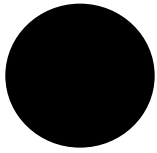


REPORTAGE

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“We Have No Martin Luther King”

Eastern Europe’s Roma Minority

Belinda Cooper

West Berlin in 1990, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, still felt like the island it had been in the sea of East German communism, sharing much of the spotless perfection of other West German cities. The Kurfürstendamm, its main shopping street, was a showcase of capitalism, a purposeful provocation to the regime in drab East Berlin, only a stone’s throw away. But Romania’s communist government had fallen in late 1989, allowing free travel to East Germany, and unlike West Germany, East Germany had no visa barriers against Eastern Europeans. Taking advantage of this new freedom, Romanians—among them, thousands of Romanian Gypsies—streamed toward the West by way of East Berlin. For a brief period in 1990, the Kurfürstendamm’s orderly sidewalks were taken over by darkly colorful Gypsy families begging, sometimes aggressively, on every street corner. Though they were not the majority of Romanians who had come to Germany, it was these beggars who became the public face of Germany’s “foreigners problem.”

This remarkable confrontation between well-off West Germans and alien, impoverished Gypsies brought into sharp relief the immense economic disparities between East and West that would only worsen in the coming years (the Romanian government ultimately agreed to take back the visitors in exchange for monetary payments from Germany). At the same time, it foreshadowed what was already becoming Eastern Europe’s major human rights problem—the plight of Europe’s largest minority, the Gypsies, or Roma, as most now prefer

to be called. The roots of this problem are ancient, dating almost to the first European arrival of the Roma from India, believed to have occurred perhaps as early as the twelfth century. According to the magisterial eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1910), the Gypsies were “a wandering folk scattered through every European land, over the greater part of western Asia and Siberia; found also in Egypt and the northern coast of Africa, in America and even Australia.” There was no correct estimate of their number outside Europe, and even in Europe official estimates were contradictory and unreliable. This remains unchanged,¹ as does the type of popular prejudice the encyclopedia captured: “They have no ethical principles and they do not recognize the obligations of the Ten Commandments. There is extreme moral laxity in the relation of the two sexes.... At the same time, they are great cowards.”

No people in Europe has been at once so persistently maligned and so excessively romanticized. Gypsies have simultaneously been despised as incorrigible criminals and admired as musicians, dancers, and free spirits, as in Bizet’s *Carmen* or George Barrow’s *Romany Rye*. In reality, as I found in a recent visit to Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania, Europe’s estimated 8–10 million Roma are a historically oppressed minority who have become the biggest losers following the demise of communism in Eastern Europe, where they are mainly concentrated.

Hardest hit by unemployment, often lacking basic education, and subject to stereotyping and discrimination throughout

Europe, Roma communities in postcommunist Eastern Europe actually have reason to look back nostalgically to the days of communism. But in the last few years, as I also learned, European and international institutions and donor organizations have begun to address Roma problems from the outside. In particular, the European Union has spurred change by insisting that candidates for membership improve conditions for their Roma minorities. At the same time, and perhaps more important, change has begun to come from within Roma communities as well. Slowly, Roma themselves—until now, more acted upon than active—are beginning to speak out and organize on their own behalf.

Rejected as Alien

Roma are believed to have originated in India (the main Roma language, Romany, and its dialects most likely evolved from Sanskrit) and to have spread throughout Europe by way of Central Asia, Persia, and the Balkans during the Middle Ages. Europeans prized their skills as horse traders, metalworkers, craftspeople, musicians, and fortunetellers. But as strangers and outsiders, they were also feared and distrusted. Generally landless and nomadic, they were relegated to the outskirts of existing communities. Rejected as alien, they were restricted, hunted down, and killed with impunity. In Romania, Gypsies were held as slaves beginning in the fourteenth century; captured, bought and sold, they served landowning masters as artisans, musicians, and field hands. Not until well into the nineteenth century was this practice abolished. In 1710, an edict issued in Prague ordered “that all adult [Gypsy] males were to be hanged without trial, whereas women and young males were to be flogged and banished forever.”² In the eighteenth century, the Austro-Hungarian Empire attempted to force Gypsies to settle and assimilate, even removing children from their parents. With no state to speak up for them (and, unlike

the Jews, no concept of a homeland), Roma were completely at the mercy of the societies in which they found themselves.

