

## **HISTORY OF ROMA IN HUNGARY**

### **Arrival of Roma in Hungary**

We do not know exactly when Roma arrived in Hungary. In recent decades the historical literature has identified the earliest source relating to Roma as a document dating from 1416: the municipal accounts book [*városi számadáskönyv*] of Brassó mentions a donation of food to Mr. Emmaus, an Egyptian, and his fellows. This Egyptian, Mr. Emmaus, and his fellows were evidently Roma, because at the time Roma were known as Egyptians.

Viorel Achim draws attention to an even older (pre-1416) document in his book *Cigányok a román történelemben* [Roma in Romanian History], published in Romanian in 1998 and in Hungarian in 2001.

According to the document in question—which was issued by Mircea Cel Bătrân, the ruler of Wallachia—a boyar by the name of Costea owned the villages of Alsóvíst, Felsővíst and half of Alsóárpád in the Fogaras region of Transylvania, as well as 17 wandering Roma. A Latin version of this document, dating from 1511, has been preserved, rather than the original Slav text which must have been compiled between 1390 and 1406 when Mircea Cel Bătrân was a vassal of the King of Hungary and the Fogaras region was his fiefdom. The document indicates that Roma were already present in Transylvania around 1400.

Roma arrived in the Balkan countries in the mid-14th century, moving on to Wallachia, where they are first mentioned in 1385. From Wallachia they migrated to Transylvania. In later centuries too, Roma came from the Romanian principalities to Transylvania and Hungary. The other main route led across Serbia to Hungary.

In a study published in 1974, József Vekerdi noted that Roma “probably came to Hungary sporadically somewhat before this time.”<sup>1</sup> He cites surnames and place names resembling the word *cigány* as evidence of this. The presence of Roma in Hungary in the 14th century was supported by Barna Mezey in a study published in 1986 and by Péter Tóth in an article published in 1994. Both researchers drew heavily on earlier publications by Tivadar Lehoczky and Béla Szalay.

In 1998, based on research by Katalin Fehértói, Pál Nagy argued that the village name *Zygan* and the personal names *Cigan*, *Cygan*, and *Chygan* bear no relation to the Roma [*cigány*] ethnic group. Still, Nagy could only surmise about the origins of these names. Though it fails to prove the argument, his work nevertheless offers strong evidence that Roma did not inhabit the village of *Zygan* in the 14th century and that people with the name of *Cigan* were not Roma.

Roma arrived in western Europe in the early 15th century. According to a book by Angus Fraser, published in 1995, Roma were seen in Hildesheim in Lower Saxony in 1407, in Basel and Hessen in 1414, and in Meissen and Bohemia in 1416. They were spotted once again in Hildesheim in 1417. In the same year, in Lindau, they received a letter of safe-conduct from Sigismund, Holy Roman Emperor and King of Hungary and Bohemia. Roma were reportedly seen in Lüneberg, Hamburg, Lübeck, Wismar, Rostock, Stralsund, and Greifswald in 1417, in Frankfurt am Main, Strasbourg, Colmar, Zurich, Basel, Solothurn, Bern, and Augsburg in 1418, in Châtillon (Savoy), St. Laurent, and Sisteron (Provence) in 1419, and in Brussels, Deventer, and Bruges in 1420. In all—or almost all—of these imprecise locations, Roma presented the letter of safe conduct received from Emperor Sigismund in Lindau—a document which Miklós Tomka surmised and Pál Nagy proved to be a forgery produced or purchased by Roma. Not even a copy of this document has survived, but Hermann Cornerus’ chronicle,

written in about 1435, does mention it. Nevertheless, a copy of another letter of safe conduct, also attributed to Sigismund and dating from 1422 or 1423, has survived. This second letter was shown by Pál Nagy to be a forgery. The accounts of the chroniclers tell how Roma peddlers bearing letters of safe conduct received provisions and donations, but it is difficult to know whether to give much credence to such accounts.

Persecution of Roma evidently began very early on. They were accused by the Holy Roman Empire of being spies. Miklós Tomka states that they were expelled from Germany by the imperial diet [*Reichstag*] as early as 1479. However, according to H.M.G. Grellmann, the first expulsion order was issued by the imperial diets held in Lindau in 1496 and in 1497. The order was reiterated at Freiburg in 1498, at Augsburg in 1500, 1544, 1548 and 1551, as well as on later occasions. But both Grellmann and Tomka state that in general the anti-Roma laws could never be implemented.

The example of Spain is even more illuminating. As Grellmann notes:

In 1492, the King of Spain ordered the expulsion of the Roma. But instead of making their way towards the country's borders, Roma took refuge in remote places, and before long they could be seen all over the place once again. Emperor Charles V hounded them, as did Philip II too. But they managed to re-trench themselves in Spain and have lived there peacefully until the most recent times.<sup>2</sup>

In his book, Grellmann surveyed each of the European countries for legislation requiring the expulsion of Roma. He established that in all European countries—with the exception of Hungary, Transylvania and Russia—such legislation was adopted, but that nowhere was it effective.

“While it is true that only a few Roma were punished by all this, nevertheless it added to their feelings of exclusion,”<sup>3</sup> wrote Miklós Tomka.

Barna Mezey was of a similar view: “The states of western Europe, while never able to expel or (and this is no exaggeration) annihilate the nomadic Roma communities, did succeed in drastically limiting their numbers through their measures.”<sup>4</sup>

The words of Angus Fraser are even more poignant: “Had all the anti-Gypsy laws which sprang up been enforced uncompromisingly, even for a few months, the Gypsies would have been eradicated from most of Christian Europe well before the middle of the 16th century. This did not happen. The saving feature, as has emerged repeatedly, was that even the most rigorous penal laws were often not carried into effect, perhaps owing to silent opposition on the part of some of the population, or venality among minor officials, and certainly on account of the defective organization of such police forces as existed.”<sup>5</sup>

Historical developments in the 15th and 16th centuries perhaps explain why the national assemblies (or diets) of Hungary and Transylvania, in stark contrast to those of the other European countries, never passed laws against Roma. The greatest problem facing the region at the time was the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. The need to defend against the attacks and destruction wrought by the Turks determined everything—even the policies of rulers, diets and cities towards Roma.

In 1474, during the reign of Matthias, the Turkish pasha of Szendrő attacked and burned down the town of Váradi. In the same year, Turkish troops advanced as far as the River Fekete Körös and overran Moldavia. In 1476, Ottoman incursions led the town of Nagyszeben to employ Roma with the task of strengthening the municipal fortifications. Eleven years later, in 1487, King Matthias promised in writing to protect the freedoms of the Roma of Szeben. According to this document, which was addressed to István

Báthori, voivode of Transylvania,

the Roma, that is, Egyptians, living in the seat of Szeben—who are required to undertake certain tasks for the defense of the town—have enjoyed, for some years now, the privilege that none of the voivodes, or deputy voivodes, of these parts, nor their *familiaris*, should be permitted to bother the Roma or extract tax or other payments from them: thus, seeking to preserve the Roma in their old rights and privileges (...) we hereby order and command that you at all times refrain from pestering, inciting or burdening the aforementioned Roma, that is, the Egyptians, and from extracting taxes or other dues from them (...).<sup>6</sup>

Roma were employed not just on the fortifications but also in the manufacture and repair of arms. Evidence of this is provided by a *salvus conductusa* issued by King Ulászló II in 1496 to the voivode Tamás Bolgár and his entourage. The document distinguishes Tamás Bolgár and his party of 25 wandering Roma from other groups of Roma travelling with other voivodes. Boglár's group are ordered to make rifle bullets and other war tools in the service of Sigismund, bishop of Pécs.

From the early 16th century, the Roma population grew steadily in Hungary and particularly in Transylvania. After the Battle of Mohács, the country was divided into three parts. Most of the 16th-century sources indicating a Roma presence relate to the towns of Nagyszeben, Brassó and Kolozsvár in Transylvania, the eastern part of the divided country. In 1502, King Ulászló II addressed a document to Péter Szentgyörgyi, *országbíró* and voivode of Transylvania, offering four wandering Roma in the service of Kolozsvár protection as well as freedoms similar to those received by the Roma of Szeben. The document was subsequently reaffirmed by both Ferenc Kende and István Dobó, voivode of Transylvania. Meanwhile the document issued by King Matthias in 1487 was

reaffirmed in 1583 by Zsigmond Báthory, prince of Transylvania.

According to Brassó's municipal tax records dating from the 16th century, Roma performed several tasks in the city, such as repairing the city's gates and bridges, manufacturing arms and cannons, keeping the streets clean, sweeping the market, and clearing the sewers. Roma also functioned as gravediggers, dogcatchers, and executioners in Brassó.

Major fields of employment were the manufacture of iron tools, horseshoes and nails as well as locksmithery and blacksmithery. And some Roma were goldwashers.

Roma were mentioned in the municipal tax records of Brassó, Szeben, Kolozsvár and other towns because they paid taxes. The tax records even tell us how much tax they paid.

The Transylvanian diets also ordered the taxation of Roma. For instance, a diet convening between September 29 and October 4, 1558, decreed as follows: "The tax on Roma is 1 forint per head. They should not be subject to irregular burdens by means of their voivodes."<sup>7</sup> According to a resolution passed by the Enyed diet of March 10–15, 1560, the "taxation of Roma has been regulated: all Roma with tents should pay the sum of 50 *dinars* biannually on the days of St. George and St. Michael."<sup>8</sup>

There was clearly a demand for Roma labor—for both military and peaceful purposes. Demand for their labor meant that Roma themselves were in demand. Still, the towns and voivodes required not just the labor of Roma but also their taxes. Indeed, there were squabbles about who should receive the taxes payable by Roma and who should benefit from their labor. This was so not just in Szeben and Kolozsvár, but also in other places, such as Dés.

In 1552, Ferdinand I issued a document concerning the Roma of Dés, addressed to András Báthori, voivode of Transylvania:

... As the followers of our Royal Highness, the wise and prudent judge and jury of our town of Dés, as well as its citizens and residents, have described, our citizens dispose of ten tents

of Roma, who have been serving our chamber in Dés since ancient times and, as a result of the approval and consent of the king of Hungary, have been able to freely traverse all counties of Hungary, and everywhere they have enjoyed exemption from regular and irregular public dues, whom, however, the formerly decent Fráter György, bishop of Várad, tormented with the collection of stiff taxes and services that were not due to him, resettling the Roma from the town of Dés to Újváros...<sup>9</sup>

The document then ordered the return of the Roma to the town of Dés and the restoration of their “ancient” freedoms as well as their exemption from taxation. Queen Isabella issued a document of similar content in 1557.

In the late 15th century and early 16th century, strengthening fortifications and manufacturing weapons were not the only forms of employment practiced by Roma, for some of them were musicians: “Apart from their metal-working skills, the Gypsies were acquiring a reputation as musicians in Hungary,” writes Angus Fraser.<sup>10</sup>

His assertion was based on five pieces of data. The first dates from 1489. According to the accounts book of Hyppolit, archbishop of Esztergom, funds were granted to Roma who played the lute on Queen Beatrix’s island (Csepel Island). “We do not know the exact number of Roma,” wrote Bálint Sárosi, “nor exactly what was meant by the word ‘lute’ (it could have been a tambura or even a cimbalom). We don’t even know what kind of Roma they were (Turkish Roma musicians, who perhaps did not speak Hungarian ... ).”<sup>11</sup>

The second piece of data stems from the accounts book of Lajos II. On May 3, 1525 the sum of two silvers was paid to the *pharaunes*, who played the cythara in front of the queen at the royal horse races. According to Bálint Sárosi, the word “cythara” may have meant a violin or another plectrum string instrument, such as

a tambura or cimbalom, but it could not have been a zither at this stage.

The third piece of data concerns the appearance of Roma at the Hatvan diet in 1525. According to Archduke Joseph and Henrik Wlislöcki the “Roma ordered to appear” were musicians: “With their music, they soon conquered the sympathy of the nation, so that at the Hatvan diet of 1525 Roma musicians were officially invited.”<sup>12</sup> Since the original text mentions merely Roma rather than Roma musicians, Bálint Sárosi disputed that the Roma invited to the diet were necessarily musicians.

The fourth piece of data is a request for Roma violinists (*cytharedos chyganos*) made in 1532 by Pál Bakyth, chief captain of the Hussars, to Tamás Nádasdy. As Bálint Sárosi concluded, the *cytherados* may have been violinists, luteplayers or minstrels.

