THE MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP

is an international research and information unit registered in Britain as an educational charity under the Charities Act of 1960. Its principal aims are –

To secure justice for minority or majority groups suffering discrimination, by investigating their situation and publicizing the facts as widely as possible, to educate and alert public opinion throughout the world.

To help prevent, through publicity about violations of human rights, such problems from developing into dangerous and destructive conflicts which, when polarized, are very difficult to resolve; and

To foster, by its research findings, international understanding of the factors which create prejudiced treatment and group tensions, thus helping to promote the growth of a world conscience regarding human rights.

The Minority Rights Group urgently needs further funds for its work. Please contribute what you can. MRG is eligible to receive a covenant from UK taxpayers.

ROMA: EUROPE’S GYPSIES by Gratton Puxon

Gratton Puxon, an activist in the Romani national movement since 1963, was for ten years General Secretary of the World Romani Congress. He is the co-author of The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies and has written many pamphlets and other articles. Between 1982 and 1986 he lived in California where he acted for three years as Secretary of the US Romani Council.

ISBN 0 946690 45 6

This report was first published in March 1973, with a second edition in August 1975 and a third in April 1980. This revised and updated edition was published in February 1987 and was reprinted in this format in June 1992.

MRG gratefully acknowledges financial assistance towards the cost of this report from the European Community and the European Human Rights Foundation.

Cover photo: Inside a barrel top wagon – Birchwood Traveller Site, Lincoln, UK. BOB KAUDERS

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Roma, the correct though less familiar name, is used throughout this report in preference to gypsy, a misnomer which like its equivalents zigeuner, zingaro, cigan, gitan and others, perpetuates the very stigma the author wishes in some measure to reduce. When referring to specific groups, in Germany, Italy, France and elsewhere, who call themselves Sinti and Manush, these self-identifying terms, which also recall the Indian origin of the Romani people, have been retained.
THE UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarity andtotally unproductive acts which have added new dimensions of meaning and an adven of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from any fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people.

Whereas it is essential, if a man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations,

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

Whereas Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims

THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, juridical or personal status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether he be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5. No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6. Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7. All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against all other forms of customary, national or international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 8. Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

Article 9. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10. Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 11. (1) Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had the guarantees necessary for his defence.

(2) No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13. (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

(2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14. (1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

(2) No one shall be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against the authority of the country of origin or to that of a country from which he is fleeing.

Article 15. (1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16. (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

(3) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17. (1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19. Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20. (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

(2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21. (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.

(2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.

(3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22. Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his person.

Article 23. (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

(2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

(3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

(4) Everyone has the right to housing and to protection against periodic or other limitations of sovereignty.

Article 24. Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25. (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance.

Article 26. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, races and classes of the human family.

Article 27. (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

(2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28. Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29. (1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

(2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

(3) These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30. Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.
INTRODUCTION

There are six million Roma in Europe today – more than the population of Denmark or Scotland. They remain a rejected and downtrodden minority in almost every country. Their mistreatment, so common that it is borne like bad weather, arises from long ingrained racial prejudice. Most lack education, suffer discrimination in the economic and social spheres, and are frequently denied even a place to live. The largest communities are growing up in the socialist countries of south-east Europe, but some of the most acute intolerance is suffered by the vulnerable nomadic groups within the member states of the Council of Europe.

Since the publication of the previous edition of this report in 1980, there has been no overall improvement in the lives of the six million Roma of Europe. But the past half decade has seen an improvement in the level of organization achieved by Roma to correct this situation. The period before and after the 3rd World Romani Congress in 1981 has been characterized by a proliferation in the number of local and national activist groups striving for basic civil rights, emancipation from poverty and illiteracy, and collective recognition. As the co-ordinating body linking some fifty Rom associations, the International Romani Union has done more than any predecessor. There is no doubt that Roma are beginning to make an impact as a political entity as well as a social problem.

This factor, after many years of non-representation and corresponding neglect, may soon turn the balance in their favour.

To combat discrimination and hasten the pace of development two kinds of pressure groups have emerged: the Romani civil rights organizations, which have now existed for over a decade in Spain, Sweden and Germany, and more recently in Italy, Belgium and Switzerland; and the socio-cultural associations, permitted in parts of eastern Europe, which by preserving the musical and linguistic heritage keep alive national feeling. In recent years collaboration with each other has become possible, and necessary if progress is to mean more than the foisting of an alien culture upon Roma. The Romani movement, influenced by socialist ideals though not always approved by communist governments, sees nationalism as a necessary tool with which to lever up a deeply conservative people.

The awakening of national consciousness and the need for unity of action were the main themes of the First and Second World Romani Congresses, held in London in 1971 and Geneva in 1978, respectively. The Second Congress, bringing together delegates and observers from twenty-six countries, set up the new co-ordinating body Romani Ekipe (Romani Union) and elected the international committee, Komiteeto Lumiaiko Romano. The Romani Union, linking some fifty Romani associations throughout the globe, including all parts of Europe, the United States, India and Pakistan, has been awarded consultative status with the United Nations. The mandate it holds from the Congress is to win for the Romani people a measure of self-determination.

The 3rd World Romani Congress, held in Gottingen, West Germany in 1981, proved to be the biggest international gathering of its kind to date. Some 600 Roma from 28 countries participated. The congress drew attention to the demands of Roma for status as a national minority, for toleration of nomadic groups and acknowledgement of the still outstanding issue of Nazi war crimes. One immediate result was support for the Central Council of Sinti and Roma from the Federal German Government. The Council’s Chairman Romani Rose, Vice-President of the IRU, was received by then Chancellor Schmitz and has since met with Chancellor Kohl.

The desire to make known the often-denied Nazi genocide against the Rom nation has been echoed in the United States. The three-year-old U.S. Romani Council in 1986 prevailed upon the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council to sponsor a national civic commemoration on Capitol Hill, Washington, in memory of the half-million Rom victims. Another event which has belatedly increased awareness of the fate of Roma during World War II has been the extradition of the war criminal Andrija Artukovic to Yugoslavia after 35 years residence in the United States. He has since been sentenced to death for his part in the butchering of 50,000 Roma in Jasenovac and other concentration camps in the then fascist puppet-state of Croatia.

In both Germany and the United States, Rom activists have had to challenge the continued employment of ‘Gypsy experts’ by police agencies. Police files have been kept on Sinti even when they had no criminal record, while in several American states anti-Gypsy laws have stayed on the statute books despite Supreme Court rulings against such outdated legislation. The notion that Gypsies per se constitute a criminal element dies hard. Within the last few years Roma have been received for the first time at the Bundestag in Bonn and at the White House, but public prejudice still runs deep on either side of the Atlantic.

Besides these official steps towards acceptance, important events have taken place in India and Yugoslavia. Chandigarh, capital of the Punjab, was the venue for the 2nd International Roma Festival in 1983. Attended by the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, it was the occasion for renewed support by the Indian Government for the demand by Roma for recognition as a national minority of Indian origin. In 1991, W. R. Rishi, Director of the Indian Institute for Romani Studies, the present Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has upheld this policy.

The International Romani Symposium held in Sarajevo during 1986 similarly reinforced the claim, particularly of East European Roma, to such status. To date only the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have acknowledged Roma as a nationality. Hungary, while taking the step of encouraging the foundation of the Hungarian Romani Council, has stopped short of awarding national status to the country’s 560,000 Roma. Still cautious in its handling of a larger Rom minority, Romania has tentatively permitted the establishment of a Rom national committee with organizing an annual festival. Formal status in the Soviet Union has likewise been accompanied by caution in recent years. However, there are some indications of a shift in policy towards the international movement. Artists from the Moscow Roman Theatre have participated in a cultural event in India and the Rom writer Lev Cherenkov submitted a paper for the symposium in Yugoslavia.

