of

¹³⁹ Interviews with Zdeněk Matějka (Prague, 14 August 1996) and Jonathan Stein of the European Studies Center of the Institute of EastWest Studies (Prague, 14 August 1996).

¹⁴⁰ See, for instance, interviews with Gabriella Varrjú, Vice-President of the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities (5 August 1999); Zdeněk Matějka, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Jan Pečáček, Adviser to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (Prague, 23 August 1999); Vasil Hudak, Director of the EastWest Institute's Prague Center (Prague, 25 August 1999); Vera Klopič, Institute for Ethnic Studies (Ljubljana, 2 December 1999); Pál Csáky, Deputy Prime Minister in Charge of Human Rights, Minorities, and Regional Development (Bratislava, 9 September 1999); Dan Oprescu, Head of National Office for the Roma, Department for the Protection of National Minorities, and Péter Eckstein-Kovács, Minister for the Protection of National Minorities (Bucharest, 2 November 1999); Petar Atanasov, Secretary of the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues at the Council of Ministers (Sofia, 15 November 1999); Ventsislav Ivanov, director of the Directorate of International Organizations and Human Rights at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Sofia, 16 November 1999).

¹⁴¹ Interview with Antal Heizer, Office of the Prime Minister (Budapest, 28 May 1998). See also "Roma in Hungary: Views of Several Specialists," Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board (Ottawa, February 1999), 30.

¹⁴² Stephen Kinzer, "Rights Groups Attack German Plan on Refugees," *New York Times*, 7 February 1993.

opposition parties to power, AI issued a 32-page document on continuing human rights violations in Romania referring to reports it received alleging government discrimination, shootings, torture, and deaths in custody, even though a few months earlier the OSCE's van der Stoep described the Bucharest government's line on minority policy as "courageous."¹⁴³ In December 2000 AI was forced to apologize to the Hungarian government for having published an advertisement in the Netherlands depicting a three-year old Romani child with his teeth allegedly broken by Hungarian police. Anna Burley, AI's European Director, who went to Budapest in January 2001 to make amends in person, admitted that the credibility of the picture was not checked by AI's Dutch member organization.¹⁴⁴

Starting in 1990 Helsinki Watch/Human Rights Watch expanded its coverage to produce a series of publications detailing the situation of and widespread discrimination against the Roma in Eastern Europe. Most of these do not even make a pretense of objectivity because they extensively rely on interviews with Gypsy victims of discrimination on the basis of which blanket generalizations are made.¹⁴⁵ Helsinki Watch has inspected the Roma's conditions in several states of the region, organized meetings with local and state officials, and offered recommendations based on international law and agreements for improving minority policies. Helsinki Watch and its regionwide branch offices have also been active in monitoring Romani interstate migration and criticizing the governments for not improving the Gypsies' conditions. The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights has issued numerous press releases protesting anti-Romani incidents in the region.¹⁴⁶

Since 1989 in every East European state numerous NGOs have been established to monitor human rights. These organizations usually focus on civil and political rights, but, especially since the mid-1990s, their attention has often extended to social and economic discrimination. Some of these NGOs have done a great deal of useful work mostly inves-

¹⁴³ "Romania: Amnesty Reports Further Human Rights Abuses," NCA (London), 21 April 1998; and RFE/RL II, 1:3 (3 April 1997).

¹⁴⁴ RFE/RL II, 4:249 (29 December 2000); and "Bocsánatot Kért az Amnesty International," *Népszabadság*, 23 January 2001.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with David Murphy of the Nova Škola Foundation (Prague, 23 August 1999). The objectionable methods of Human Rights Watch have also been criticized in other contexts. In 1998 Human Rights Watch produced a 200-plus-page report on Russian orphanages based on interviews with less than 25 people and visits to 15 orphanages in one small area. According to one expert on the subject, the HRW's "extensive report" was a "disgrace." See Juliette Engel of the MitraMed Institute in Johnson's Russia List, no. 3063, item 3 (20 February 1999).