Yet remarkably, the Roma did not disappear. Instead, they adapted to persecution by holding onto their traditions and language (passed on mainly orally, as the Romany language was largely unwritten until the twentieth century) and developing tight-knit communal groups. Suspicious of non-Roma and their authorities, they insulated themselves from surrounding populations, excluding outsiders even from any knowledge of their culture. These characteristics were particularly unwelcome to the all-encompassing totalitarian movements that engulfed Europe in the twentieth century. The Nazis wiped out a significant portion of Europe’s Gypsy population; scholars estimate that as many as half a million Roma were killed in the Nazi-occupied countries, though this aspect of the Third Reich’s racial policy has received less attention and acknowledgement than the genocide of Europe’s Jews.³

The communist regimes of postwar Eastern Europe approached the “Gypsy problem” from a different angle, viewing it as a social problem that could be solved by settling and proletarianizing the Roma. In the 1960s and 1970s, many Roma in Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and other countries of Eastern Europe were forcibly settled and dispersed, a policy that both broke down existing community structures and brought the Roma into unfamiliar, and frequently unfriendly, environments. Their nomadic lifestyle, where it still existed, was replaced almost entirely by settled factory or agricultural work, though sometimes it was supplemented with more traditional crafts or semi-legal trade. Communist ideology largely denied the existence of ethnic differences, but forced assimilation could not erase the effects of centuries of inequality between Roma and non-Roma. In the full-employment, welfare-state system, Roma had work, but

as a rule they occupied the lowest rung on the social and economic ladder, providing a needed pool of unskilled labor. Little significant effort was made to raise their educational level sufficiently to enable them to advance economically. Like other workers under communism, some Roma did, for the first time, gain the opportunity to study and improve their status, but they did so at the cost of concealing or denying their ethnic identity.

Roma history took a somewhat different path in Western Europe following the Second World War. In the absence of forcible settlement policies, some Roma continued to be nomadic or semi-nomadic (in Britain they are known as “Travelers”). Prejudices against them remained, reflected for example in rules restricting camping, and even more sedentary Gypsies, like Germany’s Sinti, tended to be poor and marginalized.

In Eastern Europe, the fall of communism led to a precipitous decline in living conditions for the Roma. They were among the first to become unemployed when factories closed down. As agricultural cooperatives dissolved, they lost their agricultural jobs but were unable to benefit from the privatization of farmland, either because they had not owned land before collectivization or because they lacked the necessary documentation to prove ownership. Gypsies who, under communism, had served a welcome function by providing crafts and black-market goods otherwise unobtainable in the planned economy, a risk others were reluctant to take, now represented undesirable competition as markets opened up and the goods and crafts they had supplied became readily available from other sources. As the majority populations also became poorer, they found themselves competing for social welfare benefits with Roma, which aggravated existing hostilities.

Outbreaks of anti-Roma violence throughout Eastern Europe made clear that denying the existence of ethnic distinctions had only suppressed, not eliminated, tradi-

tional antipathies. Some of the violence, which began almost immediately after the collapse of communism, was committed by skinheads. In other cases, it took on a vigilante character, with mobs collectively punishing entire Roma settlements for the alleged crimes of individuals. In a particularly egregious incident in 1993, villagers attacked a Roma community in the Romanian town of Hadareni, in Transylvania, following a fight in which an ethnic Romanian was killed. After lynching two men, they burned and destroyed 19 homes, burning a third man to death and forcing the Roma inhabitants out of the village. Similar incidents have been documented in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Poland, Ukraine, and other countries of the former Eastern bloc. In Kosovo, after the 1999 American-led bombing campaign, ethnic Albanians scapegoated Roma for allegedly collaborating with the Serbs, beating and killing Kosovar Roma and forcing as many as 100,000 to flee.