In Western Europe, the main thrust has been at the Council of Europe and European Parliament. The Council of Europe’s earlier recommendations for the provision of camping sites and educational opportunities for nomadic groups have been strengthened. The EEC has had studies commissioned to survey the needs in member states. An earlier estimate which reported the existence of 300,000 travellers within Common Market countries has had to be more than doubled since the inclusion of Spain, Portugal and Greece. In the European Parliament, Spanish Rom M. P. Juan de Dios Ramirez has several times raised the issue of recognition for Roma and urged the speedy adoption of social programmes to assist them.

Ramirez took a leading role in the Council of Europe’s 1983 teachers’ training seminar, when he paid tribute to the work of educationalists in the following words:

‘One day, when many generations of young Roma have come and gone and the true history of our struggle to free ourselves is finally written, it will be our duty to render sincere homage to those schoolmasters and mistresses who, with patience and generosity, have opened to us the gates of education which, for us, are the gates to freedom.’

On the eve of the 4th World Romani Congress, there is criticism that not enough has been done by the IRU Presidium and its officers. Yet in reality the level of activity has increased manifold within a few short years. Present at most of the events mentioned, then the present President of the IRU, Sait Balic, and General Secretary Rajko Djuric, have travelled more widely than any previous Rom leaders: in Warsaw for sessions of the Polish War Crimes Commission, in Madrid for a social conference and Copenhagen for the International Rom Tribunal, and they have also organized presidium meetings in France, Switzerland and Italy. In addition, visits have been made to Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece.

Major shortcomings include an inadequate permanent secretariat, lack of international publications and under-exploitation of the IRU status at the United Nations. Most failures can be traced to the urgent need for better financing. The only significant aid to the IRU since the 1981 congress has been a grant from the World Council of Churches. The Yugoslav-based secretariat still has no regular organ, and this gap cannot be made up either by the Indian half-yearly journal Roma nor the U.S. Romani Council newsletter Romanija. However, an international magazine similar to the now
defunct Krilo E Romero (Voice of the Roma) is planned and broadcasts in Romany by Radio Belgrade carry news weekly to several million in south-east Europe.

Since its acceptance as an NGO by the United Nations in 1979, the IRU has kept up representation in New York and Geneva. But the UN Human Rights Commission of 1977 to 1980, ever since that body had rejected the IRU’s Resolution adopted in 1977 by the 30th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights’ Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, which called for the right of Roma ‘to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development’, has remained a deadletter in many countries. As Geneva representative Dr. Ian Cibula told the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1984:

‘Our expectations remain unfulfilled. Discrimination, racism, injustice and often forced assimilation continue to be practised more or less everywhere.’

He further complained that IRU membership in the United Nations was merely a formality, existing only on paper. But it is clear that with more effort and resources, this apparent token admission could become a potent weapon. The well-documented cases of abuse and ill-treatment, such as the seizure and forced adoption of children in Italy, compulsory sterilization in Czechoslovakia and the continued existence of anti-Gypsy legislation in the United States and Britain, must be brought to the attention of the UN Human Rights Commission. Disclosure alone can discomfort governments anxious to maintain unsullied their human rights record. The publication of this updated report should provide some of the material necessary for a renewed campaign.

WHO ARE THE ROMA?

The full plight of Roma can best be grasped through an appreciation of their present dispersal and past history, in so far as this bears upon the contemporary situation and the roots of prejudice. Distributed around the world, outside India, are an estimated ten million Roma. Half live in Europe, and of these more than two thirds are concentrated in east and south-east Europe. The rapid growth of the Romani populations, pushed up by what is for Europe an exceptionally high birth rate, will increase their total by an estimated 30% during the 1980s.

Besides nomadic and unsettled Roma, the existence of the Romani migrant workers, mostly from Yugoslavia, Turkey and Spain, seeking employment in western and northern Europe, has added a new factor. The migrant workers number about 70,000 — the largest groups being in France, West Germany and Italy. Over the world, a quarter of the Romani population are nomadic or seminomadic; settlement schemes, using a mixture of incentive and compulsion, have over the past twenty years cut out much travelling in eastern Europe. Less than 10% are on the move in the U.S.S.R., Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Part of the reason for this is historical. In south-east Europe, towns and villages have contained Romani quarters for centuries. Formerly fully inhabited only during the winter, they have become permanent settlements under new social and economic conditions. Itinerant trades have declined or — like horse trading in Hungary — been prohibited along with nomadism itself.

Contrary to the popular gajo (non-Romani) conception, a Roma is not necessarily a nomad. Most certainly they do not think of themselves as ‘wandering Gypsies’, an invention of romanticism. On the other hand they are historically linked with frequent migrations over great distances. From the fifth century onwards Roma filtered into the Persian and later Arab empires of the Middle East, early groups of them reaching Byzantium in the tenth century. Their attachment to established religions, whether Hindu, Moslem or Christian, has been a matter of convenience rather than crotchets. Therefore, when the first Roma began to enter western Europe in the middle ages, some claimed to be pilgrims banished from Little Egypt by the Saracens. Such protection as this gained for them from the Church soon changed into intense opposition. The key that explains the seemingly endless persecution is the valuation put upon Roma by the gajo. To the mediavel mind, Roma, coming from the Turkish side of Europe or beyond and speaking an unknown tongue, were suspect and inferior. In Holland they were still called heiden (heathens) less than a hundred years ago. The Church reacted against them because it opposed fortune-telling and the practice of magic, though — ironically — this facet rather enhanced their popular image. It was not long before they became marked as the first blacks in Europe, opposed by the pillars of mediavel society, the Church, the state and the guilds. The ruling classes regarded the Roma as a potential migrant workers, mostly from Yugoslavia, Turkey and Spain, seeking employment in western and northern Europe, has added a new factor. The migrant workers number about 70,000 — the largest groups being in France, West Germany and Italy. Over the world, a quarter of the Romani population are nomadic or seminomadic; settlement schemes, using a mixture of incentive and compulsion, have over the past twenty years cut out much travelling in eastern Europe. Less than 10% are on the move in the U.S.S.R., Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Part of the reason for this is historical. In south-east Europe, towns and villages have contained Romani quarters for centuries. Formerly fully inhabited only during the winter, they have become permanent settlements under new social and economic conditions. Itinerant trades have declined or — like horse trading in Hungary — been prohibited along with nomadism itself.

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In a surprising way the Gypsies have maintained their specific way of life and social organisation. The norms, values and premises which underlie and govern the conduct of Gypsies are clearly distinctive from the general pattern of culture in present European society. Gypsies have maintained and developed strong elements of social organisation based on extended family groups and family alliances. Gypsy families are usually large and it is no rarity for a family to have six or seven children. Their communities are so cohesive — despite their geographical dispersion — that they automatically regard someone with the same name as a relation.

It is on the extended family group that Romani society relies for security and welfare, they reported, rather than state provision or benevolent organisations in the outside society. Secondly, Roma, instead of being employed, often base their economy — except for some seasonal work — on self-employment in small businesses, with groups of men, women and children working according to their own roles. As for nomadism, 'it is a romantic fallacy that they are constantly wandering'. Many Roma if they were not forced would make only a few moves a year. Change of location is mainly motivated by economic considerations, but an appreciable amount results from being moved on by officials. The above report included:

'The fact that the Gypsy way of life is different from that of the total society has, unfortunately, caused many biased judgements on the Gypsies, and in many instances discrimination. Discrimination against Gypsies has often occurred in Europe and because of their prejudice many people cannot yet accept that Gypsies should occupy sites or houses in their neighbourhood.'