The fifth piece of data concerns a letter sent to Vienna in 1543 by someone at the court of Queen Isabella. The letter states the following: “The most excellent violinists from Egypt, the progeny of the pharaohs, are playing here.” On their instrument (the cimbalom), “they do not pluck the strings with their fingers, but hit them with a wooden stick, and they sing along in full throat.”<sup>13</sup>

The above data are cited by Fraser and are also to be found in Bálint Sárosi’s book entitled *Cigányzene* [“Gypsy” Music]. Fraser does not refer to any additional data, whereas Sárosi mentions several other items and his conclusion is very different from Fraser’s:

“The data listed do not in any way verify the hypothesis that a relatively large number of Roma musicians settled in Hungary as early as the 16th century.”<sup>14</sup>

Although few written documents dating from the 16th century—or even from the 17th century—refer to Roma musicians, one should also note that few contemporary documents make any mention of Roma at all. The scarcity of documents and, more importantly, the dearth of documentary references to families and individuals, indicate that the number of Roma in Hungary in the 16th century was small. They were not particularly numerous in



Transylvania and were even more uncommon in the middle part of the country controlled by the Ottomans.

We have already noted how King Ulászló II sent the voivode Tamás Bolgár and 25 wandering Roma to Pécs. It would seem certain that the Ottoman advance resulted in the appearance of small numbers of Roma throughout the southern counties in the late 15th century and early 16th century. From the 1540s onwards, Turkish sources refer to Roma

who served the Muslim armed forces and public administration as musicians, blacksmiths, firemasters, bullet casters, nailsmiths, swordsmiths, gunpowder producers, weapon polishers, hangmen, surgeons, soldiers, and guides, or who worked for Muslim military-civil municipalities in the occupied zone—municipalities that increasingly resembled “the Balkans.” At Haram Castle, for example, 15 Roma musicians and 6 Roma blacksmiths were living in 1540. Since they were in the Treasury’s service, they were exempted from paying taxes.<sup>15</sup>

The elaboration of Ottoman sources has shown that, in the Turkish-occupied zone of Hungary, Roma were relatively numerous in five Sultanic municipalities—Tolna, Pécs, Ráckeve, Esztergom and Buda. But Roma also lived in Szeged, Kecskemét and elsewhere. “In Buda and in other parts, whole urban quarters were taken over by Roma in the 16<sup>th</sup> century,”<sup>16</sup> wrote Sándor Takács. Following in Takács’s footsteps, László Mészáros wrote the following: “According to the defters, most tax-paying Roma lived in Buda, where they inhabited a separate ‘Roma town’.”<sup>17</sup>

Other authors too mention a Roma ‘town’ in Buda. Still, given the number of Roma inhabitants, it does not seem justified to speak of a town. Fifty-six Roma families were listed in 1546, rising to 62 families in 1559 and 90 families in 1580.

According to Mészáros, the Buda census of 1546 indicates that

71 per cent of Roma heads of household still used Greek Orthodox names, while 29 per cent were already Muslim. However, the figure of 71 per cent derives from 32 Greek Orthodox families and the figure of 29 per cent from 13 Muslim families. Based on such small numbers, it would be foolish to draw far-reaching conclusions.

It was only considerably later that Roma reached Royal Hungary, i.e. the northern and western parts of the country. And they seem to have been in even smaller numbers than in Turkish-occupied Hungary. Several letters are the only documentary evidence of their presence to have survived from the 16th century.

### **Roma, Landlords, and Counties**

By the late 16th century or the early 17th century, Roma had nevertheless reached all parts of Hungary. Evidence of this is a letter of recommendation issued to Voivode Gáspár and his people by Péter Révai Túróc, county lord lieutenant, in 1608:

The birds of the heavens have their nests, the foxes have their dens, the wolves have their hiding places, indeed all the animal species know where their home is, apart from this poor Egyptian nation that people call gypsydom—nobody can be sure why, but people go on about this everywhere. Perhaps because of the brutal tyranny of the pharaoh or perhaps because the gods so destined, they live their usually sorrowful lives according to ancient tradition in tents made of rags, which they erect in the fields and meadows outside cities; and the old, young, children and infants of the clan have thus learnt how to put up with the rain, the freezing cold and the sweltering heat outside the walls of a house, to do without any birthright in this world, not to enter towns, castles, and market-towns, not to fall under royal patronage, but instead, moving back and forth between their uncertain settlements, knowing nothing of economy, having no kind of ambition, and just liv-

ing from one day to the next and from one hour to the next, they earn their food and clothing by the work of their two hands under God's free sky. Therefore, believing that this clan is worthy of pity, I request you, each one of you, and I enjoin my kindred, that if ever a group of this Egyptian clan—especially the holder of this letter, Voivode Gáspár, together with the Roma who are subordinate to him and strive under his leadership, including their children, families and chattels—should come to your lands, your holdings and your estates, that you please or, in the case of my kindred, you shall, give them permission to settle in your lower towns, on your meadows and lands, to put up their tents, to bravely practice their smithery, and that you protect them from all people that may wish to harm them.<sup>18</sup>

A letter of safe conduct issued by Palatine György Thurzó to Voivode Ferenc and his party of Roma in 1616 is almost identical in wording. Indeed, there is just one small difference between the two letters. When describing the employment of Roma, the letter written by György Thurzó does not mention blacksmithery, but states: “They strive with their own hands, anvil, bellows, hammer, and pliers for morsels to eat and clothes to wear.”<sup>19</sup> Fraser notes the following: “The document was written in fine Latin, and in the opening sentences—clearly, not by accident—it cites a verse from the scriptures (Matthew 8:20).”<sup>20</sup>

It is the subtle beauty and humanity of these letters of recommendation and safe conduct that distinguish them from other contemporary documents mentioning Roma. A further distinctive feature is that they concern the destitute wandering Roma living outside the towns. Other notables also issued documents protecting Roma in the 17th century: for instance, Palatine Miklós Esterházy in 1630, Prince of Transylvania Rákóczi György I in 1643, and György Hononnay Drugeth, lord lieutenant of Ung County, in

1661.

Citing research by Kálmán Thaly, Pál Nagy gave an account of the relationship between the Esterházy family and Roma. Nagy's account includes the following passage: "János and Ferenc Esterházy provided Roma with legal protection as well as the right to freely pursue their crafts. They also granted them letters of safe conduct, so that the Roma could move freely from one Esterházy estate to the other without let or hindrance from the civilian or military authorities at tax and customs offices, bridges or ferries. In the documents, János and Ferenc identified the main Roma trades as smithery and barter-trading, adding, in 1723, other trades that were wholesome. Essentially, the Esterházy family were acknowledging that free movement would enable Roma to provide artisan services in villages on the family's estates, which would provide them with a living."<sup>21</sup>

The documents issued by palatines, princes, lord lieutenants and feudal lords demonstrate that by the early 17th century Hungary's Roma population had grown significantly as a result of immigration and that this increase was to continue throughout the century. The documents also demonstrate a demand for Roma handicrafts, in particularly smithery, on the estates and in the villages. The feudal lords and dignitaries paid Roma for their smithery and other work, and they also provided them with protection. It is furthermore apparent that like their French and Spanish counterparts Hungarian aristocrats were generally sympathetic to Roma. The documents also contain much evidence concerning the poverty of the Roma. Although Roma were paid for their work, it seems the amounts they received were inadequate.

In 1683 the *Ungarischer Simplicissimus* reported on the growth of the Roma population. "Roma are by nature inclined towards music; almost every Hungarian noble has a Roma violinist or locksmith."<sup>22</sup> To claim that almost every noble had a violinist was clearly an exaggeration: Hungary's population at the end of the

17th century was probably between 3.5 and 4 million, and one in twenty men was a noble. But there could not have been more than several hundred Roma musicians living in the country at the time. Indeed, the total Roma population could not have been much greater than 20,000.

Written sources from the 17th century do not just mention Roma blacksmiths, Roma musicians and the nobles who offered them protection. In 1624, Szepes County determined upon the expulsion of Roma from the towns and villages of the county. The justification for such action was that Roma,

an Egyptian clan, which, due to its otherwise pitiful life of destitution and vagrancy, and having adopted the habits of vagabonds and armed itself like a group of bandits... forces the poor people to make payments, and what is particularly worthy of contempt, it steals the horses of the poor people, taking them across to neighboring Poland.<sup>23</sup>

In 1660, Nyitra County resolved to expel Roma from the county.

A patent issued by Governor Ferenc Nádasdy in 1670 reveals that expulsion orders were announced in the counties of Somogy, Vas and Zala. In the end, however, no attempt was made to implement these statutes. In the 17th century, only a very few Roma appear to have settled in these counties. Even today, few Roma live in the counties of Nyitra, Szepes and Vas.

One should note that until the Ottomans were forced out of Hungary, the country was wracked by conflict—between Turks and Hungarians, Transylvanians and supporters of Royal Hungary, Catholics and Protestants, itinerants and the sedentary population. And the conflicts resumed at the time of the Rákóczi war of liberation.

## **Reconstruction and Immigration**

From 1711 the destitute country began the process of regeneration and reconstruction. As part of the reconstruction effort, the Habsburg rulers—Charles III and Maria Theresa—settled Germans, Serbs and Romanians in depopulated areas of the country. In addition to such officially sponsored immigration, there was also a spontaneous flow of people to vacant or semi-vacant areas around the country. Some of the new immigrants were Roma. Indeed, Roma immigration continued throughout the 16th and 17th centuries and became even more significant in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Between 1784 and 1787 a census was held in Hungary and Transylvania by order of Joseph II.

According to the census, the population of Hungary, less Transylvania, was 6.5 million. Transylvania had a population of 1.5 million, while Croatia's population numbered 340,000. Together with the military districts comprising the Banat region as well as military personnel on active service, the country's population was 9,300,000.

In Hungary (excluding Transylvania) the census recorded 43,772 Roma in 1782. Roma thus accounted for 0.67 per cent of the country's total population. In Transylvania, 3762 sedentary Roma families and 3849 nomad Roma families, that is, in total 7718 Roma families, were recorded in the census of 1772. If we suppose that five individuals were living in each family, this would mean a Roma population of 38,590. Given that there were in total 302,896 families in Transylvanian, the Roma population in the principality comprised 2.55 per cent of the total population. In the Banat region, 8072 Roma persons were counted in 1780. The total population of the region was 450,000. Thus 1.6 per cent of the region's population was Roma. Combining the three parts of the country, Hungary's Roma population must have been approximately 90,000 in 1780. This was 1 per cent of Hungary's total population.

Similarly to the situation in the 15th and 16th centuries, the

main immigration route ran from Wallachia and Moldavia to Transylvania, and from Transylvania to the central, northern and western counties of the nation. The second route of immigration ran from Serbia to the southern parts of Hungary. In the late 18th century, just over half of the country's Roma population resided in Transylvania and the Banat region. These were the areas to which the new immigrants were coming. Meanwhile, few Roma resided in the western counties bordering Austria or in the northern counties bordering Poland.

The Roma immigrants were Romani native speakers; they learnt Hungarian after their arrival in the country. Within several generations, their linguistic assimilation was complete and they no longer spoke Romani. Some smaller groups, however, preserved their knowledge of the language. In the counties of Nógrád and Baranya and in the Pilis hills, some Roma continue to speak Romani (the Carpathian dialect) as well as Hungarian. And in Szabolcs County and in the Szatmár region, some Roma still speak the Gurvari dialect of Romani. Transdanubia is home to Sinti and to Vend Roma—who are also known as “knife-grinding” Roma.

### **“Enlightened” Absolutism**

During the reign of Maria Theresa and of her son, Joseph II, censuses were carried out and records of the Roma population made. The underlying idea sought to count, record and monitor everything and everyone, to classify the population and subordinate it to the purposes of the state, to settle all unsettled issues, and to regulate anything that was still unregulated.

It was this approach that gave rise to Maria Theresa's Roma decrees. Under the decree issued in 1753, the estates were obliged to designate areas under their ownership for the permanent settlement of Roma. In such areas, they were obliged to assist Roma in building accommodation; the estates were also to provide agricul-

tural land, to support Roma in practicing their artisan trades, and to secure them access to guild membership. The decree prohibited Roma from moving from one place to another and from traveling; and it prohibited the authorities from issuing passports to Roma. Roma were also prohibited from begging. The decree placed the Roma voivodes and the general Roma population under the jurisdiction of the village magistrates. It prohibited Roma from keeping horses. It ordered Roma to wear normal clothing wherever they were living. The decree of 1761 prescribed that Roma were in future to be called “new Hungarians” or “new peasants” and that use of the word *cigány* should be discontinued. Indeed, people who used the word *cigány* were to be fined. The decree issued in 1762 prescribed military service for young Roma males aged over 16. The decree of 1772 prohibited Roma from speaking Romani. It also prohibited Roma from marrying among themselves. It ordered that Roma children should be removed from their families at the age of four and placed with peasants. The counties were to pay maintenance payments to the foster parents of Roma children.