Such violence is often abetted, if not perpetrated, by police, who tend to consider the word “Gypsy” as synonymous with “criminal.” These views are hardly concealed. One Bulgarian lawyer I spoke with described a conversation he had with an officer who, after denying ever having beaten anyone in custody, readily admitted that “anyone” did not include Gypsies, and a young man who is among the very few Roma to graduate from the Hungarian police academy told me that “despising Gypsies is fashionable among the police.” Violence against Roma is rarely prosecuted, and prosecution is even less common if the police are involved in an alleged attack.⁴ In the Hadareni case, police looked on and even took part in the assault, but none were ever brought to trial, and the few civilians convicted, years later, in connection with that pogrom were soon freed. Although the law itself is not openly discriminatory toward Roma—and although crimes committed by Roma are more likely to be petty than

major—they are far more likely than non-Roma to be suspected of, and imprisoned for, criminal behavior.

Anti-Roma prejudice is not confined to the police, but is widespread and openly expressed throughout Eastern Europe. In the popular mind, Roma continue to be thought of as dirty, lazy, uneducated people who have many children and live parasitically on social assistance. Media routinely identify Roma criminals by their ethnic affiliation. Following the Hadareni killings, a major Romanian newspaper termed the riot a confrontation between “honesty, love of labor and fear of God” on the one hand, and “thievery and arrogant and aggressive shamelessness” on the other.⁵ The infamous wall that was built in 1999 to separate a street of Roma from non-Roma in the Czech city of Usti nad Labem was said to be necessary because the Gypsies were so noisy and dirty. (It was torn down following international protests.) Surveys of majority groups in Eastern Europe consistently indicate high levels of aversion to Roma.

Between Stereotype and Reality

As is often the case, stereotypes attached to the Roma may once have had some basis in actual cultural differences between them and the majority populations.⁶ But the connection between stereotype and reality today is generally much more straightforward: like many marginalized groups, the Roma have been caught in a cycle of poverty, illiteracy, dependency, and petty crime that has kept them marginalized and is in turn used to justify further discrimination.

Of course, not all fit this pattern. Generalizations cannot do justice to the extreme diversity of the Roma populations, with their significant cultural, linguistic, and lifestyle variations even within one country. Some Roma live among the majority population, while others were able to retain their more traditional communities and occupations as musicians or craftspeople even under communism. Different Roma groups

speak various dialects of Romany and even different languages, like Hungary's Beash, whose language derives from Old Romanian. Many no longer speak a Roma language at all, like the roughly 70 percent of Hungary's Roma who belong to the Romungro, a more assimilated Roma group. In Bulgaria, many are Muslims and live side by side with the country's Turkish minority. Some Roma are wealthy, having made money, like many non-Roma, by taking advantage of commercial opportunities that came with the end of communism or by working in Western Europe.

But almost everywhere, large numbers of Roma have been relegated to the outskirts of both small towns and large cities, where they live in ghettos that share distinctive features regardless of the country: unpaved streets, limited water and electricity supply, substandard schools and health care, and shanty-like homes. As unemployed Gypsies lose their homes elsewhere, and as their families grow, they build without official permission and the ghettos expand. These illegal residents are frequently denied such basic city services as water and garbage collection. (Stereotypes notwithstanding, the Roma quarters I visited seemed remarkably clean, particularly given the absence of such vital services.) In recent years, some local authorities have deliberately moved homeless Roma to the fringes of cities and towns. Isolated in these ghettos, Roma have little contact with the majority population, which is most likely to encounter them as street sweepers, beggars, pickpockets, or supplicants at the local social welfare office.