That Romani communities, which give social value and significance to Roma, are now endangered by increasing stresses and strains, will be seen from the following review of the present treatment of them by individual European states.

France

For twenty years the Rom movement had its centre in Paris. The post-war Communauté Mondial Gitan and its successor Comité Internationale Rom were founded there. Yet outside of the metropolises, except for some short-lived activity in Marseilles, nothing like a grass-roots organization existed, especially among the travelling Manush. Although not intentionally, the groundwork for the emergence of true civil rights campaigning was undoubtedly laid by the enormously successful Romani Evangelical Church.

Now the multiplication of groups has become almost confusing. Because of overlapping and unnecessary rivalry, there have been several attempts to unify. An early effort was the Union Tsigane. In 1983 there followed Initiatives Tsiganes and in the same year the Office National des Affaires Tsiganes was created to help guide the movement. This was an important change as officialdom had previously dealt almost exclusively with the research-orientated Etudes Tsiganes. How much the various Rom activist groups will influence and even supersede the long-established associations working on their behalf will soon be seen. Representatives of the national Rom associations met for the first time with these bodies three years ago.

Meanwhile, the law still discriminates against Roma. Those on the road are required by the Act dated 3 January 1969 to carry a carnet de circulation, which is constantly checked by the police. Article 7 stipulates that the Préfets des Départements decide to which commune nomads will be attached. The Council of Europe report points out that other French citizens have the freedom to choose their place of residence. In any event this legal attachment to a commune does not give the 100,000 nomadic Manush a place to live. It simply tightens control by the police, replacing the more cumbersome law of 1912. The current Act is considered less harsh, although in practice it is no less discriminatory. The old law brought in the carnet anthropométrique, giving precise physical measurements of the holder.

Wherever they stop, children must be registered at school, enabling the authorities to claim that a high proportion are being educated. In fact, Roma children hardly progress in school at all. Besides the high-handed action of some communes makes even overnight stays impossible. Yet Article 10 of the 1969 law disenfranchises those who cannot prove unbroken residence in one place for three years.

The French Government, like its Italian and Spanish counterparts, has at infrequent intervals issued circulars urging district authorities to set up caravan sites. Comparatively few have responded, most preferring to put up signs reading Interdit aux Forains. Some have gone further, like the major of Hoerdt, in Bas-Rhin, who demolished the shack home of the Weiss family, slaughtering their animals and leaving ten children shelterless. After almost a decade of legal action, in which the Nobel Peace Prize winner Alfred Koestler supported their case, it was settled in favour of Weiss in 1983.

However, since 1970 the government has spent millions of francs equipping some 30 caravan sites. In addition, two housing settlements, at Grasse and Marseille, have been created. Still lacking is a crash education programme to do the kind of work that has been piloted by various voluntary bodies. The Ministry of National Education expressed concern over the lack of suitable schooling in 1984 and admitted that some schools had refused to admit children, while those wishing to help found it difficult to find teachers willing to work in special classes. Some of the problems are illustrated by figures from a caravan site school in Dijon. About 500 children are attending the school at different times throughout the year and more than 2000 have registered since 1975 on a park which holds 80 caravans. To meet this demand, four classes are held in summer and five in winter.

Adding to the hardship of itinerant families is the law dated 22 December 1972 which outlaws door-to-door sales. Known by Manush as la chine, one of the most common occupations has involved offering anything from handkerchiefs to carpets at cut-price in small towns and city suburbs. It has been a main source of income for Manush and perhaps half the Sinti. The ban on this once legitimate trading may be one reason for a reported increase in begging and a growing rate of delinquency.

Besides the hard-pressed nomads, there are more than a hundred thousand semi-sedentary Roma, most living as shack-dwellers in the notorious bidonvilles. They include thousands of workers from Yugoslavia. At Romainville in 1984, the municipal authorities condemned them as a threat to public safety. The O.N.A.T. called a press conference and organized a demonstration to defend their rights.

Belgium

The provision of serviced camping places by local authorities has been government policy for several years. But comparatively few local councils have so far responded and effective pressure from the appropriate ministry is needed. It is somewhat ironic that Brussels, where EEC studies on the plight of nomadic families were initiated almost a decade ago, has given only a weak lead in this matter.

The law dated 1 January 1975 made it possible for Roma to acquire Belgian citizenship. On paper this ended a scandalous situation in which even children born in the country remained stateless. Deprived of basic civil rights, they grew up to be carriers of the infamous carte de nomades, which left them at the mercy of law enforcement officers.

An official survey shows that at least 20% of local councils have passed by-laws against parking of caravans and camping. In addition to everyday hardships caused by these regulations, they effectively prevent Roma from registering residence in a commune in order to qualify for full citizenship. They also stop children, who make up 60% of the travelling population, from attending school with any regularity.

The Ministry of the Interior, as early as 5 October 1972, noted some of the difficulties faced by families on the road. Six years later, while Ostend opened the first legal caravan park, the municipality of Brussels continued its policy of brutal evictions. Even members of the Romani Evangelical Church were harassed during their attempts to secure a stopping ground for their families and a permanent location for a prayer house. Roma are still living on municipal refuse tips and unhealthy wasteland, which contributes to an infant mortality rate 20% higher than the national average.

West Germany

The situation in West Germany has changed radically since 1980, particularly as regards the political leverage obtained by German-born Sinti and to a lesser extent foreign Roma. Before the 1981 Göttingen congress, Sinti had already begun to organize nationally and tackle such issues as police harassment and discrimination at
campaing places. But this event put them on the map and helped gain the attention of the Bonn government.

Less than a year later, Chancellor Schmidt met with Roma representatives led by Romani Rose, President of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma. This first ever top level meeting was a positive development and marked a significant step forward in the fight against discrimination and prejudice. The meeting brought the belated recognition that Roma had been the targets of racial persecution by the Nazis.

'Sinti and Roma were subjected to severe and unjust wrong through the setting up of several offices able to cope with individual case-work and the promotion of the larger aims of the organization. However, this has not yet brought to an end incidents of brutality. Early in 1984, a large number of Yugoslav-born Roma, settled in Darmstadt since 1979, were evicted and driven out of the town. Their children had been attending local schools and several Roma were licensed artisans. In a heavy-handed police action, their houses and workshops were bulldozed and destroyed.

More permanent success appears to have been achieved in the campaign to compel police authorities to give up their long-held 'criminal' records on the Romani population. Inherited from the Nazi regime, regional bureaus had continued through the 1970s to update records on all Sinti and Roma, treating them collectively as a criminal element. Through such actions as sit-ins and occupations at police stations, combined with legal proceedings, the Central Council gradually gained the upperhand on this issue. Most such records have been officially destroyed, although it is suspected that some have been secretly kept. Hamburg city authorities resisted opening such files until late in 1983, despite the efforts of the local Rom and Sinti Union.

In a further effort to obtain reparations for war crimes' victims, the Central Council has followed the example of Jewish groups in seeking compensation for former slave labourers from German companies. Seven such companies have already paid more than 58 million marks to former Jewish workers and their families, but no compensation has been offered to Romani survivors of the Nazi forced-labour programme. Inherited from the Nazi period, regional bureaus had continued through the 1970s to update records on all Sinti and Roma, treating them collectively as a criminal element. Through such actions as sit-ins and occupations at police stations, combined with legal proceedings, the Central Council gradually gained the upperhand on this issue. Most such records have been officially destroyed, although it is suspected that some have been secretly kept. Hamburg city authorities resisted opening such files until late in 1983, despite the efforts of the local Rom and Sinti Union.