After the death of Maria Theresa, Joseph II issued a decree in 1783 that served to reiterate and summarize the previous provisions. Thereafter, however, Joseph II ignored the Roma issue.

Maria Theresa’s decrees were clearly impossible to implement. Landowners were reluctant to grant land to Roma, and guilds had no wish to accept Roma artisans as their members. The county diets appeared to support the imperial and royal decrees, passing them on to the district administrators. In reality, however, the diets had no interest in verifying implementation of the decrees or in providing the funding necessary for their implementation. Time and again, the royal court issued new commands to the governing councils, demanding they give account of the results. The governing councils then demanded the same of the counties, while the counties adopted resolutions but never verified their implementation. The only real efforts were made in counties bordering Austria,



close to the royal court in Vienna.

In 1783, a new census recorded 30,241 Roma persons—13,531 persons less than in 1782. The difference stemmed from the reclassification of some Roma as new Hungarians; they no longer counted as Roma.

On April 10, 1787, the governing council informed the counties that Roma were no longer on the agenda and that the Department for Roma Affairs had been abolished. It told them to stop providing for Roma children out of their own funds. Thereafter the governing council ignored the Roma issue, as did also the diets of the 19th century.

### **The Triumph of “Gypsy” Music**

The decrees of Maria Theresa and Joseph II prohibited the Roma from making music, thereby acknowledging the significance of the change in the Roma lifestyle that began to take place as the decrees were being drafted. The census of 1782 recorded 1582 Roma musicians and 5886 Roma blacksmiths, but in subsequent years the number of Roma musicians rose rapidly.

Roma musicians had been living in Hungary since the late 15th century. At first, there were only a few of them, but their numbers grew steadily. Still, “gypsy” bands and “gypsy” orchestras did not begin to form until the 18th century. The first gypsy band was founded by Panna Czinka. It had four members: first violin [*prímás*], second violin [*kontrás*], bass, and cimbalom. János Lányi, a landowner in Gömör, had taught Panna Czinka music; the orchestra was in Lányi’s service. By the end of the century, a whole series of “gypsy” orchestras had been established. In the initial periods, they were founded by landowners for their own entertainment. Nonetheless, landowners were usually quite willing to support public performances, and they took their orchestras along with them to the national diets.

Bálint Sárosi offers a thorough analysis of developments in the

era—which saw the ascendancy of “gypsy” music. Such music should not be regarded as Roma music, but as music performed by so-called gypsy musicians, who usually play the works of Hungarian and Roma composers and whose style is acknowledge and respected the world over as “gypsy” music. Sárosi wrote:

In the early 19th century, the best Roma musicians, led by János Bihari (1764–1827), won general acclaim; the public saw them as the representatives of [Hungarian] national music, welded to the Hungarian national movement.<sup>24</sup>

Sárosi then noted that Bihari was the most popular of contemporary musicians because he knew more than anyone else about Hungarian musical traditions and was the most effective player of the tunes that conjured up the spirit of the wars of liberation.

Roma “gypsy” musicians also accompanied their masters into the war of independence of 1848. After the Hungarian defeat, it was time for plaintive merriment [*sírva vigadás*]; and Roma musicians were in greater demand than ever before.

### **Roma Population Growth in the 19th Century**

According to the census of 1850, the permanent population of Hungary was 12,946,000 while the resident population was 13,192,000. By 1857, the permanent population had risen to 13,668,000 and the resident population to 13,769,000. Meanwhile, the Roma population in 1850 was 140,000—1 per cent of Hungary’s total population. In 1857 the number of Roma with permanent residence in the country was about 143,000, or 1 per cent of the total population. Between 1784 and 1857, Hungary’s total population grew by 47 per cent, while between 1782 and 1857 the Roma population grew by 58 per cent. Immigration accounts for some of the population growth among both the general population and the Roma population. Nevertheless, immigration was clearly a more important fac-

tor among the Roma population.

According to the 1893 Roma census—one of the most important documents in the history of the Roma of Hungary, 280,000 Roma were living in the country on January 31, 1893. The number of Roma recorded in the census was 274,940. (This is the usually cited figure.) Still, Budapest, where perhaps more than 500 Roma were living, was not covered by the census. Moreover, “the census did not find sedentary Roma” in several towns. The document also notes the following: “The census left out those who did not profess to be Roma... Adding in those who were missed, the number of Roma in Hungary may surely be put at approximately 280,000.”<sup>25</sup>

In the census report, Roma population figures were broken down by county. The Treaty of Trianon cut through the borders of Hungarian counties and districts and various subsequent changes have been made to Hungary’s administrative boundaries. These two factors mean that one may only make an approximate estimate of the size of the Roma population in the late 19th century in areas that today belong to Hungary. Our estimate is that about 65,000 Roma were living on territory that still forms part of Hungary. In 1893, 160,000 Roma were living on territory ceded to Romania after the First World War, about 40–42,000 on territory ceded to Czechoslovakia, and about 8–10,000 on territory ceded to Yugoslavia.

Of the 65,000 Roma living in areas that today belong to Hungary, 23,000 were living in Transdanubia, 18,000 in the region between the rivers Danube and Tisza (excluding Bács-Bodrog County, but including the municipality and district of Baja as well as Heves County), 10,000 in what is today the northern part of Hungary, including Borsod County as well as retained parts of the counties of Esztergom, Nógrád, Abaúj and Zemplén, and about 14,000 in what is today the eastern part of Hungary, including the counties of Békés, Hajdú and Szabolcs as well as the retained part of Szatmár County.

Minister of Interior Károly Hieronymi, who took up his post on November 19, 1892, in fact initiated the census. Several weeks

later, Hieronymi assigned the holding of the census to the Statistical Office. According to the preface of the census report, Hieronymi's aim was "to settle, at national level, the issue of vagrancy and also to sedentarize vagrant Roma." Nevertheless, the survey was not limited to nomadic Roma but also covered Roma who "had already fully assimilated into modern civil society and who no longer differed from the rest of the population in terms of lifestyle, livelihood, culture and traditions, disregarding some minor anthropological differences." The survey also noted housing conditions, family status, religious adherence, literacy, employment, livelihood, as well as native language and knowledge of other languages.

The head of the Statistical Office charged Antal Hermann—"an ethnologist known for his studies of Roma"—with elaborating the data collected during the census and with compiling a general report.

In several areas the findings were somewhat surprising. Indeed, the large number of Roma staggered Antal Hermann. He referred to the 1873 "Roma census" that had been carried out under a decree of the Minister of Interior. That census had recorded "on very indefinite grounds" 214,000 Roma. Hermann might also have cited earlier data.

In just 53 years the Roma population had doubled. Its share of the total population had risen from 1.16 per cent to 1.8 per cent. Yet, during this period, the natural increase rate could not have been much higher among Roma than it was among the general population. Proof of this is that, in 1890, children aged under 14 comprised 37 per cent of the Roma population and 36.6 per cent of the general population.

During the same period, the national population grew by 30 per cent but the Roma population by 100 per cent. This difference must be attributed to immigration, principally from Romania, a country with the highest percentage of Roma in Europe. The effects of immigration were apparent in regional differences in the size of

the Roma population. Whereas in Transdanubia and in the region between the rivers Danube and Tisza, the Roma share of the population was just 0.8 per cent, it was as much as 5 per cent in Transylvania. In what are currently the easternmost counties of Hungary, it was 1 per cent in Békés, 1.5 per cent in Hajdú, 1.8 per cent in Bihar, and 2.6 per cent in Szabolcs. The northwesterly direction of migration is apparent in the figures for Abaúj (2.4 per cent) and for Borsod-Zemplén (1.9 per cent).

The extent and direction of forward migration from Transylvania are perceivable in the figures. Thus, whereas during the 1850 census, 78,906 of 140,092 Roma (i.e. 53 per cent) were living in Transylvania, by 1893 it was 105,000 of 280,000 Roma (i.e. 37.5 per cent).

As we have seen, Roma migrated from the Romanian principalities to Transylvania and from there to Royal Hungary. The migration flows began as early as the 15th century and grew stronger in the second half of the 18th century and in the first half of the 19th century. Migration became even more significant in the second half of the 19th century.

One-third of the Roma recorded in the census of January 31, 1893 were either recent migrants or migrants (or their children) who had arrived in the country after 1850. An additional 50,000 Roma were descendants of people who had arrived in the country after 1809.

Accordingly, 38 per cent spoke Hungarian as their native language, 30 per cent spoke Romani, and 24 per cent spoke Beás (Romanian). Other native languages spoken by Roma in Hungary were Slovak, Serbian, German, Ruthenian, and Croatian. In terms of the spoken language, there were substantial regional differences.

In the region between the Danube and Tisza, Hungarian was the native language of 82 per cent, while 8 per cent spoke Romani and 8 per cent spoke Serbian. In Transdanubia, Hungarian was the

native language of 72 per cent, while 11 per cent spoke Romani, 8 per cent spoke Beás (Romanian), and 6 per cent spoke German. In what are today the eastern counties of Hungary, Hungarian was the native language of 89 per cent of Roma in Békés, 94 per cent in Hajdú, 98 per cent in Szabolcs, 70 per cent in Szatmár, and 45 per cent in Bihar; Romani was the native language of 12 per cent in Bihar and 17 per cent in Szatmár; and Beás (Romanian) was the native language of 29 per cent in Bihar and 13 per cent in Szatmár. In the northern counties, the Hungarian-speaking share of the Roma population was 76 per cent in Nógrád, 88 per cent in Borsod, 75 per cent in Abaúj, and 47 per cent in Zemplén; the Romani-speaking share of the Roma population was 16 per cent in Nógrád, 12 per cent in Abaúj, and 29 per cent in Zemplén. In these counties, the native language of some Roma was Slovak: 8 per cent in Nógrád, 11 per cent in Abaúj, and 22 per cent in Zemplén. In Borsod County, the native language of 10 per cent of Roma was Ruthenian.

As far as Hungary's current territory is concerned, in January 1893, Hungarian was the native language of 79.5 per cent of Roma, while 10 per cent spoke Romani, 4.5 per cent spoke Beás (Romanian), and 6 per cent spoke another language (Serbian, Slovak, German, Ruthenian, Croatian, etc.). One may observe substantial differences between pre-Trianon Hungary and the country's current territory, but the differences are even greater if one compares the Roma population living on territory that still belongs to Hungary with the Roma population living in Transylvania where Romani was the native language of 42 per cent and Romanian was the native language of 39 per cent; or with the Roma population living in the Tisza–Maros region where Hungarian was the native language of just 5 per cent.

The above is perhaps evidence that most of the Roma population living, in 1893, on territory that today still belongs to Hungary were descendants of earlier immigrants: their forebears had arrived

in the country neither after 1850 nor during the 50 preceding years but during even earlier periods. However, recent migrants were clearly predominant in areas where the native language of Roma was not Hungarian: for example, in Baranya County, where Hungarian was the native language of just 53 per cent of the Roma population and Beás and Vlach Roma had immigrated from the Slav regions to the south; or in Bács-Bodrog County, where migration flows from the south had added to the relative significance of the Romani-speaking Roma population (22.5 per cent), the Serbian-speaking Roma population (38.5 per cent) and the Beás-speaking Roma population (4 per cent), while reducing the Hungarian-speaking share to just 34 per cent.

### **Roma in the Late 19th Century**

#### *Roma Settlement Patterns and Housing Conditions*

As previously noted, at the end of the 18th century, 39,000 Roma were living in Hungary proper (Hungary without Transylvania and the Banat region) while 51,000 Roma were living in Transylvania and the Banat region. Thus, 43 per cent of the Roma population lived in Hungary proper and 57 per cent lived in Transylvania and the Banat region.

According to the 1850 census, 47,609 Roma—34 per cent of a total Roma population of 140,092—lived in Hungary proper, 12,121 (8.7 per cent) lived in the Banat region, 780,806 (56.3 per cent) lived in Transylvania, and 1660 (1.1 per cent) lived in Croatia-Slavonia.

According to the 1857 census, 46,040 Roma—32.2 per cent of a total Roma population of 143,150—lived in Hungary proper, 52,480 (57.6 per cent) lived in Transylvania, 12,950 (9 per cent) lived in the Banat region, and 1660 (1.2 per cent) lived in Croatia-Slavonia.