To an American, the resulting prejudices immediately bring to mind those directed against African Americans. Roma often look different from the majority population, and in some places they have characteristic last names; but even Roma who are indistinguishable from non-Roma experience prejudice if their ethnic identity becomes known. Animosity is not only directed at ghetto-dwellers. While poorer, more vulnerable Ro-

ma experience verbal harassment, bureaucratic hostility, and violence, even the more integrated university students and Roma rights activists I spoke with described numerous instances of subtle and not-so-subtle discrimination in jobs and public accommodations: positions and apartments available on the telephone but suddenly unavailable when a darker-skinned applicant appears in person; “No Gypsies Allowed” signs on discos and restaurants; colleagues astonished that they do not fit the Roma stereotype. Some non-Roma I spoke with admitted they were surprised to meet educated Roma who spoke the majority language fluently.

Nevertheless, East European societies, lacking a tradition of tolerant multiethnicity, have resisted acknowledging the existence of discrimination in their midst. Concepts like institutional racism and indirect discrimination, which in Western Europe have contributed to greater sensitivity in dealing with Roma and other minorities, have yet to make inroads into public consciousness. Most East European countries have other national minorities within their borders, and some have attempted to fit Roma into the framework of special arrangements under which these minorities enjoy cultural, linguistic, and sometimes political autonomy. Hungary’s comprehensive 1993 minority rights law, for example, allows 13 of the country’s minority groups, including Roma, to elect representative councils with advisory powers. But Roma benefit less than other minorities from such laws, which address neither the discrimination nor the economic and social disadvantages they are far more likely to experience than others.

Discovering the Roma Cause

International human rights organizations started to document anti-Roma prejudice soon after the fall of communism, and writers began discovering the Roma cause when the formerly closed East European countries opened up. Publications like the vivid 1995 book *Bury Me Standing*, by journalist Isabel

Fonseca, focused popular attention on the problem. By the mid-1990s, most East European countries, eager for closer ties to Western Europe, had joined the Council of Europe, the European organization concerned with protecting human rights; this obligates them to adhere to European human rights standards, including comprehensive antidiscrimination directives. The council turned an attentive eye to its new members’ treatment of Roma, which has also become a measure of candidate states’ suitability for membership in the European Union. Pressure from Europe has forced governments to pay at least lip service to Roma rights and led to the creation in some countries of national plans for improving the situation of Roma, though implementation has been slow at best.

Western Europe’s interest is not purely humanitarian. Some activists speak of an “ethno-business” in funding Roma initiatives to improve local conditions because of Western fears of an influx of thousands of unemployed Roma. In summer 2001, the British government sparked an uproar when it became known that British officials at the Prague airport were openly singling out and turning back Roma trying to travel to the U.K. Most asylum seekers in Britain from the Czech Republic are Roma seeking refuge from discriminatory treatment (though in 2000 the number was fewer than 1,200, and most were sent back). Britain maintained that its only other option to this sort of screening would be to limit travel for all Czechs.

Though they are certainly not the only Eastern Europeans migrating to Western Europe, legally and illegally, Roma immigrants and refugees have, as in Germany in 1990, come to represent the public face of Eastern Europe in the West. In a classic case of blaming the victim, East Europeans have taken to castigating Roma for limiting their opportunities to move west, as well as for tarnishing their image by claiming discrimination and thus delaying their countries’

entry into the European Union. In a particularly galling incident for the current Hungarian government, a group of Hungarian Roma from the town of Zámoly who had been living in substandard conditions since being evicted from their homes (which were damaged in a storm, then demolished and never rebuilt despite repeated promises) and who had endured months of harassment by the local population (the mayor of a town in which they sought refuge reportedly maintained that they “have no place among human beings...parasites must be expelled”) finally traveled to Strasbourg in 2000, where they were granted refugee status by the French government. Some in the Hungarian government and media asserted that the Roma were smearing Hungary’s reputation abroad and pointed to claims in a British periodical that the Russian secret service had instigated the incident to prevent Hungary from joining the European Union.