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Spain

In addition to some 600,000 Roma there are 150,000 Gypsy families in Spain who follow a similar nomadic way of life. Among both majorities are not registered and in some sense live outside the law. However, through the efforts of Rom member of the Cortes, Juan de Dios Ramirez, the old anti-Gypsy legislation of the Franco period has been taken off the statute book and the status of Roma has improved. Previously, Roma were under the direct surveillance of the Civil Guard. There is now an Interministerial Commission to deal with the problems faced by Roma, which is at least facing the basic facts. The average Rom life span is only 43 years, half the working population is unemployed and 80% of Roma adults have never been to school. Barely half the Rom children are getting any education.

With the support of the Catholic Church, the Secretariado Gitano has been encouraging local authorities to provide housing for Roma, most of whom are living in poor barrios consisting of shacks. More recently, the Socialist Government has urged the adoption of a housing programme and some cities have responded. But this has sometimes caused a backlash from the rest of the population.

One of the more recent violent episodes occurred in Zaragossa after the municipal authorities announced a plan to relocate 36 Rom families from their old barrio into temporary housing on part of a housing project. The Roma had been squatters on one corner of the site and their shacks were due for demolition. For almost a week there was serious rioting over this issue in which dozens of people were injured. Barricades were put up in the streets to prevent Roma occupying their new homes and police who intervened were attacked.

In other areas the once-common practice of driving Roma out has been replaced. At Mediolia in 1984, municipal workers were ordered to pull down shacks belonging to six Rom families, while most of the adults and children were away on farm employment. In Segovia province, the mayor of Sanchonufo led a mob of several hundred which forced a family to leave the home they had lived in for twenty years. It was then bulldozed.

During a further similar incident elsewhere, a mob set fire to a house badly burning two women and three children trapped inside. In a Madrid suburb ten Rom children were expelled from school because parents opposed their continued attendance.

Aid to the education problem, the government is subsidizing several reception classes. By 1981 there were 124 centres with some 4000 pupils. But this has left another 100,000 without schooling. Juan Ramirez, and other Rom activists, believe that a crash programme covering education, housing and job-training is needed.

Francisco Hernandez, a leading member of the Secretariado, has summed it up:
Many of our people live in misery, in huts made up from scraps. When it rains they are flooded. Then flat-building begins on the site and our people are thrown out. We want a dignified life—not paternalism but tolerance and understanding.

The Netherlands

While the Netherlands continues to lead in the provision of well-serviced caravan parks for indigenous nomadic families, policy towards stateless and foreign Roma is strict. Some few hundred have been allowed to take up residence on an ad hoc basis and others have been evicted at times in a legal no-man's-land between the Netherlands and West Germany. But overall this country must be held up as an example to others for both its construction of a network of sites and efforts to meet the educational needs of children and adults. The implementation of the 1968 Caravan Sites Act has involved experimentation with large trailer-home parks and small family units. Some of the bigger centres have their own social activity buildings and more than 70 special schools, adult education classes and kindergartens have been established.

The intention behind official efforts to accommodate nomadic families was once to integrate them gradually into settled society. Since the EEC-sponsored studies have given a wider picture of the existence of travelling Roma throughout the member states, there has been better recognition of the fact that theirs may be a life-style which is here to stay.

Britain

The situation for Travellers in Britain is worse today than it was a decade ago. With the spread of 'Designation' creating 'no-go' areas, drastic cut-backs in local authority spending almost halting new caravan sites construction and an increased use of the 1959 Highways Act against roadside camping, life on the road is hard. Figures for 1981 show that 4500 caravans were at that time on illegal encampments, compared with just 3000 occupying council-run sites and another 1200 on licensed private land. This official count, which may be 15% too low, has changed little in the past five years.

The biggest blow to hopes for improvement came when the outgoing Labour Government's allocation of £30 million for a five-year plan for caravan site amenities (which was to run to 1983) was abandoned. However, an important ruling on the obligation of county authorities to provide sites was given by the High Court in January 1985. It arose because Hertfordshire had built only 105 pitches for caravans, although there was a recognized need for another 150. The court declared that the county was in breach of its statutory duty and the Secretary of State should have intervened. Other councils which have neglected to construct enough caravan sites should be influenced by this judgment.

Only two weeks later in neighbouring Bedfordshire, a group of Irish Travellers were towed from an official caravan site. Vacant pitches were available but they were not accepted. Two caravans were moved illegally with children inside and fires alight, but rather than restrain the council employees, police arrested twelve Travellers during the eviction. Much damage was done to unsecured belongings inside the caravans. Such move-on operations continue to take place throughout Britain at the rate of about ten a day. When police are resisted and opposed by the various activist organizations, including the Romany Guild, the East Anglia Gypsy Council and the National Gypsy Council, a Rom evicted only with the help of a snow plough near Harrogate, Yorkshire, just before Christmas, later joined the executive of the National Gypsy Education Council.

Plans to develop six caravan sites in the Swansea area were dropped and a large group of families moved on late in 1985. Others were evicted in West Glamorgan despite pleas from the Gypsy Council. That summer Bradford obtained legal sanction to ban five Gypsies from the city. Similar legal action was taken against 23 persons, although some had been living in Bradford for three generations. The mayor of Maldon, Essex, is quoted as saying recently, 'To my mind they don't really count as human beings.' It is shockingly clear that local authorities collectively would rather waste an estimated £5 million annually on driving the problem into the next area than doing something constructive.

Those who suffer worst from this heartless policy are the children. In 1984 a report by the Save the Children Fund stated that the infant mortality rate among Travellers is fifteen times higher than the national average. Meanwhile, educational opportunities have declined because of budget cuts. A ruling in 1977 even stated that children not belonging to the area of any educational authority had no right to go to school. This was corrected by a 1980 act and improved the following year. The present Conservative Government admits that at least 5000 children are receiving no education. At least another 20,000 are getting inadequate schooling, and many of them are growing up illiterate. Much pioneering work has been stimulated by the National Gypsy Education Council but until an adequate network of caravan sites exists no educational programme can be effective.

The Department of Environment has issued a paper on the needs of long-distance Travellers. This advocates the provision of a chain of ten stopping places with up to forty pitches each for some 250 families, and the building of sixty small sites for another 300 regionally-mobile families. This appears to be the sole promise of progress at the present time and there are undoubtedly flaws in it, apart from the difficulty of persuading county councils to agree to the proposal.

Ireland

More than twenty years have elapsed since an Eire Government commission urged the immediate provision of sites. In that time the Traveller population has doubled and no end is in sight regarding the forced evictions and degradation of wayside families. Allocation of legal camping places has continued to lag behind needs and efforts at education have been disrupted by heartless local authorities. However, in 1980, the Supreme Court ruled that before evicting families, a local authority must offer a suitable alternative. But not until police were informed during a move-on operation in Dublin did the pace slow.

The ruling did not save a large group of families encamped at Charlemont Street. When they were uprooted both schooling and child-care projects were destroyed. Indeed, Travellers began to lose faith in the hard-pressed outsider-run Dublin Committee for Travelling People and Minceir Misli, a militant self-help group emerged.

At the present time there are over 630 families living in the Dublin area alone. Most of them are on illegal stopping places and have to move frequently. Less than half their children are able to attend school and then only irregularly. Infant mortality is three times as high as among the settled population, undernourishment is common and life expectancy half the national average. Nan Joyce, a founder of Minceir Misli, said:

'I'm a grandmother with sixteen grandchildren, and again all I hear is good words.'