According to the Roma census of January 31, 1893, 20,905 Roma (7.61 per cent of a total Roma population of 272,776) lived in the 11 counties to the north of the Danube, 22,197 Roma (8.29 per cent) lived in the 11 counties of Transdanubia, and 22,328 (8.12 per cent) lived in the five counties between the Danube and Tisza. Overall, 24 per cent of the country's Roma population lived in these three regions. In each region, the Roma share of the population was below the national average: 1.12 per cent to the north of the Danube, 0.83 per cent in Transdanubia, and 0.81 per cent between the Danube and Tisza. The Roma population in the eight counties to the north of the Tisza (today, eastern Slovakia) was 30,076—or 10.94 per cent of the total Roma population. The Roma population in the seven counties to the south of the Tisza (the Great Plain region) was 36,336—or 13.21 per cent of the total Roma population. Overall, 24.15 per cent of the country's Roma population lived in these two regions. The Roma share of the total population was 1.98 per cent to the north of the Tisza and 1.76 per cent to the south of the Tisza. Meanwhile, the Tisza–Maros region had a Roma population of 35,300 (12.84 per cent of the country's Roma population) and Transylvania had a Roma population of 105,034 (38.20 per cent of the country's Roma population). These two latter regions together accounted for 51.04 per cent of the country's total Roma population.

*Table 1:*

**The Number of Roma and their Percentage of the County  
and Regional Populations**



**The Number of Roma and their Percentage of the County  
and Regional Populations (continuation)**

The effect of various administrative boundary changes in the

<b>Region</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Grow Vegetables</b>	<b>Keep Livestock</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Total</b>
Budapest agglom.	64.1	0.0	23.1	12.8	100.0
Eastern	45.4	18.5	9.3	26.9	100.0
Great Plain	52.5	5.0	22.5	20.0	100.0
Northern	39.5	16.4	10.7	33.3	100.0
Transdanubia	36.1	18.6	6.2	39.2	100.0
Western*	(0.0)	(100.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(100.0)
Total	42.9	15.9	11.4	29.8	100.0

latter half of the 19th century should be noted. For instance, Transylvania's administrative territory declined from 60,700 square

<b>Region</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>Grow Vegetables</b>	<b>Keep Livestock</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Total</b>
Budapest agglom.	64.1	0.0	23.1	12.8	100.0
Eastern	45.4	18.5	9.3	26.9	100.0
Great Plain	52.5	5.0	22.5	20.0	100.0
Northern	39.5	16.4	10.7	33.3	100.0
Transdanubia	36.1	18.6	6.2	39.2	100.0
Western*	(0.0)	(100.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(100.0)
Total	42.9	15.9	11.4	29.8	100.0

kilometers in 1850 to 57,804 square kilometers in 1876 and 1893. According to the 1850 census, 65 per cent of the country's Roma population lived in Transylvania or the Banat region. If the 1850 administrative boundaries had remained unchanged, 65–66 per cent of the country's Roma population would have been living in these two regions in 1893.

We have already noted that 65,000 Roma, or 23 per cent of the country's Roma population, were living in areas that still belong to Hungary today. Meanwhile, 58 per cent were living in areas subse-

*Table 2:*  
**The Numbers and Percentages of Roma  
 in the Census Categories for the Various Regions**

Region	None	Grow Vegetables	Keep Livestock	Both	Total
Budapest agglom.	64.1	0.0	23.1	12.8	100.0
Eastern	45.4	18.5	9.3	26.9	100.0
Great Plain	52.5	5.0	22.5	20.0	100.0
Northern	39.5	16.4	10.7	33.3	100.0
Transdanubia	36.1	18.6	6.2	39.2	100.0
Western*	(0.0)	(100.0)	(0.0)	(0.0)	(100.0)
Total	42.9	15.9	11.4	29.8	100.0

quently ceded to Romania, 15 per cent in areas ceded to Slovakia, and 3.5 per cent in areas ceded to Serbia. Today, approximately 1.6 million Roma live in Transylvania and 400,000 Roma live in Slovakia.

The stated objective of the Roma census of 1893 was “to resolve the issue of vagrancy and to sedentarize itinerant Roma.” The census-takers sought, therefore, to determine the numbers and describe the lifestyles of Roma that were “permanently settled,” “temporarily resident” or “itinerant.” According to the census, 89.2 per cent of Roma in the country were permanently settled, 7.5 per cent were temporarily resident, and 3.3 per cent were itinerant.

The census recorded Roma populations in 7962 (63 per cent) of the country’s 12,693 communities. Permanently settled Roma were found in 7220 communities while temporarily resident Roma were found in 2399 communities. The category “temporarily resident” meant residence of up to one month in 167 communities, 1–6 months in 659 communities, 6–12 months in 383 communities, 12 months or more in 632 communities, and an unspecified duration in 543 communities. Thus, by the end of the 19th century, 90 per cent of Roma were settled.

In the regions to the north of the Danube and between the Danube and Tisza, as well as in Transylvania, more than 90 per cent of Roma were permanently settled. Approximately 90 per cent of Roma were permanently settled in the regions to the north and south of the Tisza, but the ratio was just 84 per cent in the Tisza–Maros region where one-third of itinerant Roma were living and as low as 78 per cent in Transdanubia where the percentages of itinerant Roma and temporarily resident Roma were twice the national average. In the Tisza–Maros region—and particularly in Krassó-Szörény County—a significant factor was immigration from Romania and from Serbia. Immigration was also salient in the southern part of Transdanubia and especially in Baranya County. A general and self-evident observation is that earlier immigrants were

more likely to be permanently settled than were more recent immigrants.

As already noted, there were 7220 communities with permanently settled Roma populations. Roma were living in segregation in 3750—or 52 per cent—of these communities, while in 2784 communities (38.6 per cent) they were living mixed with other local inhabitants, and in 596 communities (8.3 per cent) they were living partly segregated and partly mixed. In this regard, there were significant differences between the various regions.

The majority of the population was Slovak in both regions—which were ceded to Czechoslovakia after the First World War. The census findings indicate that in the Slovak-inhabited areas of Upper Hungary, where Roma tended to live in segregation, Roma were rather detached from their Slovaks neighbors. As Antal Hermann wrote in the report: “Relatively few [Roma] speak Slovak, and rarely do they assimilate to the extent that they no longer speak Romani.”

In the counties to the south of the Tisza—roughly, the Great Plain region—there were almost equal numbers of mixed and segregated communities, while in 11 per cent of communities Roma lived partly segregated from, and partly mixed with, other local inhabitants.

Between the Danube and Tisza, Roma lived in full segregation in 41 per cent of communities, mixed with other local inhabitants in 46 per cent of communities, and partly segregated and partly mixed in 12 per cent of communities.

In Transdanubia, Roma lived in full segregation in 44 per cent of communities, mixed with other local inhabitants in 51 per cent of communities, and partly segregated and partly mixed in 6 per cent of communities.

In Transdanubia too, there were some counties where the percentage of segregated communities was higher than the percentage of mixed communities. Indeed, segregated communities were more

*Table 3:*  
**Relatively Segregated Roma Populations  
 in Two Regions of the Country**

Composition of Class	Rural	Provincial Urban	Budapest	Total
Only Roma children	1.9	3.6	7.7	3.4
Mostly Roma children	6.0	10.4	14.2	9.1
Mixed	60.7	54.0	32.5	53.9
Mostly non-Roma children	31.1	30.5	44.4	32.5
Don't know	0.4	1.5	1.2	1.0
Total	100	100	100	100

common than mixed communities in the counties of Baranya, Komárom and Vas. Antal Hermann noted that German tended to be the dominant native language in districts where Roma lived in segregation. In Transdanubia, this was especially true in the districts of Felsőőr, Kőszeg and Németújvár in Vas County.

In Hermann's view, Germans and Slovaks were more likely to reject Roma than were Hungarians. Thus Roma were more inclined to live among Hungarians than they were among Germans or Slovaks. But Roma mixed even more easily with Ruthenes and Romanians. For instance, in the counties of Bihar and Szatmár, mixed communities were more common than segregated communities in the predominantly Romanian districts, but they were less common in the predominantly Hungarian districts. Such analysis, however, could not explain differences between predominantly Hungarian districts and counties. For instance, it could not say why, in the region between the Danube and Tisza, mixed communities were more numerous than segregated communities in the counties of Bács-Bodrog, Csongrád and Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun but less numerous in the counties of Heves and Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok. Nor could it explain why, in the region to the south of the Tisza, mixed communities were more numerous in the counties of Békés and Hajdú but less numerous in Szabolcs County.

Further, the native language of the majority population could not explain the differences between the three Szekler counties in Transylvania. In Csík County, Roma were present in each community, and everywhere they lived mixed with other local inhabitants. But in Háromszék County, Roma lived in segregation in 42 communities, mixed with other local inhabitants in 39 communities (42 per cent), and partly segregated and partly mixed in 12 communities (13 per cent). Meanwhile, in Udvarhely County, Roma lived in segregation in 41 communities (30 per cent), mixed with other local inhabitants in 57 communities (50 per cent), and partly segregated and partly mixed in 16 communities (14 per cent).

Evidently, the native language of the local majority population did not determine the extent of the residential segregation of Roma. Antal Hermann identified other social factors underlying segregation. “There are villages in which some Roma, usually those working in the more disdained or filthy trades, live in segregation, while those working in more respected and clean trades tend to live dispersed among other local inhabitants.” The methods employed in the 1893 census did not, however, make it possible to categorize whole Roma communities as either “disdained/filthy” or “respected/clean.”

In this regard, the census report’s analysis of housing conditions represents a point of reference—albeit an inadequate one. The analysis and accompanying table tell us how many permanently settled Roma were living in proper housing in the various regions: 77 per cent in Transdanubia, 73 per cent between the Danube and Tisza, 72 per cent in Transylvania and the Tisza–Maros region, 49 per cent to the south of the Tisza, 43 per cent to the north of the Tisza, and 39 per cent to the north of the Danube. The remaining Roma population lived in shacks, tents, hovels, etc.

As far as Hungary’s current territory is concerned, mixed communities were more common than segregated communities at the time of the Roma census of 1893. We may therefore conclude that Roma were more likely to be living among non-Roma in 1893 than they were in either 1971 or 2003.

### *Employment and Livelihood*

Of 275,000 Roma recorded in the 1893 census, 101,000 were aged under 16 years. Wage-earners accounted for 143,000 of 174,000 adults, while there were 18,000 homemakers and 13,000 unemployed. This latter group included those who were recorded by the census as making a living through begging, sooth-saying, fortune-telling, quackery, theft, and loafing.



Among the wage-earners, 50,506 were working in industry and 4453 in commerce. There were roughly 17,000 musicians, 5847 farm-workers, and 64,190 day-laborers. The latter two categories must have been a rather arbitrary distinction. Most Roma lived in villages, on the outskirts of villages or in isolated Roma settlements. Accordingly, almost all Roma day-laborers must have been working in agriculture, occasionally performing odd jobs for other villagers, who then paid them in kind. But such odd jobs could only have been secondary to the real work of the day laborers, which was first and foremost seasonal agricultural labor: hoeing in the maize, potato, sugarbeet and vegetable fields, reaping, swath-laying, threshing, assisting in treading the corn, corn-crushing, gathering of turnips, picking paprika and tomatoes, fruit and vine harvest, pruning and hoeing the vineyard, sheep-shearing, force-feeding geese, and plucking feathers.

In addition to paid work in agriculture, the day-laborers also undertook other kinds of work. “They will do anything and they are good for anything,” wrote Lajos Kiss of the day laborers. “The day-laborers are in the most uncertain position; they are lucky to find work on 200 days in any given year.”<sup>26</sup>

Those lucky enough to find work on 200 days in a given year were unlikely to have been Roma, who usually found work on far fewer days. In winter, work was practically unavailable—as is the case even today. In spring, work was scarce. The most work was to be had in summer and autumn: harvesting, threshing and treading in summer; corn-crushing, collecting turnips, clearing, storing in pits, and vine-harvesting in autumn. Wages were also higher in summer and autumn. Indeed, day-laborers—both Roma and non-Roma—earned their food for the whole year during the summer and autumn months.

Of approximately 64,000 day-laborers, 28,000 were men and 34,000 were women. Many of the latter came from families where the menfolk were working in industry. In such cases, just a part of

the family's livelihood—usually a minor part—stemmed from day labor. Large families limited the extent to which women could participate in day labor or undertake any other kind of paid work. In this respect, Roma day-laborers were no different from the other day laborers. “In most large families,” wrote Lajos Kiss “the women are permanently pregnant; if their husbands merely touch their hats, they fall pregnant.”<sup>27</sup> Large families with many children were the norm among non-Roma day-laborers, farmworkers and other rural poor. Indeed, until the Second World War and even afterwards, children were just as numerous in the non-Roma families as they were in Roma families.