¹⁴⁶ Dan Ionescu, "Violence against Gypsies Escalates," *Report on Eastern Europe*, 2:25 (21 June 1991): 23.

tigating incidents, criticizing and advising the authorities (usually the ministries of education interior, labor, and the police forces) responsible for eliminating discrimination, and organizing meetings discussing them. In many cases, such as those of the Human Rights Project in Bulgaria, the Citizens' Solidarity and Tolerance Movement in the Czech Republic, the Union for Peace and Human Rights in Slovakia, and the Office for the Protection of National and Ethnic Minority Rights in Hungary, their dogged determination has led to dismissals and criminal proceedings against corrupt or abusive policemen and other officials, prosecution of those responsible for attacks against the Roma, changes in departmental/ministerial policies, and the like.

Since its founding in 1996, the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) has aggressively monitored anti-Roma discrimination and upheld Romani rights. In addition, it has provided stipends for dozens of Gypsy law students across the region and for the legal defense of many Roma accused. ERRC has also acquired a reputation of publishing unbalanced reports and pursuing its objectives with rather more zeal and less tact than would be optimal.¹⁴⁷ The following two examples should illustrate why this is so. Shortly after the 1995 Burgenland pipe bomb incident mentioned earlier, the ERRC conducted an investigation into Austria's political, social, and legal situation. The resultant report found the country's policies xenophobic and its laws discriminatory, both reflecting its "racist climate." Extensive citations taken from the extreme nationalist (i.e., nonmainstream) press buttressed this conclusion.¹⁴⁸ The 62-page report failed to mention, however, that President Thomas Klestil, several members of the Austrian cabinet, at least 50 other state officials, and religious leaders protested against the attack with their presence at the victims' funeral.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Interviews with Flórián Farkas, President of the National Gypsy Self-Government (4 August 1999); Roman Kristof, editor of *Romano Hangoš* and coordinator of HCA-Roma section (Brno, 2 September 1999); Michal Vašečka (Bratislava, 10 September 1999); Elena Marushnikova and Vesselin Popov (Sofia, 13 November 1999); Trajko Petrovski, a researcher at the Institute for Folklore (Skopje, 25 November 1999); Vera Klopčić, a researcher at the Institute for Ethnic Studies (Ljubljana, 2 December 1999); and others who wish to remain anonymous. One researcher who objected the ERRC's constant portrayal of Roma as victims was told by Claude Cahn, ERRC's director of publications and research, that ERRC's "is an ideological approach and we are fully aware of its artificiality." Cahn informed a prospective contributor to the ERRC's newsletter, *Roma Rights*, that according to editorial policy, photos should only depict "poverty, degradation, violence, destroyed houses, etc." The researchers wish to remain anonymous, the documents are in my possession.

¹⁴⁸ See *Divide and Deport: Roma & Sinti in Austria* (Budapest: ERRC, 1996).

¹⁴⁹ See, for instance, "Nyugodjunk bekében?" *Amaro Drom*, 5:3 (March 1995): 6-7, a report of the funeral by Hungarian Gypsy activist Aladár Horváth.

In July 1999, after the Finnish government reestablished visa requirements for Slovaks in response to the arrival of hundreds of asylum-seeking Slovak Roma in Helsinki within a few days, ERRC described the decision as "discriminatory" and, in a letter to Foreign Minister Tarja Halonen, expressed its disappointment that the Finnish government has "apparently succumbed to the widespread racial stereotype and anti-Roma sentiment in much of Europe."¹⁵⁰ In essence, ERRC criticized the Finns for refusing political asylum to economic refugees and upholding their immigration laws that satisfy all international norms.

Although the intentions of human rights organizations are nearly always admirable, their efforts are often misguided. In general, their data collection methods have been unsound to say the least. In many cases Romani victims are interviewed about the events in question and their testimonies are presented as a factual account of what happened. Human rights organizations often do not concern themselves with the problems and realities of the Gypsies' daily life but concentrate on the headline grabbing stories without a critical, objective approach. It is also important to remember that these organizations have a stake in making things appear as grim as possible. They are financed by various foundations and agencies who might well reduce their contributions if reports suggested that the Roma's conditions or state policies toward them had actually improved. After all, at any given moment there are a plethora of worthy causes needing to be funded. There is no doubt that human rights organizations have done an indispensable job in encouraging governments to maintain fundamental rights standards. Nevertheless, their reports should be viewed with the same measure of skepticism with which one might appraise the assertions of government officials. Both sides have an interest in bending the truth.