An appeal to the European Court of Human Rights on the grounds that a particular eviction contravened basic civil liberties has strengthened the hand of activists but widespread prejudice remains a barrier to real change.

Sweden

The most notable news from Sweden is the generous way the Government has accepted into the country the many hundreds of Roma expelled from Poland. Because they carried no papers or nothing more than exit permits, the Polish Roma have been treated as refugees and assisted to find both jobs and housing.

But the public attitude towards Roma continues to be tainted with much ill-feeling and police discrimination is evident. In the summer of 1985 a group of fifty youths attacked a Rom family in the central Swedish town of Kumla with stones and a fire-bomb, while local police allegedly watched from a patrol car without intervening.

While much has been done in recent years for Roma immigrants, little effort has been made by the authorities to help the older nomadic Tasure (who call themselves Travellers). It is clear they want recognition for their way of life and the special educational needs of their children.

Meanwhile, the number of Roma has increased considerably with the influx from both Poland and Finland. The Finnish Roma have formed their own association in Stockholm and many have been
housed in municipal apartments and housing estates. The Romani language has been introduced into a number of special schools, and Rom teachers and social workers have been trained. The liberal assistance given to Roma was inaugurated by a parliamentary commission over thirty years ago.

Switzerland

Much has changed in Switzerland since 1980 regarding the attitude of the Federal Government. A commission set up by the Minister of Justice made important recommendations in 1983 aimed at helping the last 5000 Jenish and Manush nomads to save their traditional way of life.

More recently, the government has issued a statement regretting the injustices and suffering caused under the long-pursued policy of taking infants forcibly from their parents. The organization responsible was Pro Juventute, with headquarters in Zurich. Back in 1972, the decision to ‘work for the children of the road’, which was subsequently supported for more than forty years by federal and cantonal financial grants. In 1959, Zolli Muller, founder of Pro Tzigania Svizzera, was told of infants taken by Pro Juventute without the parents’ consent and of children being told later that their mothers and fathers were dead. Several recounted how in adulthood they had carried out harrowing searches to re-discover their whereabouts. In some cases they believed the orphaned children had committed suicide. At the same time parents complained of fruitless attempts to contact their children in which Pro Juventute refused even to pass on letters or make known their whereabouts. In 1972 the dossiers were passed to the press. This scheme, finally abandoned in 1973, involved some 700 children. Now the authorities are attempting to repair part of the social damage by re-uniting those they previously separated. Many of the children spent years in orphanages and juvenile detention centres. In addition, the organization Radgenossenschaft der Landstrasse, and its paper Scharolt, has been campaigning for the setting up of caravan sites by the Cantons. A lead in this respect has been given by the towns of Biel, Bern and Versoix, and gradually other local authorities have followed. Nevertheless, harassment of nomadic families continues occasionally. Thus the police were called in to evict twenty caravans from land near Zurich in 1984 and roadside halt sites have led to prosecution numerous times despite federal appeals for greater tolerance.

The 35,000 people of Romani descent have been drawn closer in recent years by the annual cultural festival organized by their association. Both political and social efforts have been assisted by the existence in Bern of the International Romani Union’s UN office, headed by Dr. Jan Cibula, former president of the World Romani Congress.

Greece

There remain two countries, Greece and Turkey, which – though belonging geographically to south-east Europe – I have included in the present section since they are both members of the Council of Europe. The Romani communities there ought, therefore, to benefit eventually from the Council’s recommendations.

The formation of a socialist government in Greece has raised the expectations of the country’s 140,000 Roma. But their hopes have not so far been realized, though some positive initiatives have been made to help them. Impatient with the lack of progress, a group of nomadic families threatened in 1984 to set up their tents outside the Ministry of Urban Planning in Athens. In the Trikala district, other families occupied a piece of land allocated for a camp site before basic services had been completed. The Ministry of Education has begun to recognize the acute educational needs of the 43,000 nomadic Muslim Roma. An advisory committee has been formed to make recommendations. A small private effort is being made with the support of the Save the Children campaign.

Meanwhile, the Orthodox Bishop of Florina has continued to lead a church mission which is attempting to convert Muslim Roma to Christianity. This controversial activity has drawn attention to the critical situation of Muslim Roma, who lack citizenship and thus basic civil rights. A law passed in 1979 was designed to enable them to obtain identity cards, but as most do not have birth certificates little has changed. Although not formally required by the constitution, in practice Muslim Roma have only been accepted as Greek citizens after baptism and admission to the church.

Another difficulty faced by travelling Roma is that since 1976 it has been illegal to camp outside organized sites. Since almost all existing camping areas are designated for tourists, tent-dwellers are banned. Inevitably this has brought them into conflict with the police, although the government is disposed to take notice of the Council of Europe’s appeal to stop unnecessary harassment. The long-established Panhellenic Romani Association has been gearing itself to exert more influence. At least since 1980 it has held council elections in both Athens and Salonica. Through the association, some municipal apartments have been given to families from the Agia Varvara quarter and negotiations are in hand concerning further allocations of land and housing. About fifty small houses have been built for Roma at Serres, in northern Greece. But poverty, illiteracy and lack of citizenship still keep Roma collectively at the bottom of the social pile, although a few individuals have succeeded as musicians, singers and business entrepreneurs.

Turkey

Turkey also contains a large proportion of nomadic Roma, and when border restrictions are not in force families travel frequently between the two countries. Istanbul alone contains some 25,000 Roma, inhabiting quarters which date back many centuries. Both Ankara and Izmir have shanty-quarters where most families are very poor, and few even among the settled children are getting regular schooling.

Political conditions have long deterred Roma from forming any socio-cultural associations and they remain apprehensive of the authorities. Most conceal their identity and submit superficially to assimilation, although keeping their culture and language intact in the home. Modernization and industrialization have hardly touched Roma, particularly tent and wagon-dwelling families, except to undermine traditional occupations. Many have been reduced to scavenging for a living, collecting paper, rags and scrap metal. A relatively small number have found work in factories, mostly in tobacco manufacture in the case of men and cotton yarn in the case of women.

Those in the cities act as shoe-cleaners, street-sweepers, carriers, porters and domestic servants for low returns. One of the poorest groups is a colony of sardine fishermen at Pappas, outside Izmir. In contrast, some Roma have done well as musicians, singers and dancers and form a class apart. Much of their music has been issued on record under Turkish labels.

Despite the recommendations of the Council of Europe, the government appears to take no interest in the plight of Roma as a minority nationality. Without the least encouragement and lack of approval for any organizing efforts of their own, Roma in Turkey survive at a pitifully low level of existence.

The Council of Europe’s Proposals

The recommendations adopted at Strasbourg were the first positive proposals set forth by such an international forum. In 1975 they were endorsed by the Council of Ministers. The EEC has since sponsored research into the conditions in the member states and the educational needs of nomads. At present, The Right of stateless Roma has also been discussed and a recommendation made that such persons should be granted citizenship of the countries in which they reside. The original 1969 Council of Europe report concluded: ‘In recent years, Gypsy organizations in Europe have tried to promote the cultural and political development of Gypsies: the Council of Europe should now accept the challenge of helping them to seek social justice and a respected place in modern European society.’