The total number of farmworkers and day-laborers was 70,000. In other words, almost 50 per cent of the 143,000 Roma wage-earners worked mainly or principally in agriculture. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to conclude that, in 1893, 50 per cent of the livelihood of Roma stemmed from agriculture. As we have noted already, the earnings of some of the 34,000 female day-laborers were supplementary earnings. Moreover, the large number of children restricted the work and earnings of women. It seems therefore sensible to examine, in addition to the employment distribution of the total population, the employment distribution of male wage-earners.

Of approximately 85,000 male wage-earners, 32,000 (or 38 per cent) were farmworkers or day-laborers. If our goal is to estimate the extent to which the livelihoods of Roma stemmed from agriculture, then this ratio was probably very close to reality.

It would seem reasonable to proceed in a similar manner with regard to industrial workers. The 50,000 Roma working in industry represented 35 per cent of a total number of 143,000 wage-earners. Among male wage-earners, however, the percentages are different. Of 85,000 male wage-earners, 33,930 (39.9 per cent) were working in industry. Thus, a little less than one half of the sum of livelihoods of Roma tended to stem from industry rather than from agriculture.

In this respect, Roma differed significantly from the country's other inhabitants. At the time of the census, industrial workers comprised 54.5 per cent of the general population but just 18.4 per cent of the Roma population. Moreover, importantly and significantly, there were 171 women workers for every 1000 men among the general population but as many as 487 women for every 1000 men among the Roma population.

In his analysis of the employment of Roma in industry, Antal Hermann distinguished between jobs performed exclusively, mainly or mostly by men and jobs performed mainly or exclusively by women. The statistical tables only partly show this distinction. According to the statistics, jobs performed mainly or almost exclusively by women included rope- and brush-making. Thus, among Roma, almost all the rope-, string-, brush-, and limebrush-makers were women (4135 women from 4163 persons). Jobs performed exclusively by women included the making of lace, spinning, weaving, needlework, working in a tobacco factory, white-washing, washing, and plucking (2938 persons in total).

According to the statistics, jobs performed mainly by men included the metal-work trades. The tinsmiths (60 persons), bell-makers (41), knife-makers, knife-sharpeners (43), spoolers (175), coppersmiths (81) were all men, while the locksmiths (217 from 221) and gimlet-makers (370 from 380) were almost all men. However, the largest group comprised the blacksmiths: 12,749 persons. As Antal Hermann wrote: "The blacksmiths are the most numerous, comprising 36.5 per cent of Roma men working in industry and 22.5 per cent of the all the blacksmiths in the country (whose number the census of 1891 indicated as 7146 under the category of domestic or cottage industry and 47,710 under the category of regular industry). For centuries they have been practicing this craft, which is so vital to the farmer. The guilded blacksmiths of the towns have quarreled with them, but in the villages and poorer rural areas they are almost irreplaceable. In many places, they are the

contracted blacksmiths of the village and live in the local forge house. A far greater number of women than the 379 shown in the statistics are involved in the work of the blacksmiths. As spouses, they help the head of the family in his work, performing auxiliary tasks—in which their children help out. Apart from the musicians, the blacksmiths are the most popular and attractive figures in the Roma population and may be regarded as the most useful and respectable element.”<sup>28</sup>

Roma blacksmiths were most numerous in Transylvania, followed by the region to the east of the Tisza and then the northern part of the country. The smallest numbers were recorded in the region between the rivers Danube and Tisza and in Transdanubia. As Antal Hermann observed, the lower a region’s level of economic development, the higher its number and share of Roma blacksmiths.

We discover something rather similar in earlier periods, too. A majority of Roma heads of family and Roma men in general were blacksmiths at the time of the census in 1782—i.e. when the country was less developed and poorer than it was in 1893. At that time, the number of Roma blacksmiths was almost four times higher than the number of Roma musicians.

During the 111 years between the two censuses, rather than decline, the number of Roma blacksmiths actually doubled. Nevertheless, their share of the Roma population and their relative significance diminished substantially, because, during the same period, the total Roma population increased sevenfold and the number of Roma musicians by a factor of 10.5.

In addition to almost 13,000 blacksmiths, there were also 1661 nailsmiths whose separate classification was, as Antal Hermann concludes, “not always consistent.” According to the census, female nailsmiths numbered just 36, although in fact women were involved in the work of the men in the same way as they were among the blacksmiths. Nailsmiths were relatively numerous in the northern counties.

Blacksmiths were predominant among the Roma population from the early 15th century onwards. Their role became slightly less dominant in the 18th century. Hungary's subsequent industrialisation in the second half of the 19th century reduced the significance of both blacksmiths and nailsmiths, particularly in the more developed regions.

The kettle-making and kettle-mending profession probably emerged among Roma in Hungary in the 18th century. Vlach Roma, or Kalderash Roma to be more precise, brought it to the country. In 1893, 2077 kettle-makers (including 139 women) were recorded by the census, principally in the Tisza–Maros region and in Transylvania. Half of the kettlemakers were settled Roma, one in three were nomadic Roma, and one in six were classed as “long-term residents.”

The “advance guard” of Beás-speaking trough- and spoon-makers arrived in Transdanubia in the 18th century. Larger numbers immigrated in the 19th and 20th centuries. At the time of the census, they numbered 5147 (3808 men and 1339 women). They arrived in historical Hungary from two different directions: they came from Croatia to the counties of Baranya, Somogy, Tolna; and they came from the Romanian principalities to Transylvania and the Tisza–Maros region and then to the counties adjacent to Transylvania. Antal Hermann wrote the following about them: “In forested areas, usually at the site of wood production, they use primitive tools to make basic wooden utensils for the lower classes. Their work benefits the public to the extent that in many poorly accessible places, to which it would barely be profitable to supply wood, they sell products from the forest, offering a fair price or other consideration to the owners, and they make a decent living from their work.”

The census divided the wood workers into two groups: makers of wooden spoons and makers of wooden troughs. Hermann wrote the following about the latter group: “Long-term residence is

suiting to making troughs. Groups functioning as business co-operatives stay in one place until they have used up the available raw material and have satisfied demand for their products in the area. The right bank of the Danube offers the trough-makers the most suitable types of wood and the best markets.”<sup>29</sup> Hermann was also aware that there were no Roma wooden workers in the heavily wooded areas of the northern part of the country. His explanation was that in such regions “most of the inhabitants (Slovaks and Ruthenians) cover their own needs by means of the domestic wood industry.”

In this regard, it is worth noting Gábor Havas’s conclusion that as the peasants began to produce goods and to become part of bourgeois society, so “in the social distribution of labor, the Roma specialized increasingly in the production of appliances and the provision of services which the self-reliant peasant farms had previously provided for themselves.”<sup>30</sup> Havas then classifies wood workers, as well as those working with reeds or wicker, as people working in such trades.

Let us now examine this latter group. In 1893 there were 74 matting- and bag-weavers, 963 basket-weavers, 1036 broom-makers, and 767 sieve-makers. The total number of Roma working with reeds or wicker was 2840 (1633 men and 1207 women).

Far more important than work with wood, reed or wicker and only slightly less important than metalwork was work associated with construction: plastering and mudding, firing bricks and tiles, making adobe, and stonemasonry. At the time of the census, 9385 men and 6010 women (in total 15,395 persons) were involved in such work.

Roma were involved in plastering, mudding and adobe-making as early as the 18th century. But the increase in the number of adobe-makers and the importance of adobe-making was particularly great in the second half of the 19th century.

The 50 years after the Austro–Hungarian Compromise of

1867 were a time of growth and construction. The development and expansion of small towns and villages created a demand for adobe-making. (Three-quarters of the country's population lived in places where adobe, wood and reed were the typical construction materials.)

Ferenc Erdei has shown how adobe-making is a regular industrial enterprise. It requires expertise just like walling, thatching, brick-laying. Nevertheless, "the science of the craft is not studied during prescribed terms as apprentice and assistant, nor can an examination be taken in it. Instead, just as a farmer learns how to farm, so adobe-making is learned from tradition and practice."<sup>31</sup>

Adobe-making was seasonal work available from spring until autumn. As Gábor Havas notes "Even during the season, there would not be enough work where they were living, so the adobe-makers were forced to move around."<sup>32</sup>

In the winter months, Roma adobe-makers had to make do on whatever they had put aside from spring until autumn. They worked on other jobs, too: for instance, from spring until autumn, they worked as agricultural day laborers; in winter they did a variety of jobs such as basket weaving, odd jobs around the house, and even music-making.

Roma families typically had several sources of income, and they had to select among them as the opportunities arose.

The exceptions were Roma musicians—or at least those musicians who were licensed and had steady livelihoods. But such musicians were rare. Antal Hermann also esteemed them: "The musicians are, among the Roma population too, highly respected group. They form a class that is the most distinguished in every respect; they are the most intelligent and the most significant as far as the nation is concerned."<sup>33</sup> As Bálint Sárosi repeatedly emphasized in his excellent work, music offered Roma the only possibility of social advancement. Sárosi also concluded that the peak of "gypsy" music's popularity occurred in the mid-19th century.

In earlier periods, “gypsy” music had not been so popular. In the latter half of the 18th century, for instance, little mention was made of Roma music-making and it was not an important factor in their livelihood. Still, in the late 18th century, the Hungarian national movement developed a taste for modern Hungarian and European music. Only the violins of the “gypsy” musicians were capable of providing such music.

In the reform era, great numbers of “gypsy” musicians joined the growing national movement. It was then that the “gypsy” orchestra style was established. Roma also took part as musicians in the War of Independence of 1848–49. After the war “plaintive merriment [*sírva vigadás*] permitted a heartfelt encounter between ‘gypsy’ musicians and the Hungarian upper and middle classes. In spite of their subservient role, the best musicians gained the popularity and respect of the public.”

The 1893 census recorded 16,784 musician Roma (16,638 men and 146 women), but the true number was substantially higher. The census did not include Budapest, where the greatest number of musicians was living (3000). In several provincial cities (Pécs, Székesfehérvár, and Szabadka), only nomadic Roma were counted. The authorities in Győr submitted merely a general description of Roma living in the Roma district of the city. It is thus very likely that the real number of musicians was well over 20,000.

The musicians were not a homogenous group. Alongside a small but celebrated group of first violinists and others who earned well and lived in security and comfort, there were many musicians who earned money by playing music at local weddings, balls or other occasional events, and who therefore had no choice but to work as laborers at other times.

The 4453 merchants accounted for 3 per cent of Roma wage-earners. There were 1978 men, representing 2.3 per cent of Roma male wage-earners. Women merchants numbered 2475, or 4.3 per



cent of Roma female wage-earners. Of the male merchants, 1475 were horse-dealers. They were particularly numerous in the Tisza–Maros region (especially in Torontál County) and in the region between the rivers Danube and Tisza (especially in Pest-Pilis-Solt-Kiskun County).

All things considered, at the time of the 1893 census, the situation of Roma was significantly better than it had been in earlier decades or centuries. Economic historians have calculated that Hungary's national income doubled or even tripled between 1867 and 1900. This growth had a tangible effect on Roma livelihoods. As already noted, there was a greater demand for adobe and bricks. Even more importantly, there was a steady increase in the number of landowners, middle-class citizens and peasant farmers who could afford to invite “gypsy” musicians to play at weddings and other celebrations and festivals.

Nevertheless, opportunities were unequally distributed around the country. In the region between the rivers Danube and Tisza, 10.6 per cent of the 7400 male wage-earners made a living from primary production or day labor (the national figure was 38 per cent), 28 per cent from industry (the national figure was 39.9 per cent), 8.7 per cent from commerce (the national figure was 2.3 per cent), 52.5 per cent as musicians (the national figure was 19.3 per cent, or 23 per cent after the adjustment explained above). The share of blacksmiths was just 5 per cent, compared with a national figure of 15 per cent. One should also note that 23.4 per cent of the country's “gypsy” musicians lived in the region between the rivers Danube and Tisza.

In Transdanubia, 21.5 per cent of male wage-earners made a living from primary production and day labor, 37 per cent from industry, 4 per cent from commerce, and 37 per cent as musicians. Blacksmiths accounted for 10 per cent of male wage-earners, a higher proportion than in the region between the Danube and Tisza but still below the national average. As in the region between the

Danube and Tisza, the blacksmiths gradually shifted to music-making—a process accompanied by a language shift from Romani to Hungarian.

Roma musicians living in this part of the country accounted for 12.5 per cent of the national “gypsy” musician population.

In the region to the east of the Tisza, i.e. the counties of Békés, Bihar, Hajdú, and Szabolcs, as well as half of the county of Szatmár, 15.6 per cent of 6834 male wage-earners made a living from primary production and day labor, 56.6 per cent from industry, 2.9 per cent from commerce, and 24.6 per cent as musicians. The share of blacksmiths in the region was 21.2 per cent, a significantly higher rate than the national average. The percentage of brick-makers, adobe-makers, and plasterers also substantially exceeded the national average. Musicians in this region accounted for 10 per cent of the national population of musicians.