Then again, several of my interviewees agreed with Nicolae Gheorghe, who told me that "human rights organizations are not supposed to be objective."¹⁵¹ Dan Oprescu, Head of the Romanian government's National Office for the Roma, noted that without organizations like the ERRC exaggerating problems and pressuring politicians and the public, there would be less motivation to address the Roma's concerns.¹⁵² Ventsislav Ivanov, Director of the International Organizations and Human Rights Directorate at the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, suggested that East European governments needed NGOs like Amnesty International "because we need someone to kick us in the pants" and force us to respond with positive measures toward the Roma.¹⁵³ At the

¹⁵⁰ CTK (Bratislava), 7 July 1999.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Gheorghe (Warsaw, 16 August 1999).

¹⁵² Interview with Oprescu (Bucharest, 2 November 1999).

¹⁵³ Interview with Ivanov (Sofia, 16 November 1999).

same time, Ivanov lamented that many NGOs do not see the big picture and are not realistic about the speed that governments – especially of poor countries – can take to implement new policies.

There are several hundred East European foundations – the vast majority financed by Western sponsors – working for Roma-related causes in the region. Given space limitations, it is impossible to do them justice here so I will briefly mention two. The Sofia-based International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations was established in 1993. It is an NGO that has given scholarships to Gypsy and other minority students, supported minority publications, and financed special educational programs. Funded by UNESCO, the EU, the Open Society Fund, and other sources, the Center has also worked to improve the educational standards of Bulgaria's other minorities – particularly Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) and Turks – and minority Bulgarians in Albania, Moldova, Ukraine, and elsewhere.¹⁵⁴ In terms of pragmatic, tangible programs, no East European NGO has done more for the Roma than the Budapest-based Autonomia Foundation, established in 1990 and financed primarily by U.S. charitable organizations. The brainchild of András Biró, who has had a long experience working for the United Nations in the Third World, the credo of Autonomia is that lending small amounts of seed money, in essence startup capital for minor business and agricultural ventures, to needy Romani communities will make a great difference not only in their economic situation but also in their self-esteem and life perspectives. Similarly to the microfinancing programs that have been successful in other poverty-stricken environments, Autonomia has funded hundreds of small-scale projects that have assisted thousands of impoverished Roma.¹⁵⁵

Although there are many Western foundations that have financed Roma-related projects in Eastern Europe, none has done more than the Open Society Fund and Institute established and bankrolled by George Soros, a Hungarian-American financier and philanthropist. Aside from innumerable minority scholarships, meetings, and self-help programs, Soros' organizations across the region have funded the Budapest-based

¹⁵⁴ "Reaching Out to Minorities" (interview with Center Director Anronina Zhelyazkova), *Transition*, 1:13 (28 July 1995): 58–60.

¹⁵⁵ "Cigánykerék," *Közértesítő*, 3 July 1992; "Tulajdoni stratégia a cigányoknak," *Magyar Hírlap*, 14 June 1993; Béla Osztojkán, *Megkérdezem Önt is* (Budapest: Phralippe, 1994), 46–55; Gabor Kereszty and György Simó, "Helping Self-Help: Interview with András Biró," *The Hungarian Quarterly*, 36:140 (Winter 1995): 70–7; and interviews with Biró (Budapest, 26 July 1996; and Washington, D.C., 19 September 1996); and Anna Csongor, Autonomia's Executive Director (Budapest, 5 August 1999). For microfinancing in the international context, see Hartmut Schneider, ed., *Microfinance for the Poor?* (Paris: OECD, 1997); and Muhammad Yunus, *Banker to the Poor: Micro-Lending and the Battle Against World Poverty* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999).

Romani News Agency since its creation in 1995 and have also funded several schools for Gypsy students. When I asked officials at dozens of NGOs and foundations dealing with the Gypsies and other minorities from Poland to Macedonia who paid the staff, who paid for the equipment, rent, and other necessities, and who financed the projects, the answers I heard most often were "Soros" or the "Open Society Foundation." It is interesting, therefore, that Soros and his organizations have many detractors, especially those, one supposes, who failed to secure funds from them. There are many who say, not without some justification, that Soros' organizations have tended to favor ex-communists and left-wing liberals.¹⁵⁶ Be that as it may, there is no doubt that George Soros and his dollars have done tremendous good for an awe-inspiring variety of causes and people – prominently included among them are the Roma – in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and elsewhere.