The Council of Europe Resolutions

as adopted by the World Romani Congress

1 to take all steps necessary to stop discrimination, be it in legislation or in administrative practice;
2 as a minimum measure, to promote actively the construction by the authorities concerned of a sufficient number of caravan sites which should be provided with sanitary installations, electricity, telephones, community buildings, and fire precautions, as well as work areas, and should be situated near to schools and villages or towns;
to ensure, wherever possible, that local authorities provide houses, especially in regions where climatic conditions make caravans unsuitable for permanent residence;

4 where attendance at existing schools is not possible, to encourage the provision of special classes near caravan sites or other places where groups gather regularly to facilitate the integration of Romani children into normal schools and to ensure that the educational programmes for Romani children line up satisfactorily with those of secondary school or other forms of continued education;

5 to create or improve the possibilities for professional education of adult Roma with a view to improving their employment opportunities;

6 to support the creation of national bodies consisting of representatives from governments, Romani organizations and voluntary associations, and to consult these bodies in the preparation of measures designed to improve the position of Roma;

7 to adapt existing state laws with a view to ensuring that nomadic Roma have the same rights as the rest of the population with regard to social security provisions and medical care.

**EASTERN EUROPE**

Throughout western and northern Europe, little has been done to ease the hardships of the nomadic Roma. Despite debate in the European Parliament and recommendations from the EEC and Council of Europe, much policy is influenced by common prejudice. Under constant harassment, some become ‘problem’ families dependent on ‘welfare’, while the stronger opt out of the Romani community. Deprived of its most capable members, the group as a whole is less able to adjust. Thus true integration, which calls for the modification of their life-style by Roma to meet the challenges of a changing environment, is frustrated.

The socialist countries of east and south-east Europe may start from the theoretical premise that it is the duty of the state to assist underdeveloped groups. But such programmes as have been adopted show little knowledge of the needs and no insight into the aspirations of the Romani people. Similar pressures have been applied: nomadic groups are compelled to stop travelling and settled Roma are encouraged to assimilate in order to move up the social ladder. Overall, economic considerations and a guarded attitude towards Rom nationalism by dominant minorities have outweighed any socialist enthusiasm to assist a poor group as well as racially different section of the population.

But because of the sheer size of their numbers in Eastern Europe (there be over six million by the end of the century), Roma are making their presence ever more acutely felt. They cannot be ignored as a national minority, nor assimilated into the rest of society. Already the break-through in Yugoslavia, where Roma are realizing their rights as a recognized nationality, is influencing neighbouring countries. At the same time, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, containing Rom minorities approaching 5% or more of the population, are under pressure. Roma are ready to seek integration on their own terms: an equal place in the economic and social life of the total community as a distinct national minority.

Another radical change that has taken place in the past five years has been the establishment of the centre of the Rom movement in Eastern Europe. After the 3rd World Romani Congress in 1981, the headquarters of the International Romani Union was moved from Switzerland to Yugoslavia. Although under varying restrictions, Rom leadership throughout the region is now formally brought together in the presidium of the IRU. Supported by India, and with affiliated organizations in Western Europe and the United States, the new presidium can reiterate more strongly its demands for nationality status and minority rights. It is also in a better position to make its voice heard in the forum of the United Nations, both in New York and Geneva. Since acceptance of the IRU as an NGO with consultative status in 1979, efforts have been made to improve representation.

The old policy of assimilation has recently been defeated in Hungary, and is on the defensive elsewhere. It may still have its strongholds in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia, where heavy-handed manipulation continues. But Roma are no longer isolated and the time has passed when the promotion of simple cultural outlets on the level of folklore could satisfy the urge for full emancipation. In place of a passive waiting for better times, in many places there is a surge of activity towards self-help and group assertion.

In the past communist governments could choose to follow either the Marxist-Leninist pluralist approach or the assimilationist line. For some years, the Soviets cared how the Gypsies were treated. Today there is a greater global desire for human rights, and the yardstick is applied to all societies. As Roma increase their organized requests for a better deal, they are benefitting from a liberal response both from within their own countries and from abroad. Yugoslavia is already allowing a full emancipation movement to develop, with outlets on television, the radio and press. Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, after banning the Romani unions in 1973, has kept a tight clamp on activity. Bulgaria and Romania have treated Roma with relative tolerance, though with sterilization. Nevertheless, a large gathering of Roma was permitted in the old town of Janevovack in 1983 to commemorate those who had died during World War II, an event attended by IRU President Sait Balic. Hungary has taken a major step by permitting the formation of a state-wide Rom organization, with grass-roots in the numerous local social clubs. Even the Soviet Union has recently allowed some cautious contact with the Rom movement abroad.

**The U.S.S.R.**

As elsewhere, Roma in the Soviet Union are manifesting a revival in their national culture. This has been encouraged through support for the Moscow Romani Theatre and several music ensembles, as well as seminars and publications on the Romani language. For fifty years Roma have been officially recognized as a national minority of Indian origin. But for almost an equal length of time, they have not been able to form a national association nor participate in the international Romani movement. However, a breakthrough in this respect has occurred since the visit to the Soviet Union of Honorary President of the World Romani Congress W.R. Rishi and the subsequent participation of artists from the Romani Theatre in a cultural event in India during 1985. The following year Moscow Rom writer Lajko Cherenkov submitted a paper to the International Romani Symposium in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia.

It is also clear from census figures that more Roma want their ethnic origin to be known, whereas in the past this was commonly denied. Thus between 1959 and 1969 the number of Roma registering their nationality increased by 33%, and rose by a further 20% during the census taken in 1979. The number of persons declaring themselves to be Roma reached 209,000 that year, while reliable estimates places the actual Romani population at over a million. Many parents still register their children as Russian, or as Armenian in the Armenian republic and so on. Cherenkov has written concerning his visits and correspondence with Roma throughout the Soviet Union: 'I have yet to meet Roma who have forgotten the language or the Romani traditions.'

Almost half the number of Roma in the Soviet Union live at the present time within the Russian Federation, while large communities exist in Bessarabia and the Ukraine. In the Asian republics there are many Luli, who share a common origin with the Roma of Europe. Migration in recent years has reduced the numbers in Moldavia. Some 12,000 Roma have settled in Siberia and for several years a special school was run for their children in Irkutsk. Nomadism has been outlawed for thirty years but some groups continue to travel during the summer. They have found a place in the economy as much needed seasonal workers on collective farms. Others make a living as small-scale street traders, an occupation which is illegal though usually tolerated.

**Poland**

The imposition of martial law in Poland, coupled with outbreaks of violence against Roma by members of the public, has worsened their plight since 1981. The country was the first post-war socialist state to try to integrate nomadic Rom voluntarily, but later adopted methods of coercion. According to official figures, 25% gave up the road during the early phase, responding to offers of housing and
employment. Schools enrolled many children and there were attempts to set up co-operative workshops based on such traditional skills as coopersmithing.

At the direction of the Warsaw authorities, each district established a settlement committee. These groups sometimes acted harshly towards Roma, especially during the hard winter of 1964, breaking up forest camps and preventing families from travelling from one place to another. But the alternative to caravans was often housing in dilapidated buildings. An extended family thus housed in Lublin attempted to leave the city and were pursued by the police. Nomadism was ended but a complexity of social and health problems remained. One out of every seven children was suffering from tuberculosis. Among the new house-dwellers, frequent disputes erupted with gadjo neighbours and a negative attitude towards Roma has lingered on, as a Rom sociologist has noted.

Several serious attacks on Roma have occurred since 1981, the first in Konin. A mob of about a hundred people overturned and set fire to a number of caravans and other vehicles, wounding men, women and children. When the police belatedly arrived on the scene, instead of making arrests among the attackers, they rounded up the Roma and escorted them out of town. Only a day after martial law was declared, on 14 December, police took two families from Oswiecim (Auschwitz) and placed them on the ferry to Sweden. The authorities did not provide them with travel documents. A week later other Roma in Oswiecim were harassed by the police and their presentation by the authorities was used as a pretext to help them leave the country, which some accepted out of fear.