At the time of the census, 46 per cent of the national population of “gypsy” musicians lived in the three cited regions. Analyzed in terms of Hungary’s current territory, the proportion was even higher—51–52 per cent.

### **Roma between the Two World Wars**

After the Roma census of 1893, the next comprehensive although merely representative survey of the Roma population was made in 1971. The survey covered 2 per cent of the Roma population. The questionnaire included a question concerning “father’s principal employment.” The responses to this question provide us with a rough idea of employment in the period before the Second World War.

Based on 1971 survey data for parental employment, more than one-third of Vlach Roma made a living from horse-dealing, pig-trading, carpet-selling, and other commercial activities. More

than one in four made a living from agriculture, while the livelihoods of 20 per cent were based on kettle-making or other metalworking. Finally, somewhat less than 20 per cent coupled adobe-making and plastering with music-making.

Beás, speaking dialects of Romanian, based their livelihoods on the manufacture of wooden troughs and other wooden utensils. As Gábor Havas has shown, many Beás were brought by landowners from their Croatian-Slavonian estates to their estates in Hungary. Other Beás, however, came voluntarily to Hungary from Romania. This second group settled close to villages.

Over time, Beás living on the estates moved closer to the nearby villages. Both groups soon coupled forestry work with basketweaving, partial harvesting, and other agricultural jobs. Between the wars, a third of their livelihoods stemmed from agriculture and day-labor.

As far as Hungarian Roma are concerned, we cite the 1971 survey report: "... in the preceding generation, more than a quarter of them had been living from agricultural work, while more than a half had coupled adobe-making and plastering with music-making. Meanwhile, the livelihoods of a small minority were based exclusively on music-making."<sup>34</sup>

One should add to the above summary that many other trades are mentioned by survey respondents, such as nailsmith, building laborer, rag-and-bone man, and merchant. Moreover, some of the musicians coupled music with agricultural work.

A majority of Hungarian Roma respondents participating in the 1971 survey identified their forefathers as Musician Roma and considered their original families to have been musician families.

How many Musician Roma could there have been between the two wars?

Based on Miklós Markó's book about "gypsy" musicians, Bálint Sárosi writes that in 1927 Hungary was home to more than 12,000 "gypsy" musicians. He adds that at least one-quarter of

these musicians were not in employment and that “many ‘gypsy’ musicians in rural areas were not to be included, because village musicians were generally without work.” Sárosi also establishes that, after the First World War, many Musician Roma came to Hungary from areas ceded to other states.

When interpreting these estimates, one should bear in mind that in 1893 more than 20,000 “gypsy” musicians were living within the territory of historical Hungary. Of these 20,000, about 12,000 lived within the country’s territory after 1920. All the musicians were Hungarian Roma—both in 1893 and between the two wars. At the turn of the century, 106,000 Hungarian Roma were living in the country, of which 35,000 were adult men of working age, that is, most of them made a living from music-making. And the share of musicians was even greater among those Hungarian Roma who were living within the diminished territory of post-Trianon Hungary. (The number of Hungarian Roma in this area was 25,000, and there were 16,000 men of working age.)

In 1927, there were approximately 100,000 Hungarian Roma, and the number of adult men of working age must have been about 30,000. Most of them had been born in “gypsy” musician families and had learnt how to make music in the family from early childhood. It is worth citing Sárosi once again:

In the “gypsy” music profession, more important than schooling and methodology, is that skills should be passed down from generation to generation. They are more inclined to undertake this profession rather than any other—even considering the associated risks of livelihood.

Of course, it would be a mistake to conclude that there were 30,000 applicants or candidates for 12,000 or even just 9000 posts. Still, it does seem certain that the number of Roma wanting or hoping to make a living from music gradually increased to twice the previous level and then to more than twice the previous level

towards the end of the interwar period. At the same time, however, the number of opportunities fell. Noblemen with a passion for “gypsy” music became increasingly impoverished, while the richer peasants who had once invited “gypsy” musicians to their wedding feasts grew less prosperous. Among Hungary’s middle classes, jazz music and modern dance music became increasingly fashionable. Throughout the period, Hungarian Roma experienced a painful deterioration in their situation. They were now simply too numerous for the profession that constituted their livelihood. Not everybody experienced a downturn, since the best musicians were even more famous than their predecessors had been at the turn of the century. Nevertheless, some of those who got left behind sank into poverty—which was sometimes severe.

The situation of Hungarian Roma also grew worse in terms of the jobs that were undertaken in addition to or in place of music-making. As far as seasonal labor was concerned, demand exceeded supply. And the situation grew worse between the two wars, before it finally improved in the latter half of the 1930s. Roma blacksmiths—practitioners of the oldest and, for centuries, most important trade—continued to decline; by the end of the period, they had been completely pushed out of the economy. Demand for railway-track nails continued to provide nailsmiths with a livelihood. The adobe-makers also survived, but in this area too, the supply of both enterprise and labor exceeded demand.

Beás and Vlach Roma were similarly affected by a deterioration in their livelihoods. Large-scale immigration worsened their plight. Between 1893 and 1930, the Vlach Roma population rose from 10,000 to 30,000, while the Beás population rose from 4500 to 12,000. Even if the number of opportunities had remained steady, the population increases would have made it more difficult to prosper. In fact, however, there were fewer opportunities, owing to a steady decline in demand for products such as wooden troughs and other utensils, baskets, brooms, doormats, bags, and kettles, as

well as for labor in areas such as kettle-making, wire-binding, and thatching. Moreover, Beás and Vlach Roma were affected by the changes in seasonal agricultural work noted above.

The situation of all Roma—of Beás and Vlach Roma as well as Hungarian Roma—was made worse by the political ideology prevailing in the country and the manner in which such ideology was implemented in practice. After 1867, liberal legal principles held sway in the legislative process, thereby establishing a liberal system of institutions.

An example of the effect of such principles on the Roma population is the Industrial Act of 1872, which governed the issue of trade licenses and the conditions for practicing a trade. For instance, under the provisions of the Act, the authorities were required to issue trade licenses within three days of an application being made. If they failed to do so, one could practice the trade without a trade license. In his book László Pomogyi shows how some government authorities violated this act of law but also how their unlawful measures failed to prevent or restrict Roma from practicing their trades or from being active in commerce.

Very different circumstances emerged and became dominant in Hungary after 1919. Initially, the rule of law was openly disregarded. Later on, the anti-democratic process was continued, although efforts were made to preserve appearances—particularly with respect to certain social groups. In both industry and commerce, regulation became the guiding principle. Several worrisome examples of regulation and arbitrary administration may be found in Pomogyi's book as well as in Barna Mezey's collection of essays published in 1986. Attempts were repeatedly made to prevent Roma from receiving trade licenses. Where they did receive licenses, they were valid—under a ministerial decree of 1931—merely in the county of residence. Moreover:

When practicing their trade, they must go alone; they may not keep assistants even if they are peddlers; they may not take family members along with them; and they may not use a vehi-

cle when practicing their trade.

Another of the many examples is the 1928 decree of the Minister of Interior on raids on Roma communities. According to the decree,

whether they practice migration in order to avoid work, or do so under the pretext of looking for work, the forces of public order are obliged to arrest and detain them where they are found and then to deposit them at the nearest police headquarters.

The decree stipulated that county police forces should undertake annual raids on Roma communities, but, as Pomogyi notes, in most counties such raids were actually undertaken twice yearly. Pomogyi even publishes a table identifying raids launched in Pest County in October 1940, which led to the detention of 131 Roma and the seizure of nine wagons and ten horses. Such foolish acts clearly diminished people's chances of survival. But perhaps the real purpose was to show that one could treat Roma more harshly than other people.

The thoughts and actions of ministers, state secretaries, deputy-lieutenants, district administrators, and police offices reached their lowest point—and with them the relationship between Hungarian society and Roma. It was only a matter of years before Roma could be subjected to anything, including genocide.

The German army occupied Hungary on March 19, 1944. The deportation of the Jewish population to the death camps began shortly afterwards. The first trains left Hungary on May 15, 1944. By the end of June, a majority of Jews living outside Budapest—440,000 people—had been deported. Protests from foreign governments and German military setbacks, including the Normandy landings, prompted Horthy, the Hungarian leader, to put a hold on further deportations as of July 20, 1944. However, on October 15, 1944, Ferenc Szálasi and the Arrow Cross Party seized power.

Adolf Eichmann returned to Hungary and, working in conjunction with the Hungarian authorities, resumed the destruction of the country's Jewish population. By February 1945, 50 per cent of Budapest's 200,000 Jews had been annihilated. The deportation of Transdanubia's Roma population began in November and December 1944 and continued in the first three months of 1945. During the deportation process, some Roma were murdered close to their homes by Hungarian military police and Arrow Cross party officials. In the 1970s, the Victims of Nazism Commission estimated the number of Roma victims to have been 28,000. In 1992, the historian László Karsai published a book in which he estimated, based on archival evidence, the number of murdered Roma to have been 5000. If the Germans had won the war, Hungary's Roma population would have been completely obliterated.

### **Changes after 1945**

Developments in 1945 enabled the survival of Roma and rescued them from destruction. The period of limited democracy between 1945 and 1947 altered the relationship between Roma, Hungarian society and the Hungarian state. While the authoritarian regime of the pre-1944 period had denied Roma equality and subjected them to racial discrimination and the 1944 regime had actually placed them outside the law, democracy declared the principle of equality and prohibited racial or ethnic discrimination.

Nonetheless, in the economic field, Roma suffered very serious losses. We cite Zsolt Csalog: "The disappearance of the former consumer groups in society resulted in the end of the age-old market for musicians (even if it did then partly recover in the 1960s), and the remains of the other traditional forms of employment were swept away by the tide of history. The colossal and hard-won historical capital of Roma was thus destroyed... A strange contradiction was that while the end of the Second World War had brought



emancipation and removed the immediate danger of extermination, it had failed to establish opportunities for making a living.”<sup>35</sup>

Land distribution began in spring 1945. The process marked the definitive end of the economic and political rule of the landowners. Both poorer peasant farmers and the rural landless received land. Roma, however, were left out of the process of land distribution. Most Roma did not even request land. Apart from a few rare instances, even Roma who claimed land were not given any. Land was scarce, and the process of land distribution achieved no more than create out of a land of “three million beggars” a land of “two million beggars.” It was quite easy to leave Roma out of the process—and they were indeed left out, in spite of the fact that many Roma, more than a third of them, made livelihoods from seasonal work in agriculture.

At the same time, land distribution also served to remove the job opportunities previously offered to Roma by medium and large landowners.

In commerce, the restrictions placed on Roma by the decrees and bureaucratic procedures of the former regime clearly no longer applied. Still, in 1945 and 1946, commercial activities were still highly risky and threatened by looting on the part of Soviet soldiers. Horses were taken first by the Germans and then by the Russians. Pigs were taken away or eaten on the spot. By 1947, looting was no longer a problem, but that year saw the beginning of Communist rule, which regarded private enterprise undertaken by Roma (and non-Roma) as pernicious, a threat to public welfare, and a public foe.

*Roma Population Growth between 1893 and 1971*  
*Changes in the Linguistic Distribution*

At the time of the 1971 national survey, the Roma population in Hungary was 320,000. Between 1893 and 1971 there were substantial changes in the linguistic distribution of Roma. In 1971 the native language of 71.0 per cent of Roma was Hungarian, while 21.2 per cent spoke Romani as their native language, 7.6 per cent spoke Beás, and 0.2 per cent spoke some other language. There were 224,000 Hungarian Roma (Romungro), 61,000 Vlach Roma, and 25,000 Beás. Within a period of 78 years, there had been an almost fivefold increase in the Roma population within the territory in question. The Hungarian Roma population had increased fourfold, while the Vlach Roma population had increased more than ninefold and the Beás population more than eightfold. Immigration is the only possible explanation for an eightfold or ninefold increase—or even for a fivefold increase. Many Beás were brought by landowners from their estates in the south to estates in Hungary. A majority of them arrived in Hungary before 1914. But immigration continued between the two wars and also in the period immediately after the Second World War.

Katalin Kovalcsik has identified three language groups among Hungary's Beás population. The *muncsánok* live in the southern part of Baranya and maintain an affinity with their fellows in Croatia living on the other side of the border. The *argyelánok* speak the Banat dialect of Beás. The *ticsánok* came from the Nagyvárad region in the 1910s; they initially resided in Szabolcs and Szatmár counties and then moved to the Tiszafüred region.