The most important of the several American NGOs that work with Romani issues is the Project on Ethnic Relations (PER), based in Princeton, New Jersey. Founded in 1991 and financed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York with additional support from several other foundations and the Council of Europe, one of the main focuses of PER's activities has been the Roma along with broader work on ethnic relations and state-minority affairs in Eastern Europe. PER has brought together activists, experts, and politicians to discuss and find solutions to a number of issues including the relations between the Roma on the one hand, and the media, law enforcement agencies, state officials, and so on. Like many NGOs, PER has organized dozens of conferences and meetings between government officials, bureaucrats representing international organizations and NGOs, experts, and Gypsy activists in attractive settings. It has also supported some worthwhile enterprises such as seminars for policemen and education officials to become more sensitive to the Roma's concerns. In 1993 PER set up a Roma Advisory Council in order to advise PER on Romani issues and to provide an authoritative voice for the Gypsies in addressing IOs and governments. In addition, PER has published and widely distributed numerous useful reports and policy papers.

¹⁵⁶ See for instance, Richard C. Morais, "Beware of Billionaires Bearing Gifts," *Forbes*, 7 April 1997, 82-7. When an interviewer asked Soros why he supported former communists who suddenly turned democrats in 1989, he responded by saying "They [as ex-Communists] know better what democracy is than perhaps those who were always opposed to [the regime]." This, of course, is an enormous insult to those who at times paid with their lives for their democratic convictions in communist dictatorships. *Ibid.*, 87.

Churches have also played an increasingly active role in trying to assist East European Roma since the late 1980s.¹⁵⁷ Politicians and Gypsy activists suggest that churches could play an even more important role noting that a few impassioned priests can do an enormous amount of good on the local level.¹⁵⁸ Their point is underscored by individual priests, like Father Stanislaw Opocki in Poland, who has single-handedly established several schools for young Gypsy dropouts. The Roman Catholic church in Slovakia has been particularly agile in promoting the Roma's cause. It consecrated a pastoral center for the Gypsies in 1998, has organized well-attended pilgrimages, and has issued statements calling attention to their plight.¹⁵⁹

The "Gypsy Industry"

In the last decade the acute nature of Gypsy marginality has spurred the emergence of hundreds of NGOs and international bureaucracies employing thousands of people. Many Romani leaders and experts cynically refer to this phenomenon as the "Gypsy industry," which, they contend, enriched the participating individuals but left most Roma unaffected.

Several hundreds of international meetings have been held in the last decade discussing various aspects of the Romani predicament. Though some have been successful to the extent that they have spawned practical programs and have directed attention to human rights violations, most have done little to advance the cause and have merely served as another opportunity to travel, socialize, and regurgitate for the umpteenth time familiar elements of the Gypsies' plight without actually doing something about them. In many cases there is little coordination between researchers whose studies tend to be repetitive, superficial, and pointless; activists who look out for their own interests having lost sight of the original goals; and decision makers who look "for a prescription

¹⁵⁷ See, for instance, Zoltan Barany, "Hungary's Gypsies," *Report on Eastern Europe*, 1:29 (20 July 1990); 28; and Viliam Figusch, ed., *Roma People in Slovakia and in Europe* (Bratislava: Information and Documentation Centre on the Council of Europe, 1995), 46-7.

¹⁵⁸ Interviews with János Wolfart (Budapest, 9 June 1994); Vasile Burtica, a Gypsy analyst at the Ministry of Labor (Bucharest, 15 March 1995); and Adam Andrzej, President of the Tarnów Cultural Gypsy Association and Vice President of the Highest Council of Roma in Poland (9 August 1999).