However, there are hopeful signs for the Roma in Eastern Europe’s newly flourishing civil society. Over the last decade, many non-Roma human rights activists, passionate about correcting inequities in the emerging democracies in which they live, have taken up the cause of Roma rights. Particularly since the mid-1990s, increasing numbers of organizations devoted in whole or in part to Roma issues have emerged, funded largely by such international donors as the Open Society Institute. Among the most effective is the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) in Budapest, founded in 1996, which has become a major repository of documentation on Roma in both Eastern and Western Europe. The center takes an American-style, legalistic approach to discrimination, working with lawyers and legal defense organizations to bring cases in national courts and in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. It began by addressing cases of police violence toward Roma, particularly the lack of effective legal remedies in national justice systems, and is also tackling the problem of discrimination

in public accommodations. Unlike the American legal system, Europe’s civil law systems are not based in precedent and do not allow class action suits, making it difficult to achieve enduring change through legal action. Nevertheless, the ERRC and local legal defense associations have won victories for individual plaintiffs, achieving significant publicity for their cause. Other organizations, like Bulgaria’s CEGA [Creating Effective Grassroots Alternatives] Foundation and Autonomia in Hungary, are working to lower the appalling levels of unemployment among Roma—as high as 100 percent in some places—through community-based microcredit initiatives that help Roma set up private businesses.

Roma Initiatives

Equally important, however, and especially encouraging, has been the emergence of initiatives set up and staffed by Roma themselves. Leadership is important to a community as vulnerable as the Roma, but the Roma leaders who emerged during the Communist era and in the years immediately thereafter have been criticized within the community for being unrepresentative and “ornamental,” as one Roma activist I spoke with put it, and infighting among Roma leaders and groups is not uncommon. Several people active in their community told me regretfully that Roma have no Martin Luther King of their own, suggesting that Roma may be too diverse to unite behind a single leader. Some also noted a general absence of formal leadership in traditional Roma culture.

Recently, however, an emphasis on educational opportunity has brought increasing numbers of Roma young people into universities. Romania has instituted affirmative action programs to guarantee Roma admission to certain fields of study, notably social work. A Hungarian program provides stipends and tutoring to Roma university students. Generally from disadvantaged backgrounds, most of these new students

represent the first generation in their families to attain higher education, and they share the struggles and identity problems that accompany this status. Yet a hallmark of this group is pride in their Roma identity and culture. Roma student clubs work to overcome the pulls of assimilation and denial of identity, and to shape a new, more assertive “generation of Roma intellectuals,” as the director of one such club put it. Some of these students plan to return to their communities when they complete their education, and some have done so already.

Still, the number of such graduates remains less than 1 percent of the Roma population, in large part because of the dismayingly low level of basic education among Roma. Many never even complete primary school (the figures for Hungary and Bulgaria are less than 50 percent, compared to 90 percent and 62 percent of the general population, respectively; in the Czech Republic and Yugoslavia, the number is closer to 20 percent), and illiteracy is a serious problem.⁷

Many Roma themselves see lack of education as a major factor limiting their ability to improve their social and economic status. In the Bulgarian town of Rakovski, near Plovdiv, Georgi Markov works out of a small office organizing summer educational programs for local youngsters, a project he started after a nearby boarding school closed and most of the children dropped out. “There are two schools in the city, but our students didn’t go to them,” he explains. Now the program is preparing students to return to school. Markov’s effort, which has been successful enough to attract some funding from the local government, is one of many Roma initiatives aimed at children. But the obstacles are enormous: schools in Roma neighborhoods are under-equipped and badly staffed, Roma teachers are few, and little assistance is offered for children who cannot speak the majority language.

Illiteracy is also widespread among adults, although many are multilingual.

(Roma I spoke with noted this facility with languages as a particular strength and source of pride. In the Roma quarter of Markov’s village, an elderly man enumerated for me the four languages he speaks, before adding with a smile, “And I’m illiterate!) Roma are often accused of not valuing education, and some Roma activists, Markov among them, admit that education is “not a high priority” among the general population. This is partly the result of the perception that discrimination prevents even educated Roma from getting jobs. A survey conducted by the CEGA Foundation in Bulgaria quoted Roma parents as saying, “Why should our children study? When people see they are from the minority they don’t hire them.” Parents traditionally take girls out of school early to get married, and children’s labor is often needed to contribute to family income. There are also other reasons that keep families from pushing their children to attend school: they lack money for clothes, books, and bus fare, their children may be taunted by non-Roma children and even teachers, and non-Roma parents resist sending their children to school with Roma. Even when they attend the same schools, Roma are frequently segregated from non-Roma in separate classrooms or even within the same class. Large percentages of Roma children—as many as 75 percent in the Czech Republic, by the government’s own admission, and 41 percent in Hungary—are automatically tracked into remedial schools or schools for the mentally handicapped; this is the subject of a pending case against the Czech Republic before the European Court of Human Rights.