A language shift may be observed among those Roma whose native language was Slovak, Ruthenian, Serbian or Croatian in 1893: Hungarian had become their native language by 1971. Linguistic assimilation thus partly explains the fourfold increase in the Hungarian-speaking Roma population.

In 1971 a majority of Beás were living in Southern Transdanubia: they comprised a majority of Roma in the counties of Baranya and Somogy.

Vlach Roma came from Croatia-Slavonia to Hungary in the late 19th century and early 20th century and to a lesser extent between the two world wars. In 1971, they accounted for one-fifth of the Roma population in Southern Transdanubia. Vlach Roma came from Serbia and the Banat region to the counties of Bács, Csongrád and Szolnok. In 1971 they accounted for 19 per cent of the Roma population of these three counties. A third group of Vlach Roma came from Transylvania, or Romania, to the counties of Szabolcs, Szatmár, Bihar, Békés and Hajdú. Together with earlier arrivals, they accounted for 22 per cent of the Roma population of the region.

Before 1918 it was quite natural for Romani-speaking Roma to move to areas now comprising the counties of Borsod, Nógrád and Heves. And there were few obstacles to such migration flows even during the interwar period. László Pomogyi cites a ministerial decree dating from 1927:

Villages near the Czechoslovakian border have witnessed the arrival of a large number of Roma families who come from other parts and have never been seen here before; they go from village to village ... From what I hear, the Czechoslovak state has expelled en masse itinerant Roma from its territory, who then come across at poorly defended border points, whence they disperse, primarily in the villages along the border.

The Vlach Roma percentage of the Roma population was the highest in the counties of Pest, Fejér and Komárom: 24.1 per cent. There were about 15,000 Roma in these three counties.

In addition to immigration and migration flows within the country, the period 1893–1971 saw many other changes in the country and in the lives of Roma. Nevertheless, the differences between the various native-language groups did not diminish.

A significant change was urbanisation, but in 1971 Roma were far less likely than other Hungarians were to be living in urban areas.

*Table 4:*

**The Percentage Distribution of the Roma Population  
by Type of Settlement and Native Language**

There were significant differences between the various native-language groups in terms of the percentage of people living in isolated or segregated settlements: 65 per cent of Hungarian Roma, 75

Region	None	Grow Vegetables	Keep Livestock	Both	Total
Budapest agglom.	64.1	0.0	23.1	12.8	100.0
Eastern	45.4	18.5	9.3	26.9	100.0
Great Plain	52.5	5.0	22.5	20.0	100.0
Northern	39.5	16.4	10.7	33.3	100.0

per cent of Vlach Roma, and 48 per cent of Beás resided in such settlements.

This was clearly a factor influencing the average number of persons per dwelling, which was 6.3 among Romani-speaking Roma, 5.5 among Hungarian-speaking Roma, and 4.9 among Beás-speaking Roma. Sixty per cent of Vlach Roma, 56 per cent of Hungarian Roma, and 40 per cent of Beás lived in families with three or more children. The number of dependents per 100 workers was 250 among Vlach Roma, 221 among Hungarian Roma, and 191 among Beás.

In 1971, 33 per cent of Hungarian native-speaking Roma, 54 per cent of Romani native speakers, and 57 per cent of Beás native speakers were unable to read or write.

### *The Communist Era*

A period of forced industrialization began in Hungary in the 1950s. The process continued in the 1960s and 1970s and was concluded only in the latter half of the 1980s. In the Budapest agglomeration, the Northern region, and large parts of Transdanubia, industrialization created full employment and even resulted in labor shortages, leading to a dramatic increase in Roma employment.

As a result of this process, by the time of the national survey in 1971, three-quarters of Roma males of working age (aged 15–59) were in permanent employment, a further 10 per cent were self-employed or in temporary jobs, while 15 per cent were dependents.

At the time of Hungary's census in 1970, 87.7 of males were active income earners, while 12.3 per cent were pensioners or recipients of other benefits. The difference between the Roma and non-Roma populations appeared to be small, but in reality it was quite significant.

Inactive income earners, that is, people unfit for work due to long-term illness or disability, accounted for 2.7 per cent of males of working age. The percentage of Roma males unfit for work was 7.3 per cent. Most of these men could not have been entitled to long-term illness or disability pensions, because they lacked the necessary service time in employment.

The student ratio among the male population in Hungary was 8.2 per cent. In contrast, just 0.5 per cent of Roma were students.

*Table 5:*

**The Result of Hungary's Census in 1970**

Thus, the 1960s brought great changes to the lives of Roma families: full employment was almost achieved among adult Roma males. Roma families witnessed a dramatic improvement in terms

Region	None	Grow Vegetables	Keep Livestock	Both	Total
Budapest agglom.	64.1	0.0	23.1	12.8	100.0
Eastern	45.4	18.5	9.3	26.9	100.0
Great Plain	52.5	5.0	22.5	20.0	100.0
Northern	39.5	16.4	10.7	33.3	100.0
Transdanubia	36.1	18.6	6.2	39.2	100.0

of their livelihood, standard of living, job security, and general welfare. Such progress enabled many Roma families to build “reduced-value” houses or to buy old peasant houses and thus to move away from the isolated Roma settlements to other towns or villages. Some Roma were able to use their own savings to con-

struct or purchase their homes, but most of them required loans to do so. Continuous employment was, of course, a prerequisite for receiving such loans.

Although there was virtual full employment among Roma males in industrialized areas, this was not the case in rural areas. The ratio of dependent males was 5.5 per cent in the Budapest agglomeration, 4.3 in Transdanubia, and 3.8 per cent in the northern industrial counties. In contrast, it was 10.2 per cent in the Great Plain region and 15.2 per cent in the Eastern region. In the three industrialized regions, 4.5 per cent, 5.4 per cent, and 6.8 per cent of people were unfit for work. The corresponding figures were 8 per cent in the Great Plain region and 10 per cent in the Eastern region.

Employment differences were far greater among females than they were among males. At the time of the 1970 census, 64 per cent of women of working age (aged 15–54) in Hungary were active income earners, while 6 per cent were pensioners and 30 per cent were dependents. Data of the 1971 survey showed, however, that just 30 per cent of Roma women were active income earners while as many as 70 per cent were dependents. The survey report cited two reasons for the low employment rate among Roma women: the larger number of children and the fact that rural areas offered fewer employment opportunities to women (and especially to women without school education).

Another factor identified by researchers during the survey was the limited provision of nurseries and kindergartens. Some areas had no nurseries or kindergartens, but even where there was provision, it was generally inaccessible to Roma children.

In 1971, researchers identified two main reasons for the significant income differences between Roma and non-Roma. One reason was the large number of children, while the other was the low level of female employment. Both factors led to more dependents and fewer income earners within Roma families. As the research report stated:

The lower the income, the higher the number of children, and the higher the number of children, the lower the income. An improvement in the situation of Roma would be both a means and a result of reducing the number of children, as is already the case among upwardly mobile Roma families ... In most Roma settlements, the lack of nurseries, kindergartens and employment opportunities render family planning meaningless. Yet family planning is on the advance wherever Roma have acquired basic housing, kindergartens, and employment opportunities for women.<sup>36</sup>

In 1971, 11 per cent of Roma heads of family were skilled workers, 10 per cent were unskilled workers, 44 per cent were laborers, 15 per cent were agricultural laborers, 3 per cent were day laborers, and 6 per cent were self-employed or casual workers.

The ratio of skilled workers was highest among Hungarian-speaking Roma. Among this group, 15 per cent of heads of family were skilled workers. The rate was 25 per cent in provincial urban areas and 35 per cent in Budapest. The ratio of skilled workers was negligible, however, among Vlach Roma and Beás.

The three language groups exhibited a significant difference in terms of the contribution made by agriculture towards livelihoods. Agricultural laborers accounted for 8.8 per cent of heads of family among Hungarian Roma, 10.5 per cent among Vlach Roma, and 47.5 per cent among Beás. We have already noted the far greater role played by agriculture in the livelihoods of Roma prior to 1945. Since most Roma working in agriculture were not granted land under the post-war land redistribution programme, a smaller percentage of them were included in the system of co-operatives than had been active in agriculture prior to 1945. As the 1971 research report notes:

Their relative participation rate in the agricultural co-operative system fell even further in the 1950s and early 1960s. This was due in part to uncertain income levels, in part to their leaving

the co-operatives for other forms of employment, but also in part to the fact that non-Roma members of co-operatives tended to be hostile to Roma. Jobs in industry did not just provide Roma with secure incomes—as in the case of non-Roma—but also offered them equality. They were accepted into jobs from which they had previously been excluded.<sup>37</sup>

Prior to 1945, many Roma working in agriculture were seasonal laborers, while those in permanent employment tended to be shepherds or livestock-keepers. In 1971, 15 per cent of Roma heads of family worked in agriculture, but just 5 per cent of them were members of co-operatives, and 1.5 per cent were plant cultivators, while the rest were day laborers, park keepers, seedling planters, forestry workers, shepherds, livestock-keepers, and vineyard workers. Seasonal workers accounted for 40 per cent of agricultural laborers. Nine per cent of Roma active earners in permanent employment and almost one half of those in temporary employment worked in agriculture.

The 1950s and 1960s saw Roma turn away from agriculture towards industry. Seasonal (mostly summer) work in agriculture never provided the levels of income needed in order to live decently throughout the year. Industrialization offered Roma the possibility of regular and constant income and an opportunity to secure a respected position in modern industrial society.

Nevertheless, seasonal work in agriculture continued to play an important role in Roma livelihoods. Most typically, this was the case where the men were working throughout the year in mines, blast furnaces and factories and the women took on work as day laborers in seasonal agricultural work. It was quite common for a man to take part in the agricultural seasonal work too—with or without his employer's permission. During this period, Roma livelihoods stood on two (or more) legs, and Hungarian agriculture could not have done without the Roma seasonal workers.



Seasonal work was not limited to agriculture, but covered other forms of work performed by the rural poor. Seasonal work in the rural areas of Hungary included seasonal employment in the food industry (preserves, mills, sugar, and alcoholic beverages), seasonal employment in forestry, wood-processing, wood mills, saw mills, and seasonal work in the construction materials industry, road and rail construction, as well as the itinerant industries and trades. Roma undertaking such jobs had no land or property. Still, they were not the agricultural proletariats but—as the 1971 research report referred to them—“freely wandering proletariat.” They worked in economic sectors with frequent changes in the location of work—and where labor tended to accompany the job opportunities over small distances.

This life-style thus links sedentarization with some degree of movement, and is characterized by the long-term absence of men—heads of families and fathers. During the Horthy regime, the relationship between Roma and non-Roma laborers was not constant in the various rural areas across the country. In some places, Roma and non-Roma comprised a more or less uniform working class, while in other areas ‘poor whites’ distanced themselves from Roma.<sup>38</sup>

The forced industrialization of the 1950s and 1960s led to the re-emergence and indeed dominance of families with absent fathers—this time in the form of commuting workers. But there was a significant difference; namely, that commuting workers were generally working at great distances from their families.

In the 1950s and 1960s, most Roma were subjected to a process of proletarianization. This development amounted to a fall in status for Roma musicians. According to a statistical table for January 1968, 3670 “gypsy” musicians were in employment, but Bálint Sárosi argues that the number of part-time Roma musicians was at least as high or even higher.

The process of proletarianization amounted to a reduction in status for merchants too. As the 1971 research report notes:

Roma with livelihoods based on the horse or pig trade were pushed out, because on the one hand we slaughtered our horses and, on the other, such trade was prohibited. In recent years, horse-breeding and horse-trading has recovered, but only a negligible number of Vlach Roma now make a living from these activities. Two smaller groups of horse dealers had switched to trading in automobile spare parts and to fattening cows, while a slightly larger group had become carriers (or were involved in the carrier trade as secondary work). Most of them, however, had found work in industry. The few horse-trading Roma families who continued to work in the trade (that is, those who traded horses legally for the state livestock company or who carried on the craft in wagons as raga-and-bone men) gradually became detached from the rest of the Roma population and began to consider themselves as the only real "Roma."<sup>39</sup>

In some counties, commerce and trading were specifically prohibited, but in others such activities were merely subject to restrictions—permission was granted, but only within the borders of the county in question. The carpet-traders offer an example of this. They moved from Transylvania to Hungary in 1916 after the Romanian invasion. Calling themselves Szekler Roma and speaking a distinctive dialect of Romani, the carpet-traders settled in the counties of Somogy, Veszprém and Zala, as well as in Budapest. They made a living from the itinerant textile trade and were also involved in the cottage industry production of rugs and coarse blankets. The carpet-traders of Budapest found their place in Budapest society, but their trade license was withdrawn in Somogy County and they were removed from municipal housing in Kaposvár and rehoused in barracks. The survey of 1971 revealed an image of a

doomed community.