¹⁵⁹ See Michal Vašička, "The Roma," in Gregorij Mešeznikow, Michal Ivanryšyn, and Tom Nicholson, eds., *Slovakia 1998-1999: A Global Report on the State of Society* (Bratislava: Institute of Public Affairs, 1999), 413; and interview with Agnes Horvathová, Head of the Secretariat of the Slovak Helsinki Commission (Bratislava, 8 September 1999).

without diagnosis, a treatment without analysis."¹⁶⁰ Unfortunately, all too few IOs and NGOs have targeted the implementation of these pragmatic programs. At the same time, a great deal of their money has been expended unwisely: on hefty fees for incompetent and unsuited consultants; unnecessary, expensive, and redundant conventions and symposia; and costly pilot programs that lead nowhere. Moreover, as Kevin Quigley, a former director of public policy at the Pew Charitable Trusts, writes, many NGOs and "foundations have worked almost exclusively with elites" and "have had considerable difficulty breaking out of capital cities and widening the circle of participants in their programs."¹⁶¹

In an article notable for its objectivity, Dan Oprescu writes,

I am fed up with seminars, workshops, and roundtables. I want some output from 1990 until now. Theoretically, they [NGOs] were supposed to train some "activists" to act within their respective communities. Where are those "activists"? Where is all the money spent on their training?¹⁶²

Many Gypsy politicians across the region echo Oprescu's views. Flórián Farkas, for instance, told me that "We don't need any more conferences, we know precisely what the problems are. What we need is action."¹⁶³

Many NGOs thrive on projects that are supposed to help the Roma, but only a small proportion of them actually do. According to Neždet Mustafá, the Gypsy mayor of Shuto Orizati, the sole driving force behind a large number of NGOs dealing with Romani issues is to get funded and refunded. He mentions, for instance, several expensive "computer training courses" for barely literate Romani children designed by a West European NGO whose employees quickly left — together with the computers — once they took the obligatory glossy photos to be used in their next brochure.¹⁶⁴

Though Kawczynsky and other Romani activists often overstate their case, they are justifiably angry about the millions of dollars of NGO and foundation monies that were spent on fancy and often useless seminars and conferences instead of providing practical and direct help for the Gypsy communities. As we were surveying a particularly poverty-stricken Romani ghetto in eastern Slovakia, my guide, a well-known Slovak Gypsy activist, asked me "How many of these undernourished children do you think could be fed for the price of one of those confer-

¹⁶⁰ See Liégeois, *Roma, Gypsies, Travellers*, 309–11, citation from 311.

¹⁶¹ Kevin F. E. Quigley, "For Democracy's Sake: How Foundations Fail — and Succeed," *World Policy Journal*, 13:1 (Spring 1996): 116.

¹⁶² Dan Oprescu, "Public Policies on National Minorities in Romania (1996–1998)," *Sfera Politică*, no. 6 (January 1999): 18.

¹⁶³ Interview with Farkas (Budapest, 4 August 1999).

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Mustafá (Shuto Orizati, 24 November 1999).

ences they hold to talk about us in Geneva or Strasbourg?"¹⁶⁵ The bottom line is that though an increasing number of NGOs work to reduce the Roma's plight, they need to be more focused on pragmatic programs, they should be more flexible to adjust their projects to the changing needs of Gypsy communities, and they should use their resources more effectively.

CONCLUSION

What sort of *direct* influence do international organizations like the Council of Europe, OSCE, UN and others have on the lives of East European Roma? Very limited. Their strength lies primarily in publicizing problems, criticizing governments, and influencing their policies. It is often difficult to firmly establish direct correlation between international pressures and changes in domestic policies because governments are rarely keen on admitting that they had to give in to such pressures. There can be no doubt, however, that the changes governments have implemented regarding minorities in general and the Roma in particular are motivated in large part by external factors, such as a desire to join the EU. The leverage that IOs enjoy vis-à-vis the East European states and the willingness and ability to use it has been an important reason behind policy changes because the nascent democracies of the region have become increasingly sensitive of their international image.

International organizations and NGOs have played a crucial role in influencing state policy and, generally indirectly, Romani marginality. Nonetheless, some foundations and NGOs have managed to directly contribute to the alleviation of Romani marginality by formulating and implementing practical programs. Given the preponderance of organizations dealing with human rights and ill-defined issues of "European citizenship" for the Gypsies, it is to be hoped that initiatives that provide pragmatic, tangible assistance for the Roma will multiply in the future. One expects that as East European civil societies continue to expand, more will be done more successfully.

As we have seen, the national and local Gypsy organizations and the international Romani movement have been fraught with difficulties. By and large, their influence on state policy, while growing, has been decidedly modest. In a very real sense, then, supranational institutions and NGOs have been able to make up for the deficiencies of Gypsy political mobilization in helping the Roma and improving their current conditions and future prospects.

¹⁶⁵ The activist asked to remain anonymous.