By 1983 many hundreds of Roma had been expelled from Poland in this way. In some cases, however, the authorities furnished Roma with a so-called dokumen podroz, which simply allows the bearer to exit but not re-enter the country. An addendum was written on these papers stating that the person concerned was no longer a citizen of the Polish People’s Republic. One of the most outrageous round-ups took place in a park in Gdansk, in December 1981, when a number of adults were put in a truck and prevented from collecting their own children and belongings.

On the positive side, Roma in Tarnowie have formed a Romani Cultural Society and were permitted to send representatives to the 3rd World Romani Congress. The town museum includes a section devoted to Rom folk art and traditions.

**Hungary**

At the time of writing there was some optimism among Rom leaders in Hungary that beneficial changes were in the making. Although the Hungarian Communist Party decided in 1979 that Roma did not yet warrant national minority status, they were now to be allowed to organize further on a national basis. For this purpose the Orszagos Ciganyanas was founded, with Jozsef Daroczi, a presidium member of the IRU, as President. Ten years earlier, in 1974, there had existed the consultative Ciganyszovezseg, and another body had functioned between 1958 and 1960. But the new National Roma Council now has broader representation and influence. As a follow-up to this development the Rom Cultural Association Ungro-themeske Romane Kulturake Ekipe was set up in May 1986. This organization links together some 200 local clubs and 40 dance ensembles and has been given 8 million Florint in initial funding. While the two organizations clearly mark an advance, dissatisfaction has been voiced at the way cultural and political roles have been separated. A single national body, with grass roots support through the cultural clubs and able to combat discrimination and other issues, would have been preferable.

Nevertheless, the Hungarian authorities must be credited with tackling the issues posed by the large Rom minority with realism. For a start, they are among the few in Europe who admit to the true number of Roma. A population study has revealed that the size of the Rom community doubles every twenty to thirty years. While the general population has a zero growth, the number of Roma is likely to reach 1.5 million within forty years. Meanwhile, fewer than 15% have skilled jobs and less than 5% of those employed are engaged in the professions. Life expectancy for Roma remains fifteen years lower than the average. Thousands of families have been housed in recent years but up to 100,000 Roma still inhabit shanty dwellings.

The capital itself has an acknowledged Gypsy problem. Budapest contains 70,000 Roma, many of whom live in self-made squatters settlements on the outskirts. However, by discouraging further migration from the villages to the city and undertaking a re-housing program, as the number has been greatly reduced. In the provinces, tens of thousands of families inhabit poor adobe cottages with no running water and electricity. Often there is only a dirt road leading to their remote villages.

In the Nograd region, Roma comprise over 12% of the population in many villages. Here almost 70% of the men and 30% of the women have regular jobs, and with this income Roma have acquired new houses. In Nogradmeyer, Roma make up one third of the townpeople and run a successful co-operative foundry among other enterprises. It employs 240 workers and has an annual turnover of 52 million Florint. Three members of the enterprise sit on the county council, and the whole group can be found on the town council where there are 15,000 Roma, many have regular employment in the mines and some 50 have served on district councils.

Although half the 2100 Rom settlements are situated near larger Hungarian villages, a proportion of the children are not attending school. Part of the reason is discrimination. Over the past 15 years the birth-rate among Roma has increased by 13% and some elementary schools are reluctant to allow the huge intake. In one instance a head teacher refused to admit Rom children because, he claimed, they were dirty and would bring disease to the other children. Many are handicapped by having to learn in Hungarian and complete only basic grades and are handicapped by having to learn in Hungarian. Two schools have experimented with the use of Romanes but its introduction generally has not yet been accepted. Meanwhile, the cultural clubs are taking a part in adult education. An annual course is held near Lake Balaton to train full-time club leaders.

Against this background, those who in the past advocated assimilation of the rapidly growing Rom population have been defeated. But how far the Rom movement in Hungary will be allowed to develop its potential is an open question. An Interministerial Commission on Roma has existed since 1968 and this body co-ordinates policy. Roma have only a minority voice here and this is not likely to change.

**Romania**

Making up one of the largest national minorities, Roma in Romania are also the most deprived. Many are still travelling, suffer harassment by the police and are unable to send their children to school. General Secretary of the IRU, Rajko Djuric, has criticized the Romanian authorities over their denial of civil rights and frequent refusal of passports to Rom intellectuals who wish to travel abroad.

While it is true that for several decades Roma have not been permitted to form even cultural associations, some small improvements are now evident. Roma representative, Ion Cirstea, was able to attend the Göttingen congress and in 1985 the first Rom organization for almost fifty years was established with official approval. Known as Phralipe (Brotherhood), the group held a cultural festival at Bistritz Monastery on the occasion of the annual Roma pilgrimage to this Eastern Orthodox shrine. It is planned to repeat the festival every September.

The first festival drew participants from Sibiu, and smaller towns and villages, and received support and encouragement from officials in the region. Besides music, singing and dancing, the event included drama performances. Such cultural gatherings have become routine in neighbouring Yugoslavia and Hungary, but for Romanian Rom it was a welcome breakthrough. A conference immediately after decided that local cultural groups and Phralipe clubs should be established in a number of Rom communities, on the model of that set up in Sibiu.

Whether through these activities Roma may eventually gain a status similar to the Hungarian and German national minorities remains to be seen. Although financial cutbacks have occurred, these other two nationalities have had their own schools and publications subsidized by the state. (But there are also severe problems facing both groups; see MRG Report No. 37, 'Hungarians of Romania').

Most of the Rom quarters in towns and villages consist of poor houses, and municipal services often below that provided to nearby
areas. Although a paper has been submitted urging adoption of positive policies to help Roma, lack of firm central guidance is apparent. Widespread neglect at district level is obvious. At Mera, near Cluj, some 150 families live in the poor hillside district of Balazsdomb. Most of the breadwinners have to piece together a living from casual labour, herb gathering, lacemaking and other small-scale occupations. There is little demand for their talent as musicians.

At Timisoara the Rom quarter was recently pulled down to make way for a development project. In this instance, Roma expressed resentment over the destruction of their community and the scattering of families to other neighbourhoods. Evidence of harsh handling of Roma in Timisoara goes back some years. A group of fourteen families encamped in their wagons and tents at the edge of the town in 1973 entered their children at the nearest primary school. They intended to stay through the winter. But the next day the police told them to leave. The men harnessed up and drove a kilometre further along the road, hoping to be left alone. Officers returned in the morning and compelled the families to quit the district.

While there are no special laws against nomadism, such as those passed in Bulgaria and the Soviet Union, travelling Roma meet much intolerance. It is officially admitted that 10% are on the road at any one time. During the winter, families attach themselves to the quarters of settled Roma, setting up makeshift dwellings and encampments. They plan to stay through the winter. But the next day the police told them to leave. The men harnessed up and drove a kilometre further along the road, hoping to be left alone. Officers returned in the morning and compelled the families to leave the district.

While Bulgarian has made a determined effort to raise the living standards and educational opportunities of the country's large Romani minority, the Government and Party have been equally firm in denying Roma the right to preserve their own identity and culture through formation of socio-political organizations. Although there is some variation in the official stance, for the past few years no association has been permitted, and only a few local music ensembles exist at the present time.

As a result of government efforts, the number of nomadic Roma has gradually declined. At least 20,000 families have received plots of land and low-interest loans to build their own houses. Numerous settlements have been created on collective farms, some of which are now run by Roma. One such, with the Romani name Angle (Forward), is located on 550 hectares at Lesnov, near Sofia.