If commercial opportunities were geographically disparate, they varied even more over time. Periods of relative leniency towards private commerce were followed by periods of outright hostility. The recurring policy of clamping down and then liberalizing led, in the 1980s, to conditions that were more permissive than ever before. The early 1980s saw the publication of Gábor Havas's inquiries into the employment transfer strategies of Roma communities, including the "mobile-initiator lifestyle." Diminishing markets in traditional areas led Roma to look for other income sources obtainable by similar means, Havas noted. Collecting feathers and collecting iron are forms of commerce that could be undertaken with a horse and cart. The state purchased the feathers and the iron, while the population bought the goods distributed by peddlers. The mobile-initiator life-style is based on familial relations.

The involvement of the family network is indispensable to acquiring information and making better use of any opportunities ... In such communities, extended family centres are formed—usually around the household of a patriarchal grandfather. And all of this is pictorially visible: brick houses of higher quality are surrounded by the shacks of younger relatives (the children and grandchildren).

In the mid-1980s (between 1984 and 1986), Michael Sinclair Stewart studied the lives of Vlach Roma living in a Roma settlement in the town of Gyöngyös. He concluded that Roma involved in horse-trading or some other business activity were becoming more prosperous and were respected by the non-Roma community. In his book, however, he acknowledged the truth of the following words written by Gábor Havas: "Roma with such life-styles live necessarily and permanently on the margins of illegality, and thus the group is subject to persecution."

Forced industrialization was continued for a decade and a half after the 1971 survey. During this period the labor shortage became even more acute, and new jobs were formed even in areas that had been some way from full employment in 1971. Jobs for women also became more numerous, and Roma women were more inclined to undertake regular paid work. The ratio of female earners (which had been 30 per cent in 1971) rose to almost 50 per cent in the late 1970s and exceeded 50 per cent in the early 1980s.

### **Roma Population Growth between 1971 and 1993 Changes in the Linguistic Distribution**

The 1993 survey indicated a Roma population of 468,000. According to the 1993 data, 5.5 per cent of Roma non-students aged 15 or over identified Beás as their native language, while 4.4 per cent stated that Romani was their native language and 0.6 per cent stated that it was another language other than Hungarian. These figures indicate an increase in the share of Hungarian native speakers from 71.0 per cent in 1971 to 89.5 per cent in 1993. In both 1971 and 1993, Beás- and Romani-speaking Roma were bilingual: in addition to their native languages, they also spoke Hungarian. In 1993 the native-language distributions differed significantly from the spoken language distributions. Thus while just 5.5 per cent of Roma identified Beás as their native language, 11.3 per cent said they spoke the language. Similarly, just 4.4 per cent of Roma identified Romani as their native language, but 11.1 per cent said they spoke the language.

#### *After the Political Changes of 1989–90*

In the latter half of the 1980s, the employment rate began to fall—

slowly at first, but then more quickly. In late 1993, the employment rate among males aged 15–59 was 64 per cent in the general population but 29 per cent in the Roma population. The discrepancy was even greater among the female population: in late 1993, 66 per cent of Hungarian women aged 15–54 were in employment, but just 15 per cent of Roma women.

The decline in employment was accompanied by corresponding increases in the number and percentage of unemployed people and inactive earners.

At the time of the research project in 1993–94, the number of registered unemployed was very high in Hungary: on average, it stood at 640,000 between October 1993 and January 1994. The number of registered unemployed remained below 100,000 until late 1990. It then rose to a peak of 703,000 in February 1993. Thereafter the rate gradually decreased to 496,000 in 1995, 477,000 in 1996, 464,000 in 1997, and 404,000 in 1998. A fall in the number of registered unemployed is not the same as a fall in the actual number of unemployed persons, for some of those who are not entitled to benefits do not bother to register themselves.

In late 1993, the number of unemployed Roma in Hungary was approximately 57,000. Thus, 8.9 per cent of Hungary's registered unemployed were Roma. Males accounted for 37,000 and females for 20,000 of the 57,000 unemployed Roma. Thus, 9.6 per cent of the Hungary's 386,000 registered unemployed males and 7.9 per cent of its 254,000 registered unemployed females were Roma.

The registered unemployment rate in late 1993 was 12.84 per cent among the non-Roma population and 49.68 per cent among the Roma population. The rates were more favorable in Budapest (8.1 per cent among non-Roma and 31.8 per cent among Roma) and less favorable in rural areas. The worst unemployment rates were recorded in the Northern and Eastern regions: 17 per cent among non-Roma and 59 per cent among Roma.

According to the ILO definition and based on the labor statistics of the Integral Civil Data Service System, the unemployment rate among non-Roma in late 1993 was 11.08 per cent—or 13.15 per cent together with the passive unemployed, that is, those who wanted to work but had given up hope of finding work. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate among Roma was 37.91 per cent—or 48.19 per cent if the passive unemployed are added in.

We know, however, that most inactive persons are in fact unemployed. This conclusion is valid not just for the Roma population but also for the general population as a whole. In 1982, Hungary had 5 million active earners (or 5.437 million together with working pensioners). In 1995, however, there were just 3.7 million active earners (or 3.882 million together with working pensioners). The difference between the two figures was some 1.3 million. In 1994, of these people, 632,000 were registered unemployed, 100,000 were passive unemployed, and the rest were inactive persons.

Over the years, some people who had previously been active earners had become inactive. Fleeing unemployment, they took some form of retirement—a trend indicated by the increase in the number of people on disability pensions from 500,000 in 1989 to 700,000 in 1995. Other formerly active earners were no longer recorded, having broken off contact with the labor office after the expiry of their unemployment benefits and income support.

A third group of active earners became inactive after a transition period rather than immediately. They went on maternity or childcare benefit, but when such benefits expired they were then unable or unwilling to return to work. Finally, after a period on unemployment benefit, they joined the inactive group.

A fourth group of formerly active earners became inactive when, having lost their jobs, they started working in the unofficial economy. Such people were in fact active earners rather than inac-

tive, but they were not classified as employed persons in the official statistics because they were not officially registered as such.

Finally, one should also mention the young people who would doubtless have found jobs in the 1960s and 1970s, but who, in 1993, had no hope at all of finding work and did not bother to register at the labor office.

Among the Roma population, such trends were particularly strong and began relatively early on. This becomes very apparent if we examine, by age groups, the rates of employment, unemployment and inactivity among the Roma and non-Roma populations. First of all we shall examine the non-Roma population, based on the labor survey of late 1993:

Among 30–39 year-olds, 75 per cent were employed, 11 per cent were unemployed, and 14 per cent were inactive. Among 40–54 year-olds, 72 per cent were employed, 9 per cent were unemployed, and 19 per cent were inactive. Among 55–59 year-olds, 9 per cent were employed, 3 per cent were unemployed, and 23 per cent were inactive.

Among the Roma population (based on national research in 1993–94), the same trends prevailed, but there were far higher percentages of unemployed and inactive persons. Among 30–39 year-olds, 28 per cent were employed, 30 per cent were unemployed, and 42 per cent were inactive. Among 40–54 year-olds, 24 per cent were employed, 20 per cent were unemployed, and 56 per cent were inactive. Among 55–59 year-olds, 9 per cent were employed, 3 per cent were unemployed, and 23 per cent were inactive.

The transition between unemployment and inactivity and, indeed, the dominance of inactivity are apparent among the younger age groups. Among 15–19 year-olds, 16 per cent of both Roma and non-Roma were employed, 5 per cent of non-Roma and 11 per cent of Roma were unemployed, and 79 per cent of non-Roma and 73 per cent of Roma were inactive. There is, however, a fundamental difference between the two groups. While 70 per cent

of young non-Roma were students (including 55 per cent in secondary education, 5 per cent in higher education, and 6 per cent in primary education), the corresponding rate among the same age group in the Roma population was just 25 per cent (including 3.4 per cent in secondary education). Thus, the real unemployment rate among young Roma aged 15–19 was 48 per cent—with 11 per cent registered as unemployed and 37 per cent not registered as unemployed.

In late 1993, 58,000 Roma were in work and 57,000 were out of work. At the same time, the number of inactive Roma was 151,000, almost three times the number of unemployed. Among Roma, 56.5 per cent of 15–74 year-olds were inactive, while the corresponding rate among non-Roma was 44 per cent. Among males, the rates were obviously quite different. There were approximately 37,000 employed males, roughly the same number of registered unemployed males, and 55,000 inactive males. Thus, 42 per cent of Roma males aged 15–74 were inactive, while the corresponding rate among non-Roma males was 36 per cent.

The differences between Roma and non-Roma in the field of employment were even greater among women. There were 136,000 Roma aged 15–74, of whom 95,000—or 70 per cent—were inactive, while 21,000 were employed and 20,000 were unemployed. Meanwhile, the inactivity rate among non-Roma women was 52 per cent. Of course, one should also bear in mind the large number of children among the Roma population when interpreting these figures.

Lack of education may be identified as the primary reason for the differences between the two populations. Before 1986, a completed primary education (8 grades) made it easier to find work, but by 1993 a primary or basic vocational education was no longer sufficient. According to a labor survey carried out by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office in the final quarter of 1993, the unemployment rate among the non-Roma population was 12.84 per cent—2.94 per cent for those with a higher education, 9.91 per cent



for those with a secondary education, 15.55 per cent for those with a vocational education, and 17.52 per cent for those with a primary education (8 grades).

A second reason was the place of residence of most Roma. The unemployment rate was significantly higher in rural areas than it was in urban areas, and particularly high rates were registered in small villages. Sixty per cent of Roma lived in rural areas and 40 per cent in small villages. The unemployment rate was significantly lower in Transdanubia and the Budapest agglomeration but far higher in the Northern, Eastern, and Great Plain regions, where 56 per cent of Roma resided.

A third reason was that Roma were working in industrial sectors that quickly collapsed after 1990. By way of illustration, in 1993 the unemployment rate in the construction industry was almost twice the national average. And in 1971, 26 per cent of Roma in employment had been working in the construction industry or on building sites. They must have numbered about 25,000, accounting for 10 per cent of all construction workers at the time.

However, even in combination, these three factors did not fully explain the high level of Roma unemployment. A fourth reason to consider would be discrimination, but we were unable to measure its effect.

### **Roma Population Growth between 1993 and 2005**

At the time of the national survey in 2003, the Roma population was approximately 600,000. In May 2005, the estimated Roma population was between 600,000 and 650,000. In 2015, the Roma population is projected to be between 700,000 and 800,000.

There are various forecasts for Hungary's population in 2015, but all of the estimates predict a population of less than 10 million but greater than 9 million. Thus, Roma are expected to account for 7–8 per cent of Hungary's total population in 2015.

The period 1993–2003 saw a continuation of the linguistic

assimilation of Beás native speakers but a reversal of the language shift among Romani native speakers. In 2003, 87 per cent of Roma identified Hungarian as their native language, while Beás was the native language of 4.6 per cent and Romani was the native language of 7.7 per cent.

### *The Present Situation of Roma*

Roma population growth, declining numbers of non-Roma, and migration from slum settlements, have reinforced residential segregation. In 2003, 6 per cent of Roma families were living in isolated/segregated Roma settlements, 2 per cent were living outside such settlements but away from other villages, 42 per cent were living on the outskirts of villages, and 22 per cent were living within villages or towns but in areas inhabited mainly by Roma. Thus in 2003, 72 per cent of Roma families were living in segregation.

In 2003, 28 per cent of Roma males aged 15–74 were in jobs, while the employment rate was 15 per cent among the Roma female population.

A major weakness of Hungary's economy is the low employment rate.

The employment rate is particularly low among those with no more than a primary education (8 grades) and it is even lower among those who failed to complete their primary education. The majority of Roma thus share in the fate of Hungary's poorly educated, although their employment rates are even worse than those of poorly educated non-Roma.

Data for March 2003 indicate that 82.5 per cent of Roma aged 20–24 have completed 8 grades of primary education. Still, rarely have they achieved this at the normal age of 14 or 15, but usually at an older age.

Five per cent of Roma aged 20–24 have completed secondary

education, and just 1.2 per cent are attending college or university.

One in five Roma children who fail to complete primary education face long-term unemployment, and a similar fate awaits those who fail to complete secondary education.

The integration of Roma has been the declared aim of successive Hungarian governments in the field of Roma policy. A prerequisite for integration is, however, that young Roma should be able to participate in secondary and higher education to the same degree as non-Roma.

## Notes

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9. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
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