Nevertheless, Roma activists say parents are proud to see their children in school, and the university students I spoke with all told me that their parents—themselves often uneducated—had encouraged them to study. “Parents want education for their children,” says Letitia Mark, a professor and Roma activist who works out of her home in Timisoara, Romania, teaching literacy and

providing afterschool programs to 70 children who attend school or have dropped out, some to clean the windshields of passing cars on the city's streets. One of Mark's staff—a newly minted social worker who has benefited from the local university's affirmative action program for Roma—showed me the main source of the school's clientele, the Roma quarter near Mark's home. She talked with young mothers while small children played naked on an unpaved road, a goat grazed in the background, and a woman who cleans streets for a living held her baby in the yard of her tiny, dilapidated house.

Roma educators believe they are better placed than non-Roma authorities to convince hesitant parents to entrust their children to them. "They trust me much more," explained Ignac Jozsef, one of the founders of Hungary's Gandhi School in the southern city of Pecs, which was created by and for Roma. The school began boarding Roma pupils in 1994 and aims to prove, as he put it, that "Roma children can achieve the same results as other children under the same conditions." The curriculum incorporates Roma studies, including the Romany and Beash languages, in the hope of reinforcing identity and instilling ethnic pride. Though some have criticized it as segregationist, the Gandhi school graduated its first class in 2000 and sent an impressive 9 of 18 students on to university.

To combat popular stereotyping, in which Roma appear in the media primarily as criminals or musicians, Roma activists have also made efforts to sensitize the media to Roma concerns. Magazines in the Romany language have been published for some time, and Romany-language newspapers recently began publishing in Russia and Macedonia. In the last few years, Roma have also slowly gained access to the mainstream press and the electronic media. The latter is particularly important given the high level of illiteracy among Roma ("Not that many read, but everyone watches

TV," as one Roma journalist pointed out). The Roma Press Center in Budapest, staffed by both Roma and non-Roma young people, produces articles and research, and trains Roma journalists. After several years of lobbying, the first Roma radio station was recently licensed in Hungary. Bulgaria's American University organized a course for young Roma journalists in 1998. Petar Stefanov, one of its graduates, runs a small television station in the northern town of Vidin that broadcasts several hours a day in his Roma neighborhood. "Media is the main tool to build a positive image of minorities," he says. In his family's living room, I watched videos of the station's offerings. There was traditional music and dancing, but also other programs—like a call-in talk show and a program in which local children in baseball caps sang and danced to their own rap tunes—that showed a very different side of modern Roma life.

Like many such projects, the television station runs on a shoestring, dependent on grants and the support of its founder's relatively well-off family. As in many instances where civil society projects are funded by outside donors, Roma initiatives depend on short-term grants tied to specific projects. Many activists complain of limited funding and an uncertain future. The European Union, a prime source of support for civil society projects, is known for its complicated bureaucracy, which Roma have found difficult and sometimes humiliating to negotiate. *The Economist* recently noted that EU officials "do not trust Gypsy leaders enough, yet, to let them administer a single Euro."⁸ Nor is there as yet any organized fundraising effort aimed at wealthy members of the Gypsy community.

National governments have also hesitated to commit their limited funds to projects that aid Roma, though some have begun to do so. When they do, however, they risk alienating their majority populations, who have also experienced hardships in the years since the fall of communism and re-

sent what many consider the special treatment of Roma. In the atmosphere of nationalism that has since prevailed, there has been little organized effort to sensitize majority communities to their society's prejudices and to inculcate tolerance and respect.