Some 145 residential schools have been established for the children of nomadic families, and more than 10,000 are currently attending. But this system of education has caused friction because it involves the separation of children from their parents for long periods. It is part of the overall policy aimed at assimilation. For years Muslim Roma have been required to take Bulgarian names and in other ways abandon their ethnic identity. The situation of Muslim Roma became more serious in 1984 during the crackdown on the Turkish minority.

Despite the negative aspects of central policy, the large settled communities, such as the 45,000 Roma in Sliven, and the quarters in Sofia, Varna and Plovdiv, remain strongholds of Romani social life. Such restrictions as limiting traditional weddings to one day instead of three have hardly diminished the exuberance of these communal events. In practice, assimilation policies have had little or no impact. Far more hurtful to self-esteem is the continued small-scale discrimination suffered by parents and children alike in their daily contact with Bulgarians. Public notices have been displayed at some railway stations warning against 'Gypsy pick pockets', and nomadic Roma are regularly refused entrance to cafes and restaurants.

To conclude, it is clear that forced assimilation will never work. Yet the Bulgarian authorities appear unwilling to adopt a more enlightened approach to the national minority issue. Roma express resentment at their lack of recognition and watch with envy events in neighbouring Yugoslavia. They can listen in to Romani language broadcasts from both Belgrade and Nis, while waiting for better times.
had nationality (narodnost) status on an equal footing constitutionally not only with such other national minorities as the Turks and Hungarians but also with Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Although it is obvious Roma do not yet enjoy the cultural, political or economic positions which would place them on a par with other sections of the population, they are making progress. The mass media have long since dropped the word cigen and replaced it with Roma. Some 20% of the population have placed themselves on the ‘positive discrimination’, i.e. programmes against illiteracy, for housing construction and job training. His call for recognition of Roma as a nationality and the introduction of Roma into schools has been heeded, but much more needs to be done to enable Roma to catch up.

That the opportunity for collective advancement provides a strong, and as some would say, necessary, inducement towards self-help is seen on a small scale in Suto Orizari. This Roma town of 35,000, with its own elected council and M.P., has half-seriously been called ‘the Roma state’. It has been tackling acute difficulties, especially since the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party lent importance to local initiative. Families whose homes were destroyed by the great earthquake of 1963 have with their own hands—helped by loans from the Skopje City Council—built 4,500 new houses. Street committees have laid out recreation areas and planted trees and gardens unknown in the old, crowded quarter of Topana. The town enjoys a higher standard of living than many Macedonian villages. Two thousand men and women had jobs with state and municipal enterprises, and almost as many were self-employed artisans, traders and private carriers. But a large proportion of the employed are young people. Although a second primary school opened in 1971, results and attendance are below average. As well as gaining civic improvements, such as the tarmacing of 120 streets, and the extension of light, Suto Orizari activists have founded literary and photographic groups, football and boxing clubs. The song and dance ensemble Prolalje (Brotherhood) has been established for over thirty years, while the Theatre Roma has won prizes in Yugoslavia’s youth drama festivals. In October 1974, the town received a visit by the Indian Ambassador Mr. P.N. Menon and his wife. He remarked during his stay, ‘visiting Suto Orizari is like seeing a fragment of India. You are indeed our distant cousins’.

CONCLUSION

The history of the Romani people is a story of relentless persecution. From the Middle Ages to the present day, they have been the target of racial discrimination and outright genocide. Fragmented and scattered throughout the globe since their departure from North India a thousand years ago, Roma have been unable to defend themselves. Instead they have relied for their collective survival on avoiding confrontation and keeping a low profile. However, through a long period of separation, most Rom communities have held on to the Romani language, customs and traditions. Some have even maintained an independent judicial system, known as the kris. Moreover, they have supported each other through the extended family and the clan. In this way, Roma have stayed behind their own barriers, until this century shaming conventional politics and outside influence. The devastating impact of the Nazi Holocaust showed them how vulnerable they were as a despised minority in a ruthless modern state. At the same time, the national movements of other depressed smaller nationalities, even during the pre-war years, awakened a response among Roma. Later, the civil rights campaigning by Blacks in the United States provided a model for Western European Roma, while in Eastern Europe a generation was growing up with socialist ideals of equality. Hence the emergence of the Rom emancipation movement.

At first efforts of the movement were tentative and unformulated, the response of harassed nomadic groups to constant ill-treatment and the desire of educated Roma for recognition and status. Beginning in 1971, the various strands and tendencies were brought together in the World Romani Congress. Today, with the 4th Congress planned, the international movement is led by Roma who hope they can obtain a fair deal for their people. But their outlook has been shaped by the often cruel and bloody past and the
frustrations of contemporary times. For several decades Roma have been seen as either a folklore phenomenon soon to disappear or a social problem which needed attention from welfare agencies. Only recently have governments and international bodies begun to consult with the Rom representatives. This dialogue is a new factor in the destiny of the Romani people. Already the process has produced a UN Sub-Commission's resolution and a body of recommendations by the EEC. It has moved the West German Government to recognize the crime of genocide committed by the Nazis. Moreover, it has seen Roma welcomed in New Delhi as 'the lost children of India'. This, in turn, has caused a change in attitude in some parts of Eastern Europe. Though Rom political activity has as yet barely improved the lot of those on the road and the millions dwelling in poor ghettos, it represents a start likely to prove unstoppable.

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ROMANI POPULATION IN EUROPE 1986

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>% of Roma in Country Pop.</th>
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<tr>
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<td>760,000</td>
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Total: 5,991,000 813,893,000 0.74

Other
Romani Institute, 61 Blenheim Crescent, London W11, has much unpublished archive material.
Romanestan Publications, Dr. Thomas Acton, 82 Evesham Road, London E15, stocks and sells a wide range of publications relating to Roma and other Travellers.

MRG Material
MINORITIES: WHO DO THEY THINK THEY THINK THEY ARE? in slide, tape or video form, designed mainly for lower secondary school students, shows three groups, including Travellers in the UK.
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PROFILE ON PREJUDICE, by Lynne Gerlach and Nikki van der Gaag, consists of a Teacher's Handbook and Factsheets ('Profiles') for students. From MRG, cost £4.95 plus £0.65p P & P/US$9.95 plus US$1.50 P & P.
TEACHING ABOUT TRAVELLERS, by Lynne Gerlach and Stella Hillier. Designed for use in primary and secondary schools this pack contains teacher's background information, activities for students and 20 large photographs for use in the classroom. Publication date Summer 1987. Price £5.95 plus £0.65p P & P/US$11.95 plus US$2.95 P & P.

Based on available census figures and previous estimates (taking into account high birth rate) and including associated sedentary and nomadic groups:
OPRE ROMA

Gelem, gelem, lungone dromensa
Maladilem baktale Romensa
A Romale katar tumen aven
E tsarenza baktale dromensa
A Romale, a chavale
Vi man sas bari familija
Mudardas la e kali legija
Aven mansa sa lunniake Roma
Kai putaile e Roman droma
Ake viama, ushti Rom akana
Amen hutasa mishto kai akana
A Romale, a chavale

ROMA ARISE

I've travelled, travelled long roads
Meeting with happy Roma
Roma from where have you come
With tents set on fortune's road
Romanies, o fellow Roma
Once I had a great family
The Black Legion murdered them
Come with me, all the world's Roma
For the Romani roads have opened
Now's the time, rise up Roma,
We shall now rise high
Romanies, o fellow Roma

- Anthem of the World Romani Congress
(Composed by Jarko Jovanovic to a traditional melody)
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