"Lifeboat Work on the Titanic"

Roma rights activists are not sanguine about the possibility of short-term improvement in the conditions of the Roma minority in Eastern Europe. A member of one nongovernmental organization characterized his work as "doing lifeboat work on the Titanic," and indeed, the unemployment, educational disadvantages, and discrimination faced by the Gypsy community in Eastern Europe defy optimism. James Goldston, an American who is the former legal director of the European Roma Rights Center, warns that even the modest gains Roma have made could be lost in the coming years if initiatives do not become self-sustaining, funding dries up, and East European countries gain membership in the EU without being required first to improve substantially the conditions of their Roma minorities. Even bettering the legal status of Roma, he points out, is unlikely to eliminate racism aimed against them.⁹

Still, when the Roma came to Berlin in 1990, it was all but impossible to find information on them, and few seemed to care about their fate. A decade later, it is encouraging to witness the mass of literature, research, and policy papers that is being generated about Roma, their history, culture, conditions, and rights. Although words on paper alone admittedly have little effect, this attention from international and European bodies—and more important, the funding and initiatives that have resulted from it—has in turn been crucial in supporting and promoting the assertive identity that is increasingly found among young Roma. Even without a Martin Luther King, Europe's Roma have finally ceased being invisible and are making themselves heard.

For the first time in centuries, this most persecuted minority is beginning to take control of its own destiny. ●

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Notes

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1. Though there are no exact figures, independent estimates put the number of Roma at around 2.5 million in Romania, 700,000–800,000 in Bulgaria, 500,000 in Slovakia, around 250,000 in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (or up to 10 percent of their total populations), 550,000–600,000 in Hungary, and 250,000–300,000 in the Czech Republic. Some of the larger concentrations of Roma in Western Europe are to be found in Spain, 700,000–800,000, France, 300,000, Greece, 160,000–200,000, and Italy, 100,000. Turkey's Roma population is estimated at between 300,000 and 500,000. See European Roma Rights Center fact sheet, at <http://errc.org/publications/factsheets/numbers>.

2. Quoted in David M. Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996), pp. 36–37.

3. Because of the unreliability of statistics on the Roma, it is difficult to estimate the percentage of the population this represents. See Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, *Gypsies under the Swastika* (U.K.: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1995), p. 150; Guenter Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of Gypsies* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 221–22.

4. Roma rights organizations and international and European organs have extensively documented official and unofficial violence and the difficulty for Roma of achieving justice. For a comprehensive recent report on the overall situation of Roma that includes information on violence, see High Commissioner on National Minorities, *Report on the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area* (The Hague: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2000). See also the numerous country reports issued

by the European Roma Rights Center, available at its website, <http://errc.org>, particularly the most recent report on Romania, *State of Impunity: Human Rights Abuse Against Roma in Romania*. Local legal defense organizations such as NEKI (Legal Defense Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities) in Hungary and the Human Rights Project in Bulgaria, as well as national Helsinki committees, also document these and other abuses.

5. Quoted in Brigitte Mihok, "Fremdstereotypen in der römänischen Öffentlichkeit (1990–1999). Versprachlichte Bildkonstruktion von den Roma," in *Im Dialog: Rumänische Kultur und Literatur*, ed. Mircea Anghelescu and Larisa Schippel (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag GmbH, 2000), p. 80 (the translation from the German is mine).

6. For a discussion of cultural differences—for example those surrounding concepts of cleanliness

and ritual purity—in a legal context, including the criminalization of some of these differences by majority societies, see the essays in Walter O. Weyrauch, ed., *Gypsy Law: Romani Legal Traditions and Culture*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

7. *Research on Selected Roma Education Programs in Central and Eastern Europe* (Budapest: Institute for Educational Policy of the Open Society Institute, 2001), pp. 16–17, available at www.osi.hu/iep/resources.htm.

8. "Europe's Spectral Nation," *The Economist*, May 12, 2001, p. 30.

9. James A. Goldston, "A Future for Roma Rights?" November 1, 2001, available at www.eumap.org/articles/content/20/204.